

22 April 1999

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

*Report No. 16*

*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***

Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) branches are experiencing difficulties prioritising the distribution of humanitarian aid to refugees because of the increasing pressure from other vulnerable groups, including social cases and IDPs. A shortage of relief and assistance supplies is reported throughout the country.

Local Red Cross branches are forming teams to assess population movements and needs within their community. The Red Cross teams (one for Petrovaradin and one for Sremska Kamenica) intend to focus on distribution to all the beneficiaries considered vulnerable (IDPs, refugees, and local social cases), including psycho-social support and regular assessment visits.

In Vojvodina, Red Cross distributions will now be routed through Pancevo. Large sections of Novi Sad suburbs are without a water supply, therefore necessitating two trucks with water tanks for the Red Cross branch. According to latest reports from 25 local branches in Vojvodina, there are 1,104 displaced originating from Kosovo, 7,943 displaced local persons, and 15,230 social cases registered by the Red Cross and seeking assistance.

In the Nis region, three distribution centres are planned: the existing centre in Nis (covering 21 local branches), Vranje (covering 7 branches), and Zajecar (to cover 8 Red Cross branches). All Red Cross branches are working on distributing emergency goods mainly to displaced persons from Kosovo and social cases. Local social welfare centres are assisting the Red Cross in assessing the number and needs of local social cases. Initial indications are that canned food, plastic sheeting, flour and yeast, and medication are the most needed items. In the Vranje sub-region, seven Red Cross branches have registered some 1,200 displaced (400 in Kursumlija, 365 in Nis, 200 in Zajecar, 160 in Prokuplje, and 160 displaced from Kosovo).

In the Kraljevo region, the Red Cross branch in Novi Pazar have registered 3,100 displaced from Kosovo (in total, 760 families). There is an urgent need for medicines, particularly for people with neurasthenics, diabetics, high blood pressure, asthma and heart diseases. The soup kitchen is serving 250 beneficiaries each day, but at least 250 additional meals are needed. The Novi Pazar Red Cross branch maintains some Federation hygiene parcels and food, but requires additional supplies of mattresses and blankets, food, hygiene items, diapers and baby food for 205 babies up to one year of age.

The Red Cross branch in Lucani has registered 200 displaced from Kosovo. Some 88 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia who had been assisted prior to the current crisis are accommodated in two collective centres in Lucani, spending most of their time in shelters.

The Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) has received an emergency ambulance equipped with a defibrillator, electro-cardiograph, sonograph, artificial respirator and an emergency kit for doctors. The donation of this mobile clinic and medical equipment, by the ICRC, is an integral part of a large scale Red Cross Red Crescent relief operation to assist people affected by the present crisis.

The Serbian Red Cross has distributed food supplies to the Cacak, Valjevo, Lucani and Kursumlija districts, while food, clothes and hygiene items have been despatched to Vojvodina and to the Belgrade municipalities of Zemun and Rakovica.

100,000 copies of psycho-social first aid pamphlets will be printed and distributed throughout the YRC network. Other municipalities (Kragujevac, Novi Sad, Nis, Aleksinac) are in the process of implementing help-lines similar to those of the Belgrade Red Cross which have proved to be extremely useful.

Two trucks with the balance of emergency relief for the YRC are being customs cleared, and the supplies will be stored in a YRC central warehouse in Zemun. Two land cruisers, donated by the British Red Cross are expected during next week. Approximately 250 Dressing Material Kits donated by the Norwegian Red Cross are expected to arrive by the end of next week. Following a meeting between Movement representatives and the Federal Ministry of Health, it was agreed that the distribution of all medical assistance donated by the Red Cross will be channeled through the YRC branch network with needs assessments being undertaken by the YRC and THE ICRC.

In Montenegro, the situation is becoming increasingly tense. Unconfirmed reports by the Montenegro Red Cross suggest that displaced from Kosovo are still entering at Rozaje at a pace of several hundreds per day.

The capacity of the Montenegro Red Cross is still being overstretched. The Federation is presently finishing a survey of the situation in the local branches with the purpose of channeling support, both from own and other sources, to the ones most in need.

Federation and ICRC cooperation in Montenegro remains effective, with frequent consultations on all key issues, including following-up on the relief distributions and a review of the beneficiary figure arrived at during the recent food coordination meeting (81,000 IDPs). The general situation presently of the society and its need for support is, however, also going to be raised.

