

21 April 1999

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

*Report No. 15*

*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***

For a number of reasons many of the displaced currently on the move have not yet contacted Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) branches or governmental bodies such as the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees, and accurate estimates of the number of displaced are therefore rough. The size of the population which can be considered vulnerable has increased significantly, a result of the existing refugee population from Croatia and Bosnia of over 530,000 (out of which 225,000 are Red Cross beneficiaries) combined with an already substantial number of impoverished local population.

The Red Cross branch in Nis has started distribution of emergency supplies to the displaced in the region. In addition to the DPP and emergency operations, many of the 210 YRC branches have intensified First Aid training activities among the general population, as well as the Voluntary blood donation campaigns. Mobile teams within the psycho-social support programme are implementing activities and workshops in shelters especially for children traumatised by the war.

The need for soup kitchens has increased. According to information provided by the Red Cross branch in Vojvodina, a total of 12 branches are managing soup-kitchens which reach some 3,400 beneficiaries. It is estimated that these needs will increase in the future.

Relief goods from Greece were handed over to the Red Cross branch in Nis, and quantities of food and hygiene items from bilateral donors have also reached the Red Cross branches in the Kragujevac Region.

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

The recent slowdown in the influx of new refugees was replaced Tuesday with reports of thousands of people waiting to cross. In Jazince, 2,000 people were reportedly said to be in the 'no man's land' between Kosovo and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. At the Lojane border point, UNHCR reported some 3,000 people crossed over late Tuesday night and were transferred to Stenkovac-Brazda and Stenkovac-French. UNHCR also reports 600 new refugees crossed at Blace on Tuesday.

According to the UNHCR, on Monday 19 April, 390 refugees were flown out of Skopje to Poland on three flights. Poland, Belgium, Austria and Turkey had scheduled evacuation flights for Tuesday. Government teams from France, Sweden, Norway and Austria have arrived in Skopje in order to oversee the processing of refugees for departure to their respective countries.

UNHCR is conducting an assessment of medical cases in the camps in Macedonia to identify refugees who are in need of evacuation for medical reasons.

A local television station, SITEL, carried a report on the poor garbage disposal within the Bojane camp. Journalists have also begun to pose questions to Federation Information delegates about this issue.

Relief Distribution: April distributions are continuing by the branches of the Macedonian Red Cross. On Tuesday, the total number of refugees in host family accommodation which received non-food relief provided by the Federation increased to 31,700.

The Relief Co-ordinator visited the Kicevo and Struga branches on Tuesday to assess the capacity of the branches which have become overburdened as a result of this crisis.

Health: The handover of patients from the Israeli military hospital to the German Red Cross field hospital was completed by mid-day Tuesday in the Stenkovac-Brazda camp. The field hospital now has a total of 34 inpatients; all beds, except in the Obstetrics ward, are filled.

The Health Co-ordinator continued with assessment visits to the branches in Kicevo, Struga, Debar and Ohrid on Tuesday. A report on the immediate health needs of refugees living with host families is in preparation.

Shelter: Lack of adequate shelter remains a top priority. Roads in the existing camps are muddy from rains and sanitation is becoming problematic as latrines are uncovered (and in the vicinity of the long food distribution lines) as reported by delegates visiting the Brazda camp.

An agreement was reached between the government and UNHCR on construction of a new camp in Cegrane (in between Gostovar and Tetovo) which will have an initial capacity of 5,000, but can be expanded to accommodate 15,000 people. The government has also approved the establishment of a new transit facility at Blace with a capacity for 5,000 people. Tents will provide accommodation at the transit center for up to three days.

Logistics: All requests for relief goods have been forwarded to the joint Federation/ICRC logistics cell in Geneva. Requests for dispatch of relief items have been received from the Federation's Relief field delegates reporting to the Relief Co-ordinator for branches assisting refugees in host family accommodation. The inventory of the warehouse, which had been delayed due to use of the warehouse for packing parcels, has been completed and the warehouse is being structured according to Federation procedures.

Telecommunications: A radio operator has been employed locally to staff the delegation's radio room. A VHF network has begun to be expanded to include the equipping of all delegates with mobile radio handsets.

Two more Land Cruiser vehicles need to be equipped with VHF radios (equipment already in the pipeline). A VHF base station must be installed in the field hospital at Brazda camp (equipment already in the pipeline).

Macedonian Red Cross: The Macedonian Red Cross reported it will co-ordinate assistance with the UNHCR for 3,000 people that arrived on Saturday in the border village, Mali Malino, and in Brest and Tanusevci, who are without identity documents and not properly clothed for

the snowy, mountainous region. OSCE and local police estimate another 2,000 people are expected in this region.

