

20 April 1999

## **RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION**

*Report No. 14*

*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](http://www.ifrc.org) and [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org).*

### **LATEST EVENTS**

#### ***Federal Republic of Yugoslavia***

The estimates of the Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) and government sources that there are approximately one million displaced in FRY include displaced persons from Kosovo, pre-crisis refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and people on the move within Serbia from big and medium size towns to villages and "safer areas". Those who move are mainly women, children and the elderly, who go to stay with relatives or friends, to summer houses or to monasteries in the countryside.

However, the Red Cross emphasises that because of the volatile situation it is extremely difficult to get accurate statistics on population movements. To build a reliable picture, it is collecting data/statistics from different sources. It points out that if the numbers of those displaced or otherwise affected by the current crisis are added to the pre-crisis refugee population from Croatia and Bosnia of over 530,000 (of whom 225,000 are Red Cross beneficiaries) and the substantial numbers of the impoverished local population, the total number of vulnerable people is approximately 2 million (in a country with a population of 10.5 million).

In response to the crisis, the YRC is planning to expand its current soup kitchen programme from 18,000 to 50,000 beneficiaries, if support is forthcoming, and is increasing its regional warehouse capacity from six to 11 warehouses. It is also preparing to increase its fleet of vehicles. Food and medicines remain the most urgent needs.

In Pozarevac (south-east of Belgrade), YRC social-welfare programme workers have organised seven anti-stress teams, who are visiting shelters where they are working with children and chronically ill people. In this region the distribution of assistance to refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia is ongoing. The soup-kitchen has 550 beneficiaries, but its stocks are running low.

In the Rozaje area of Montenegro where some 20,000 displaced persons are located, Red Cross teams are currently constructing 2 communal kitchens in which meals will be prepared for the collective centres.

A shipment of emergency stocks and five generators for YRC is due to arrive this week, while a consignment of 15 faxes, 12 photocopiers, 8 typewriters and 92 computers and printers, to improve the YRC communications and logistics capacity, is being organised (despite difficulties in recruiting truck drivers to deliver to FRY).

The immediate release of 234 MT of ECHO food stocks for refugees in Belgrade will provide two months' assistance to approximately 40,000 refugees living in the area. The balance of the ECHO food shipment (750 MT) for this period for the rest of the country is arriving in FRY from elsewhere in Europe.

The first medical interagency meeting, initiated by the Federal Co-ordinator for humanitarian assistance jointly with YRC, was held yesterday in Belgrade. Issues of distribution, imports and needs were discussed with representatives of UNHCR, UNICEF, MSF, Pharmaciens Sans Frontieres, Cooperazione Italiana, and the ICRC and the Federation. The Red Cross proposed that the distribution of medical items should continue as at present, through the YRC network; the issue will be considered in bilateral co-ordination meetings between government officials and the agencies concerned.

### ***Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia***

The pace of new refugees arriving into the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has slowed down considerably in the past two days. The OSCE confirmed that only 40 new refugees crossed into FYROM through the Blace border point on Monday. As of Sunday, the OSCE states 31,405 people had departed for third countries. The higher figure being given by some international organisations for departures is based on the addition of over 15,000 refugees who departed to Albania several weeks ago during the 'involuntary' removal of refugees.

Indications of rising tension within the country prompted a security briefing to be held for all delegates. Although no serious security problems now exist, information and ideas were shared in the event of escalating security. Both the ICRC and the Federation will implement 24 hour security guards for the delegations in Skopje.

### Relief Distribution

By Monday, a total of 27,981 Red Cross beneficiaries living with host families had received non-food relief assistance distributed by the Macedonian Red Cross. Distributions are ongoing with over 500 mattresses sent from the warehouse to the Senokos camp on Monday.

Next month, social cases will be added to the beneficiary lists to dispel commonly held views within the country that the Red Cross is only assisting one ethnic group. The ability of the four Field delegates to effectively carry out their responsibilities is hampered by the continued lack of vehicles.

### Health

The situation in the field hospital remains stable. Preparations are underway for the hand-over of patients from the Israeli hospital which is closing down Tuesday. The Health Co-ordinator assessed conditions and needs in the Tetovo and Gostiva branches on Monday, as well as in the Radosa, Bojane, and Senokos camps.

### Logistics

New shipments which have arrived include: 300 tents, 1,500 kitchen sets and three Mercedes trucks from the German Red Cross.

The new warehouse, with 3,780 square metres of space, will have sufficient capacity for the anticipated flow of relief goods. The warehouse manager has begun to structure the warehouse according to Federation guidelines and standards. An inventory of stocks remaining in the warehouse was begun Monday.

