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

Report No. 28

*This report is published thrice-weekly 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***

According to figures from the Serbian Red Cross, 41,236 internally displaced from Kosovo have registered and asked for humanitarian assistance from Red Cross branches across Serbia.

Vojvodina : The Red Cross branch in Pancevo made a request for a weather monitoring unit to be used to analyse potentially high levels of toxic gases which might necessitate evacuation of the local population. The unit and software cost 7,000 DM and was donated by the ICRC to municipal authorities. An assessment will be carried out by the Red Cross on the present and future ecological problems in the region. So far, with chemicals spilled into the Danube and the emission of toxic gases, there could be significant consequences on the health of the local population.

Nis : A team assessed damage in Nis yesterday (9 May) and an ICRC delegate and YRC representative delivered a truckload of supplies to the Nis medical centre on 10 May. The Red Cross centre in Kursumlijska Spa was damaged during an air attack. The number of social cases is on the increase, and Yugoslav Red Cross branches in the Nis region have distributed 500 family parcels.

Valjevo: A Red Cross team delivered relief assistance to 1,300 displaced people on 7 May.

Montenegro : Distributions in most municipalities will start today, 10 May. The number of displaced in Rozaje now totals 17,080, while in Podgorica there are 13,468 refugees and 9,800 displaced. Baby items are urgently needed, since there are 400 babies in the 0-2 age group.

Health : A joint Red Cross medical team visited Aleksinac, Prokuplje and Vranje on 7 May to deliver surgical material kits and a total of 786 l of infusions to medical centres.

External Relations, Information and Publicity : At the invitation of the YRC, the ICRC and Federation Head of Delegations participated in a joint press conference on 7 May, aimed to highlight "Yugoslav Red Cross Week, 8-15 May" and "World Red Cross Day" on 8 May.

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

Although the FYROM government has stated that the border remains open, in fact only persons with Macedonian documents have been entering. UNHCR reported no refugee arrivals from 6 to 9 May; meanwhile, departures continue to third countries. Over the same four-day period 5,796 refugees departed to Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey and USA. About 12,000 refugees are scheduled to leave in the coming week.

Relief Distribution: According to latest figures from the Macedonian Red Cross, 112,300 refugees living with host families are now registered. With further influxes anticipated for May, the beneficiary planning figure is 143,300. The Macedonian Red Cross standard distribution to refugees living with host families includes one blanket per person on arrival; one hygiene parcel for three people; and a monthly food ration of 12 kg of wheat flour, 1 kg of sugar, 1 kg of beans, and 1 litre of oil, soap.

In recent days, non-food items and hygiene parcels have been repositioned at 22 branches to expedite distribution in May. Because of the influx last week to Tetevo, stocks were replenished with 1,500 sleeping bags, 1,500 boxes of high protein biscuits, and 1,500 regular biscuits.

Health: The field hospital and equipment donated by the Norwegian Red Cross for the Cegrane camp has arrived at Skopje airport, but is being held in customs. Red Cross/Red Crescent representatives are meeting with FYROM health ministry officials to expedite an early release. The construction of the hospital is targeted for late Wednesday.

Logistics: Dispatches from the International Federation's central warehouse over the weekend included: 548 mattresses, 16,263 blankets, 5,831 hygiene parcels (donated by ECHO), 432 hygiene parcels (donated by the American Red Cross), and 377 cooking sets. Incoming goods included: 11,088 hygiene parcels from the Netherlands and 450 tents from the Swiss Red Cross.

Tracing: Through Monday, 10 May, the Red Cross tracing service has registered 538 vulnerable cases (the majority of which are unaccompanied children, but also including elderly, physically and mentally disabled persons), as well as 1,164 tracing requests. The number of cases closed, with families reunited, has increased to 216.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: International Red Cross and Red Crescent delegates conducted interviews or briefings with the following media over the weekend: CBC/Canadian TV, MTI/Hungarian News Service, La Nacion (Argentine newspaper), Irish TV, German TV, the US magazine 'Civilisation', Voice of America, Star Channel/local Greek TV, Prilep/Macedonian radio, and Nova Macedonia newspaper.

A press conference, hosted by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is scheduled for this Wednesday (12 May), to update local media on Red Cross/Red Crescent activities in the Balkans stressing the Fundamental Principles of impartiality and neutrality, and differentiating the Movement from other parties involved in responding to the current crisis.