A steady influx of displaced continues to swell the ranks of the estimated 31,000 people already in the Ulcinj region of southern Montenegro. Some 2,500 people arrived there between 17 and 20 April. Over the past few days, 60 beneficiaries, identified as particularly in need, have received Red Cross relief items. Last weekend, the installation of a communal kitchen was finished at the Neptune camp in Ulcinj. Food supplies were provided by the Red Cross for the first four days before the kitchen was handed over to other agencies. Heavy rains continue to plague the Ulcinj region and parts of the Neptune camp site originally ear-marked for tents are now completely waterlogged.

***Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia***

The flow of refugees into the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has increased again with the arrival according to the OSCE of approximately 5,000 refugees on Tuesday and Wednesday, 20 and 21 April. On Tuesday, 20 April, some 600 refugees were evacuated by air to Austria, Belgium, Poland and Turkey, according to UNHCR.

The Macedonian Red Cross continues to be in close contact with police authorities and UNHCR regarding the plight of thousands of refugees in the remote border village of Mali Malino.

Relief Distribution: Over the last several weeks the operation in Macedonia has settled down into several main areas of work: first, continued support of the Red Cross teams at the border points in case of a large influx of refugees into Macedonia. A contingency stock of supplies is ready for dispatch to any border point if the need develops; second, the direct work with the Macedonian Red Cross in planning and executing the distribution of relief to the refugees in host families. These numbers are increasing every day and will probably exceed 85,000 shortly. Equipment such as computers, photocopiers and vehicles are being assigned to the Red Cross branches to facilitate the work. Funding for these branches is being transferred on a monthly basis based on a flat rate of beneficiaries served.

April distributions of food and non-food relief to refugees living with host families are continuing by the Macedonian Red Cross branches. On Tuesday, 21 April, the total number of refugees accommodated with host families which received non-food relief (blankets, hygiene parcels and mattresses) provided by the Federation increased to 33,200. Distributions for beneficiaries of the Skopje branch have not begun in earnest due to the late arrival of food supplies to the Macedonian Red Cross from UNHCR, WFP, and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The Federation has informed the National Society that the American and German Red Cross are offering support to fill gaps in the food supply. The total number of refugees living with host families and registered with the Macedonian Red Cross has increased to 65,251.

Health: The Red Cross field hospital is now filled to capacity as a result of the hand-over from the closed Israeli military hospital. UNHCR, which is responsible for space management within the Stenkovec-Brazda camp, has not yet positively responded to repeated requests from the Red Cross to expand the hospital's capacity.

Logistics: Over the last week, the following non-food relief items were dispatched to Macedonian Red Cross branches: 4,500 blankets to Tetovo; 500 mattresses to Gostivar; 1,000 mattresses, 1,000 blankets, 1,000 hygiene parcels and 52 baby parcels to Kumanovo; 4,000 blankets, 2,000 mattresses, 1,000 hygiene parcels and 80 baby parcels to Debar.

Logistics remains a significant constraint with the daily arrival of requested and unsolicited items. The availability of a large warehouse (rented at the beginning of the emergency phase) has provided some degree of flexibility in terms of space to stock items requested through the Appeal, as well as relief supplies sent with no prior notice. The warehouse staff are working almost 24 hours a day receiving incoming supplies and dispatching them to the various branches serving the refugees. The Red Cross system is working well in distributing non-food items to the branches.

External Relations and Publicity: An interview taped with local television during the recent visit by the Presidents of the Federation and the ICRC was broadcast Tuesday evening. The interview highlighted the response of the Macedonian Red Cross to the crisis and the fact that the Red Cross is caring for all vulnerable persons no matter their ethnic background.

Increased contacts have been noted with regional media. On Wednesday, an interview was taped with Radio France International, another with the Romanian section of RFI, as well as the Media-Fax news agency in Romania. A briefing was given to a journalist from a Norwegian daily newspaper. A Japanese newspaper was briefed and contact provided with the Japanese Red Cross Field delegate. Media contacts and briefings were also maintained with APTN, CNN and NBC.

### ***Albania***

Overnight figures for the number of refugees in Albania are unchanged from yesterday at 347,500, including a concentration of 120,000 in the Kukes area. Red Cross Red Crescent assistance continues to comprise relief distributions, medical/health components, tracing and camp management.

