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

*Report No. 17*

*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 Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) has intensified fund-raising activities in order to increase its assistance to beneficiaries. Among various recent initiatives, an agreement has been signed between the Society and a fast-food company. Under the agreement, the company will allocate one dinar for each item sold in its restaurants. The YRC is also in the process of expanding a soup-kitchen programme for up to 50,000 beneficiaries all over the country. In Montenegro, the Red Cross approximates the number of displaced at 106,000, including some 34,400 people who arrived during 1998. While the pace of the influx of displaced has slowed, it has not ceased and the Red Cross network is becoming seriously overloaded. Food and non-food items appear to be in adequate supply for the time being and significant quantities of food and non-food items are currently arriving at the Rozaje branch. Elsewhere, however, there are fears that the daily increase of displaced will outpace supplies in the pipeline.

In Novi Sad, the second largest Yugoslav city, the water supply is of particular concern, and a Red Cross truck now delivers water from one side of the city to the other. Generators for institutions such as hospitals will be needed, as well as increased tracing and mailing support. The YRC has also proposed re-launching the programme of support to pharmacies for refugees and social cases, with medical supplies being given to those in need.

In a coordinated action between the Movement's three components, programmes to respond to the emerging needs are to be expanded. In addition to communal kitchens, cash assistance and psychological support, technical and development assistance to the YRC is necessary. The shipment of 57,500 hygiene sets from the German Red Cross has been customs cleared and will be in the distribution pipeline shortly. Two Landcruisers donated by the British Red Cross are expected to arrive in Zagreb next week and will then be shipped to Belgrade.

In view of the quickly evolving situation in Montenegro, a Red Cross assessment mission is being carried out today (23 April).

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

UNHCR reports 1,500 refugees crossed through the Blace border point yesterday afternoon (22 April) and were transferred to the Stenkovec-French camp. An additional 300 refugees were reported to have crossed yesterday evening but information is still unclear about the exact border area where these people crossed. UNHCR also reports that the present camp population is now 52,400. The new camp in Cegrane will be ready to accept 3-5,000 people by next week and an additional 10,000 within ten days. Through 22 April, the UNHCR reports the total number of refugees in FYROM is approximately 136,400.

A total of 402 refugees departed to third countries on Wednesday, 21 April. The destinations included Belgium, Poland and Turkey. The total number of refugees in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is 132,000, according to the UNHCR.

Relief Distribution: Due to the limited capacity of the Skopje branch, distribution of food and non-food relief will be decentralised to ten distribution points in the greater Skopje area. Eight distribution points will be located in the surrounding villages, and two in the town of Skopje. Distribution will begin Saturday. While more distribution points will give beneficiaries better access, the decentralised system poses greater logistical challenges.

The pipeline of relief stocks and incoming goods has stabilised. This will allow for the increase of non-food relief rations. For example, one hygiene parcel was presently distributed for every three persons, but next month the steady supply of stocks will allow the ration to be increased to one parcel for every two persons.

Health: The Red Cross field hospital handled its first delivery of a baby, by Caesarean section, on Thursday. Previous deliveries in the Stenkovec-Brazda camp were handled by the now-closed Israeli military hospital. The UNHCR gave its positive approval late Thursday for the needed expansion of the field hospital which is now operating at its full capacity of 42 beds. The expansion will increase the capacity by 48 more beds. It is still unclear whether the hospital will be completely relocated or expanded at its present site.

Social Welfare: Delegates visiting the camps have confirmed the worrying state of elderly refugees that are unaccompanied by family members. While children and young people are seen milling around in the outdoors, the elderly for the most part remain in the tents. Too frail to wait in food distribution queues for four hours or more, ICRC Tracing staff report these elderly have simply given up. They show no interest in searching out and being reunified with younger family members.

Logistics: As NATO is no longer providing offloading and transport services at the airport for relief deliveries which arrive by air freight, UNHCR is attempting to make alternative arrangements. Some problems are expected during the transition period. The 14 volunteers from the Kuwaiti Red Crescent departed from FYROM on Thursday.

Tracing: Through Thursday 22 April, 253 files for children separated from their parents and 776 files for parents searching for their children have been opened. A total of 49 cases have been closed, meaning reunification was successful after cross-checking of the database. Collaboration is continuing with the Macedonian Red Cross on adult cases.