### ***Albania***

Latest estimates from Albania's Emergency Management Group indicate that more than 417,000 refugees are now in the country. The Red Cross/Red Crescent has revised its planning figures upwards and is now working on the basis of 288,517 refugees living with more than 45,000 host families - representing a beneficiary caseload of more than 330,000, twice the figure specified in the integrated appeal of 7 April 1999.

Meanwhile, the daily number of refugees moving out of the Kukes area now exceeds those coming in, which has caused the overall figure to drop back to just over 100,000.

Bajram Curri and the surrounding area in the north of the country is reported to be very tense. Government sources have also noted increasing tension between the refugee and indigenous populations - especially the camps and townsfolk/authorities. In addition, there are indications of 'host family fatigue' and suggestions that some refugees are attempting to pay for entry to camps considered to offer better facilities. These are all indications of a deepening malaise and the urgent need to create more appropriate longer-term refugee accommodation across the country.

Relief Distributions: Over the weekend, Durres received a dispatch of wheat flour (60 MT) and Fier (40 MT). A ferry with 18 trailers arrived at the port; the immediate transfer of Swedish Red Cross food parcels was completed to Shkodra (3,840 units), Fier (1,920) and Elbasan (1,920). The remaining 14 trailers were loaded with French Red Cross food parcels; a consignment of 9,000 is being shipped to Kukes shortly.

Thirteen trailers of Swedish Red Cross food parcels (1,920 per trailer), on board a second ferry have been dispatched Lezhe, Elbasan, Fier, Shkodra and Tirana.

In the Kruja area, distributions continued throughout the weekend to the caseload of almost 5,000 beneficiaries. Some 300 food parcels received from the Red Crescent of the United Arab Emirates - each of which can cover the needs of two people for a week - have been delivered to the Tirana warehouse.

Health: Red Cross/Red Crescent assessments of selected hospitals across the country are continuing, with a review also underway of sanitation facilities in the Tirana sports complex.

Logistics: The procedure whereby only trailers travel on the two ferries from Italy appears to be functioning well; trucks on the Albanian side then transport the trailers either directly to the delivery points or to the warehouses.

Telecommunications: The Austrian Red Cross ERU has handed over responsibility of telecommunications to an integrated delegation team.

Tracing: A positive outcome has been achieved in the case of widowed man with a Swiss residency permit, wishing to take his four children to Switzerland. Current figures from the delegation's tracing and protection departments are: 65 parents registered who have lost children; 51 unaccompanied minors; 34 unaccompanied vulnerable (mostly elderly); 6,022 satellite telephone calls have been made; 3,014 radio messages sent; 47 Red Cross messages sent; 65 travel documents issued; and 14 tracing cases opened. Between 140-180 people are visiting the department on a daily basis.

Albanian Red Cross: According to the latest figures, more than 1,000 people working with the Albanian Red Cross (including 500 volunteers) are involved in the refugee assistance operation.

Participating National Societies: Officials from the Japanese Red Cross are continuing their assessment of the vulnerable unaccompanied elderly. The Spanish Red Cross is preparing to take over the management of a camp, in conjunction with Caritas, Spain, for 5,000 persons currently being established in Hamallaj (Durrës prefecture). The set up of prefabricated houses instead of tents is being evaluated, and work on the site is expected to begin in 15 days. For this purpose, Spanish Red Cross has sent a 4 delegate team to Albania to cover the following needs: establishment of a liaison office in Tirana to co-ordinate Spanish Red Cross activities with the joint delegation and the Albanian Red Cross; follow up Spanish Government's final work in the Hamallaj camp site; and organise a proper logistic system before the arrival of refugees in the camp.

External Relations, Information, and Publicity: TV3 (France) has returned from filming a documentary in Kukes while a BBC team is working with the delegation's tracing and information departments for a feature story. Swiss national television is working on a story on the radio messages programme. Briefings have been given to Southern News of Canada, National Public Broadcasting and SPEAR refugee radio. Other contacts included the Associated Press, Shekulli (Albanian newspaper), Boston Globe, National Public Broadcasting.

Knight Ridder conducted an interview with the joint delegation's relief coordinator while a 150 second spot with the medical coordinator was shown on Deutsche Welle's morning shows in Germany.