The number of refugees from Kosovo to Albania appears to have dwindled significantly since the start of the week, though according to reports many thousands are moving towards the border. Just 14 people crossed the Morini check point on Tuesday though in contrast at Hani Hotit on the Montenegro border, some 2,000 new refugees arrived on the same day. An estimated 1,000 people remain at Hani Hotit with food, shelter or transport to Shkoder, the nearest town. OSCE reports indicate the presence of some 2,200 refugees in Bajram Curri, in the Tropoja district.

Relief Distributions: Over the last few days, relief distribution to refugees with host families has consisted of food parcels, blankets, Ready-to-Eat Meals (MRE), and field rations. Food parcels comprise full 20 kilo rations. In the Tirana prefecture, a total of 7,311 food parcels and blankets were distributed on Monday and Tuesday. In the Tirana area, the numbers of refugees with host families have doubled in the last 10 days; according to the most recent figures, there are 28,879 such refugees in the prefecture. The process for refugees to receive the relief items entails the head of the refugee family and of the host family reporting to one of four distribution points in Tirana and signing for the packages. Across the country, the Red Cross is distributing weekly over 1,500 mt of food for some 195,000 people.

The Elbasan prefecture has received 5,900 food parcels and distribution has begun to those refugees living in the surrounding villages. Selection of a warehouse in the Fier area is underway, in co-operation with the local branch.

In Shkodra 12 mt of food parcels were received today. An expected influx of refugees into the area has necessitated the shipment of provisional stocks, with a further 14 mt of field rations and MREs already en route. Helicopter shipments to Peshkopi will bring 6 mt of MREs. Bajram Curri will receive 3 mt of medical supplies and MREs, with another 3 mt of MREs due tomorrow.

Health: Immunisation (against measles and polio) in Kukes should begin this weekend. Even though there have been five reported cases of dysentery, from a health perspective the situation is considered stable at the moment.

Clinics established by Red Cross Red Crescent national societies from Italy, the United Arab Emirates and the emergency response unit (ERU) from Finland are operational and are working well in Kukes. A Finnish Red Cross Basic Health Care response unit is on stand-by.

A Red Cross/Red Crescent assessment mission to the Tirana military hospital took place yesterday and a basis for cooperation reached. A similar mission is on its way to Bajram Curri

by helicopter (loaded with relief items) to look at the situation in the hospital, including support required and potential caseload.

Shelter: With further influxes of refugees expected, the shelter situation in Albania remains critical. To date, there have been no reported difficulties with identifying host families. The state of the camps is satisfactory, though sanitation and garbage conditions are worsening as the camps grow in size. Latrines are being constructed for the refugees in the camps, despite a shortage of concrete slabs.

Logistics: Vehicle fleet management has allocated five vehicles to the relief function, five to the Kukes Sub-delegation, three to specified personnel at the headquarters in Tirana, and four for the pool.

A German Red Cross donation of 20 mt of canned beef is in the pipeline.

The "Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS)" has put a medical team at the disposition of the Movement, composed of 4 doctors, 4 nurses, and an administrator. The Federation has asked the PRCS to maintain the medical team on stand-by for the time being.

Telecommunications: Training of staff on the use of the telecommunications equipment is in progress. The programming of additional channels on handsets, mobiles and base stations will allow better communication amongst the delegates. Plans for new VHF frequencies, the relocation of repeaters and an additional repeater have been prepared. The installation of VHF and HF radios will begin when the equipment arrives.

Protection and Tracing: An ICRC field team left for the port city of Durres to coordinate tracing activities while one delegate has been assigned to Korch on the Macedonian border where over 100 families have indicated a need for tracing services. Three delegates are in Vlora for an assessment mission. The team also visited the Albanian Red Cross branches in Fier and Berat to help with tracing activities. Local radio broadcasts are starting to prove successful with four children who were situated in Lezhe reunited with their families after their names were broadcast over a Voice of America programme.

External Relations and Publicity: Today, the delegation is scheduled to welcome the Secretary General of the Finnish Red Cross and the Society's International Director. Meetings with the Albanian Red Cross are planned for today and the group will travel to Kukes tomorrow.

BBC TV's late evening flagship news programme included an interview with a Red Cross/Red Crescent delegate. Meanwhile the Albanian Red Cross has proposed a public information campaign to advise refugees on facilities to assist them.

### ***Other Issues***

Logistics coordination remains essential, and the International Federation and the ICRC advise National Societies that no 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 22 730 2876;**

**email: fedicrcbalkanlog.gva@icrc.org.**

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

*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](mailto: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