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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 11

This report is published daily as a general update on Red Cross Red Crescent activities during the Balkans crisis, targeting primarily the Movement's components and supporters. Today's text can also be found on the internet: www.ifrc.org and www.icrc.org.

LATEST EVENTS

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The first truck carrying disaster preparedness materials for the Yugoslav Red Cross arrived yesterday (14 April) in Belgrade. The shipment included 750 sleeping bags, 7 water filters, 27 transistor radios, 10 typewriters, and 210 torches (with batteries and chargers). The materials will be distributed around the country to the Red Cross branches coping with the current crisis. A second truck containing gas/kerosine stoves, lanterns and candles is expected to arrive later this week.

The Red Cross branch in Sabac estimates there are some 100 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo in the municipality mainly staying with relatives. The Red Cross branch in Loznica has requested additional food and blankets for refugees from Croatia and Bosnia who with the current crisis have had to move a second time. The Red Cross Branch in Valjevo has requested mainly baby food for families whose houses have been destroyed.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The OSCE and UNHCR confirmed the arrival of 700 new refugees via train from Urosevac on 13 April, and 2000 more on 14 April who were transported through the Blace border crossing. Reports indicate the refugees were transferred to Brazda on the same days.

According to UNHCR, there are a total of 117,783 refugees as of 14 April in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The majority of the refugees, some 72,000, have made private arrangements or are living with host families. Around 46,000 of these refugees are Red Cross beneficiaries and their number is expected to increase to 60,000 during May. A total of 45,433 are accommodated in the following refugee camps (tent cities): 27,000 in Brazda (Stenkovac), 12,000 in Stenkovac, 2,052 in Bojane, 3,200 in Neprosteni, 1,181 in Radusa.

The transfer by air of refugees to third countries is continuing and German authorities confirm the transfer of 900 persons per day, with Germany, Norway and Turkey the main destinations. On Tuesday, 37 tons of relief aid arrived from the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society. The goods have been transferred to the Red Cross warehouse in Skopje.

Relief distributions

Some branches have experienced slight delays due to the late arrival of relief goods but the distribution is proceeding according to plan. A shortage of mattresses has been reported. Four Federation relief delegates have been placed in Struga, Kicevo, Tetovo and Veles municipalities to better monitor the needs of refugees living with host families. According to the latest figures, distributions to branches include: 14,285 hygiene parcels, 20,981 blankets, and 5,481 mattresses.

Health

The Red Cross field hospital is operational and, as a result of the new influx during the night of 14 April, has been treating cases of diarrhoea and pneumonia, mostly among children, and shock among adults. Local health personnel will be recruited to strengthen the response capacity of the Red Cross field hospital in Brazda. Basic public health education is being conducted by the various NGO's working in the camp at food and non-food distribution points.

Water

The Red Cross programme has been providing 80,000-100,000 litres of potable water per day to hospitals, health posts, a school and the Stenkovac transit centres.

Albania

Continuing their two day visit to Macedonia and Albania, the President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Dr Astrid N Heiberg and the President of the ICRC, Dr Cornelio Sommaruga, arrived in Tirana last night. The event was covered live on national television. After a briefing at the Albanian Red Cross (ARC) headquarters, the two Presidents were received by the President of Albania, Mr Rexhep Mejdani.

Today began with early morning briefings for the Presidents at their respective delegations before a meeting with the Prime Minister of Albania, Mr Pandeli Majko. Next, the Presidential group flew to Kukes, the main arrival point for refugees from Kosovo into Albania. There they met with ARC staff and volunteers, talked with refugees in a collective centre, witnessed a distribution of food parcels and visited a Red Cross health post and tracing office.

As in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the previous day, there was intense media interest in the visit, including international coverage by the BBC, Reuters, APTV, ORF, ZDF and correspondents from Austria, Norway, Hungary and Canada.

Regional Update

Bosnia Herzegovina:

Since the start of the current emergency, there has been a big influx of refugees from Yugoslavia, primarily from the Sandzak region of Serbia. Many of the arrivals are being accommodated with host families in Sarajevo canton. According to latest official and informal estimates, there are 30,000 refugees in Bosnia Herzegovina at present, of which just 2,000 are living in government centres.

The Civil Affairs ministry, together with other agencies, reacted immediately by establishing a reception centre at the bus station in Sarajevo to register the refugees and distribute relief items, including food parcels and blankets. Meanwhile in Republica Srpska, the number of newly arrived refugees from FRY has increased significantly in recent days, again mainly being accommodated with host families. The Red Cross is assisting the refugees on entry to the community.

At present, the Red Cross is seeking to establish a contingency stock for 10,000 people including hygienic parcels, food parcels and blankets and to implement a six months'

programme to assist registered refugees living either with host families or in Government centres.

Bulgaria

According to latest figures, some 400 Yugoslav refugees have applied for asylum and an estimated 2,500 are in the country. There is a constant flow of refugees (in small numbers) in transit to third countries.

Hungary

Over 600 refugees from FRY have applied for asylum.

Poland

The government has decided to host between 1,000 and 2,000 refugees from Kosovo and requested the Polish Red Cross to assist them. Some 16 people have arrived and are being accommodated in a tourist camp near Warsaw. According to the latest available information, a further 400 people are expected to arrive over next weekend. This group will be accommodated in Krakow and near Wroclaw.

Other Issues

Significant logistics problems are still being encountered. The International Federation and the ICRC advise National Societies that no further unsolicited donations can be accepted by the operation. All donations must be co-ordinated with the Geneva logistics unit.

Contact names and numbers: Charles Bernimolin, Federation, and John Wert, ICRC, at:

Phone: 041 22 730 2143 or 041 22 730 2204;

Fax: 041 22 733 9460;

email: fedicrcbalkanlog.gva@icrc.org).

For further information from the International Federation, please contact Mark Wilson (tel: +41 22 730 4439; mobile +41 79 406 1963, email: wilson@ifrc.org) for Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Penny Elghady (tel: +41 22 730 4319; mobile +41 79 205 1959, email: elghady@ifrc.org) for Albania and Macedonia.

For further information from the ICRC, contact External Resources Department (tel: ++ 41 22 734 6001) or Pierre Kraehenbuehl (tel: ++ 41 22 730 2256, email: pkraehenbuehl.gva@icrc.org)

Renny Nancholas
Director
Europe Department
International Federation of Red Cross
and Red Crescent Societies

Angelo Gnaedinger
Delegate General for Europe,
Middle East, and North America
ICRC