### ***Kukes Report***

Over the weekend nearly 16,000 refugees (mainly women and children) crossed the border. Although the general situation in Kukes and Has Districts remains calm, there is uncertainty surrounding the future of the camps, and consequently tension has increased. The lack of information given to refugees is a contributing factor, particularly regarding third country asylum and/or family reunion.

The movement of refugees to the south remains an issue. The current proposals will result in the camps being moved south, complete with their current camp management, staff and equipment. The United Arab Emirates Red Crescent has accepted this proposal, and site investigations are underway. Discussions with other organisations are on-going.

The two week construction of an airstrip in Kukes (funded by the Government of the United Arab Emirates) was completed on Friday (6 May). The Sub-delegation is in the process of clarifying the status concerning utilising the airstrip and very much hopes that it is intended for humanitarian assistance to include the Movement.

Relief Distribution: Relief in Kukes town, carried out by the Red Cross/Red Crescent, is organised through 7 points of distribution. Each refugee receives a 1 week ration of food supply, which consists of 2 Kg of wheat flour and a partial food parcel (2.7 Kg of food), provided by the French Red Cross. Each host family, as a unit, receives the same amount of food.

In total, 42,306 refugees in host families and 2,039 host families received 20,740 boxes of food parcels with a total weight of 112 MT, and 8,715 boxes of 8 Kg each of wheat flour, amounting to 69.72 MT. The total weight of food items distributed reached 181.72 MT.

The new relief programme commenced in Has district on 9 May. Refugees living with host families and host families themselves were comprehensively covered by this first distribution exercise.

Some 619 refugees in host families and 59 host families in two villages near Krume, (Zahrisht and Gajrep) received 683 boxes of food parcels, weighing 3.69 MT and wheat flour in bags of 50 Kg each, weighing of 5.9 MT. The distributions will continue for all the beneficiaries in Has district during the next few days.

Health: Due to the large influx of refugees (mainly women and children) over the weekend all the Red Cross/Red Crescent clinics and hospitals have been extremely busy. The United Arab Emirates Red Crescent camp is full to capacity (8,000 refugees), and people are reluctant to leave for the south. The hospital in the camp treated 450 patients on Friday, 7 May alone, of which around 100 were fairly serious cases. Two cases of meningitis are suspected and the hospital currently has 60 inpatients. The Finnish Red Cross health clinic inoculated 280 children on 7 May, and 104 on 8 May against measles and polio, and staff gave preventative health care training to parents. In addition, hygiene kits were distributed, and the children were given clothes. Over the weekend, the Italian Red Cross Camp/hospital assisted many refugees en route to Kukes Town, giving them food and water and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hospital gave 450 consultations on Saturday alone. The facility has also started a new preventative health programme, which will be expanded in the coming weeks, but presently includes education on breast feeding and the usage of oral dehydration salts. The International Red Cross also organised three medical evacuations over the weekend to Tirana, one of which was for a 36 hour old baby who is in serious condition.

Logistics: From 6-9 May, the Kukes Sub-delegation received 52.3 MT of French food parcels (7 kg each) by helicopter. In addition, 40 MT of wheat flour were received from WFP. During the same period, the Sub-delegation distributed the following food and non-food items to the Italian, UAE and Finnish Red Cross/Red Crescent camps, clinics and hospitals: 1,700 blankets, 10 bales of used clothes, 200 sets of sheets, 382 Hygiene Kits and 0.8 MT of mixed food parcels.

Tracing/Messages: The Tracing team had a meeting with doctors from Kukes hospital to discuss transferring 16 elderly patients, (some of whom are abandoned) to the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Camp. The team opened the following cases involving: 2 abandoned elderly people; 1 unaccompanied child; 1 separated family. On 6 and 7 May, telephone calls and radio messages from the Red Cross Tracing Office, Besimi Camp, United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Camp and Krume town were as follows: 275 radio messages and 436 telephone calls.

External Relations, Information, and Publicity: To celebrate the World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day on 8 May, the Albanian Red Cross organised a function which was attended by staff, volunteers and local dignitaries.

The Director General of the British Red Cross also visited Kukes on Saturday, receiving briefings from members of the Sub-delegation, visiting a host family, and joining in the 8 May birthday celebrations. The International Director of the South Korean Red Cross arrived in Kukes for discussions with the South Korean delegate (Relief Administrator).

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