The Kuwaiti Red Crescent volunteers have completed packaging of 4,340 parcels made from 37 tons of goods donated from this National Society. These volunteers are expected to complete their mission in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, then move on to Albania.

Six Land Cruisers, originally intended for the delegation in Albania but re-routed to Skopje, were transferred to Albania over the weekend. The delayed registration process for the 16 Finnish vehicles will make it necessary to reallocate vehicles used by the delegation to field delegates if the cars are not ready by Friday.

### Tracing

According to the ICRC, through Sunday, a total of 274 files had been opened for children separated from their parents. Family reunification are occurring daily since last Friday when clearance was received from the Ministry of Interior. A total of 24 reunions between minors and their parents have taken place.

### Participating National Societies

Because of the substantial response to the emergency by American Red Cross (ARC) with cash and in-kind goods, ARC will now have representation within the Federation's Macedonian delegation. Together with the Federation, the ARC will use this representation to assist in the co-ordination and delivery of cash and in-kind resources supporting the operation. Initial activities of the ARC have been:

- w the purchase of 30,000 bottles of lice shampoo and 30,000 bars of soap needed immediately by the refugees in the camps (distributed by Macedonian Red Cross);
- w supporting the MRC with technical resources (computers and copy machines) to allow for accurate refugee registration at the branch level. Eleven computers and eight copy machines have been purchased and are being distributed to the branches;
- w initiating a fresh food programme for the refugee camps in co-ordination with the World Food Programme;
- w purchasing and delivering 20,000 blankets for distribution to refugees in host families;
- w purchasing some 20,000 bars of soap and 10,000 women's hygiene articles as contingency stock.

### External Relations, Marketing and Publicity

Two live interviews were conducted for BBC TV (one as an individual and one as a panelist), as well as an interview for a French radio station. Arrangements for scheduled interviews with international media in the coming days were also made.

Daily Federation/ICRC information and co-ordination meetings are held to agree on uniform media messages on behalf of the Movement, to keep each other informed about media contacts, and to facilitate immediate sharing of information about new influxes or events.

### Delegation

As of Monday, April 19, there were 52 delegates (which include 30 German Red Cross health and technical delegates) working out of the Red Cross's Macedonia delegation.

### ***Albania***

According to latest figures more than 355,000 refugees have entered Albania since the start of the present crisis. Some 150,000 are currently massed in the border area of Kukes, accommodated in 62 collective centres, or housed with host families; however, a significant number are without shelter and assistance is being hampered due to poor weather. Elsewhere in the

country, across 11 prefectures, more than 205,000 refugees are living with host families or in collective centres.

#### Relief Distributions

Under an agreement reached late last week with the WFP, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement - working through the Albanian Red Cross 36-branch network - will provide assistance to approximately 150,000 refugees across the country accommodated with host families.

#### Health

Respiratory infections continue to afflict many adult refugees, who are being cared for in the Kukes' 260-bed hospital. Children are also suffering from respiratory ailments, as well as diarrhoea and leishmaniasis (a skin disease). Some 5 mt of water sanitation equipment has been dispatched to Kukes, where drinking water is becoming increasingly scarce.

#### Telecommunications

A pactor link has been established in Kukes, thereby facilitating much better communication with the joint delegation in Tirana.

#### Participating National Societies

Across the country, seven Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies - from Austria, Belgium/Netherlands (joint), Denmark, Greece, Italy and Turkey - are establishing camps for refugees. The French Red Cross is providing food parcels for refugees living with host families. The United Arab Emirates Red Crescent has increased its presence in the country since the crisis began and is also establishing a camp in the Kukes area for 10,000 refugees and setting up a 200-bed field hospital. The Society has distributed a large number of relief items, including ready to eat meals, dates, rice, tents, blankets, and family parcels - with more in the pipeline. The Kuwaiti Red Crescent will be dispatching a 110 mt consignment of food and hygiene parcels shortly.

#### External relations, Marketing, and Publicity

HRH Princess Margriet of The Netherlands, Vice President of the Netherlands Red Cross and Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, carried out the second and concluding day of her programme in Albania today (20 April). Her schedule included sessions with refugees living with host families and in a centre directly opposite the Tirana delegation. The visit has been well reported in the local media. During this week, correspondents from NRK and Aftenposten (Norway) have covered Red Cross Red Crescent activities in Kukes, while journalists from Britain, Sweden and Argentina have been briefed at the joint delegation.

#### ***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.

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