As well as ongoing distribution of non-food relief (blankets, mattresses and hygiene parcels) provided by the Federation, the Macedonian Red Cross continues with the distribution of UNHCR-provided food parcels provided to refugees living with host families. Each parcel (for three persons) contains 12 kg of flour, 1 litre of oil, 1 kg of sugar, 1 kg of beans, and 2 bars of soap. Baby parcels provided by UNICEF and diapers from the German Red Cross/Federation are also distributed.

External Relations, Marketing and Publicity: In-depth stories on family reunions were filmed by NBC, as well as an interview with Red Cross Information staff. A Reuters TV crew filmed food distribution at the Gostovar branch of the Macedonian Red Cross. An interview was also given to a photojournalist from a private French agency.

British and Scottish newspapers, and Finnish media were provided over the phone briefings.

#### Outstanding Needs

An outstanding problem is the contact between the remotely located field delegates and the delegation in times of crisis. In order to supply all delegates, including German Red Cross staff, more VHF hand sets are needed (despite 13 more VHF hand sets which are in the pipeline).

#### ***Albania***

New figures from the Republic of Albania's Emergency Management Group, estimate there are 347,500 refugees in the country, with the largest concentration, 120,000 still in Kukes.

According to reports, a further wave of refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are believed to be on way to Albania. Meanwhile, the situation in Kukes is worsening as the camps are preventing easy access to the town, thereby disturbing the economic stability.

Following the proposal of the Albanian Red Cross (ARC), a country-wide arrangement for Red Cross action is now being implemented, with one delegate to be based in each of the six regions working closely with the ARC.

Relief distribution: The relief pipeline is being hampered by the backlog of trucks waiting to enter Albania, but the distribution of all current in-stock food is ongoing. The provision of monthly food parcels to 150,000 refugees in host families is planned, though Albanian Red Cross lists suggest that there are 200,000 people living with host families. In the Tirana prefecture alone, the Albanian Red Cross is providing assistance to 10,000 refugees.

In addition to the assistance to approximately 150,000 refugees in host families, an additional monthly food parcel will also be distributed to the host families. In agreement with WFP, the Red Cross will also be responsible for distributing relief for 5,000 people in six collective centres in Kukes. The Red Cross will be responsible for distributing BP-5 and HDRs to new arrivals as they cross the border in the Kukes and Kruma region

On Monday (20 April), some 8,000 food parcels (5 kg per parcel) were dispatched to Elbasan and will be distributed.

Health: The Red Cross clinic at the mosque in Kukes received 1,132 patients between 12 - 17 April. The clinic has now been closed and the staff has been integrated into the Emergency Response Unit of the Finnish Red Cross which is now operating in the mosque area. With war wounded continuing to be received at the Kukes hospital, the ICRC has distributed more medical supplies to the hospital including surgery, dressing, and pediatric sets.

Mine Awareness: The mine awareness delegate met with NATO and Albanian government officials to discuss the need for a public information campaign on the dangers of cluster bombs reportedly used in Northern Albania. There is a need to produce leaflets and posters quickly to inform the refugees and the local population.

Protection and Tracing: A radio spot about unaccompanied children in Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was prepared and broadcast on radio networks. Red Cross teams have visited Shkoder and Vlora for tracing activities. There is now a constant flow of people to the delegation requesting help and information on tracing and resettlement issues.

Telecommunications: With the pactor system set up in Kukes, a repeater is being installed in the new offices of the joint delegation. Antennas have been erected on the roof of the building and telephone lines installed in the new offices.

External Relations, Marketing, and Publicity: Among visitors to the delegation expected shortly is the Finnish Minister for Co-operation and Development.

Media interest in the Red Cross Red Crescent operation continues to be strong with interviews/briefings given to journalists from the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Delegation: Delegates from the International Federation and the ICRC are now working under one roof in Albania, following the establishment of a joint delegation earlier this week. Led by the Federation head of delegation, ICRC delegates will continue to be responsible for tracing and protection issues and head the logistics function. International Federation delegates are managing the relief and medical components. While both organisations will retain their administration and information functions, a high degree of coordination is anticipated.

Outstanding Needs: Among outstanding personnel needs are a water-sanitation delegate for Kukes; a medical administrator for the Tirana warehouse and a field nurse for Tirana.

### ***Other Issues***

Logistics coordination remains essential, and 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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