The ICRC estimates that the number of vulnerable persons is rapidly growing longer. The most pressing challenges faced by the ICRC are that tracing efforts are labour intensive and require significant logistics and personnel. An additional challenge is the continuous movement

between tents by the refugees living in the camps, creating a change in the 'address' of potential beneficiaries.

External Relations and Publicity: Briefings/interviews were conducted with Media Fax, Greek TV, Canadian, Bulgarian and British journalists, as well as follow-up with a Japanese newspaper.

Delegation: With the inclusion this week of representatives from the Macedonian Red Cross in the daily Federation/ICRC meetings with the ICRC, an increased level of co-ordination between the members of the Movement has been achieved.

### ***Albania***

Overnight figures for the number of refugees in Albania remain at 347,500 with updated statistics being sought from the country's emergency management group. The largest concentration, 120,000, remains in Kukes where a broadcast and leaflet campaign is underway to persuade the refugees to voluntarily move further south; the influx since the crisis began has been well beyond the prefecture's capacity to cope adequately with such a large refugee population.

A significant number of refugees continue to flow through Hani Hotit on the Montenegro border, coming from Pec. These new arrivals are joined by displaced from Podjorica, Ulcinj, and Rozaj. From the border, the new arrivals are transported to Shkoder in northwestern Albania where sanitary conditions are deteriorating and relief supplies are in short supply.

A tripartite agreement is due to be signed today (Friday, 23 April) with the WFP and UNHCR, confirming the role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as responsible for assisting all refugees residing in Albania with host families.

Relief Distributions: In the Tirana area, another 4,100 beneficiaries have received blankets and 20 kg food parcels which include rice, pasta, oil, sugar, tinned protein, salt and yeast.

The delegation's relief co-ordinator has visited Peshkopi, a very poor area in the north-east of the country, to assess the refugee situation. Although the numbers are relatively small (3,600, of which more than 2,500 are living with host families), any further influx will severely hamper the coping capacities of the local Red Cross and government authorities. Many of the refugee families have between five and ten children. Currently the Red Cross is providing milk for children, while each refugee is receiving \$1 per day from the government.

To meet the needs of the new arrivals from Montenegro, four Red Cross trucks loaded with wheat flour, blankets, MREs, and food parcels were dispatched to Shkoder.

Health: According to the relief coordinator's report, the refugees in Peshkopi are suffering from a variety of ailments including respiratory and intestinal infections, and hygiene problems.

Logistics: The present combined warehouse capacity in Kukes of approximately 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> is being operated by Albanian Red Cross staff, supported by the logistics delegates

The Tirana warehouse has recently received some 2,000 mattresses, while shipments out of the facility to Durres and Elbasan include 4,235 boxes of high protein biscuits, 2,000 mattresses, and 10 bales of used clothing. A consignment of computer equipment for the delegation - mainly PCs and printers - has arrived at the Rinas airport and awaits customs clearance.

The French Red Cross (FRC) have sent twelve trucks loaded with relief items to Albania during the past week. The logistics team in Tirana includes eight FRC delegates.

Tracing: Red Cross satellite telephones are now available to refugees in the towns of Korce, Shkodra and Durres, with the possibility of more locations being added. In Korce alone, approximately 300 calls have been placed. Assessment missions to Vlores and Durres report that needs are enormous. The Red cross family news radio service continues with the BBC, in collaboration with the British Red Cross which is now also broadcasting the information daily. As of Monday, Radio France Internationale, in collaboration with the FRC, will also support the tracing programme. To facilitate easier (voluntary) movement of refugees to third countries, the Red Cross is currently in discussion with various embassies regarding travel documents. Broadcasts over the Voice of America have brought together another two families, while an elderly man was reunited with his grandson.

Participating National Societies: As noted in an earlier report, the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent has initiated the establishment of a camp in Kukes with an anticipated capacity of 10,000 refugees. Also included in the proposal is funding for sanitation, a 200-bed hospital with two operating theatres (which will allow 12 surgical operations per day) and complete management of the camp.

External Relations and Publicity: The Secretary General and the Director of the International Department of the Finnish Red Cross are travelling to Kukes today. The International Federation's Europe Department and Disaster Response Support Directors are currently on mission in the region conducting field briefings and reviews of the operation.

Recent media interviews have been given to international news organisations in Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Outstanding Needs: The relief coordinator reports an urgent need for heart and respiratory ailments medicines in Peshkopi.

### ***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:

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