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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 44

This report is published twice-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 and www.icrc.org

LATEST EVENTS

This week the return of refugees to Kosovo gathered speed. Exact figures are not available, but several thousands of refugees are on their way back home.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia)

The Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) has installed three reception posts and several transit points along the Kosovo/Serbian borderline, where thousands of internally displaced Serbs fleeing Kosovo can get food, water, medical treatment and shelter for the night. Two of the reception centres are in Prokuplje and Nis, where 17,000 Serbs streamed over the border during the weekend, and a third is located in Ribarica, south of Novi Pazar, where there are now 7,000 internally displaced. The regional branches of the YRC donate wheat flour, salt and oil to bakeries for bread for the newly displaced.

The Serbian Red Cross delivered humanitarian assistance on 14 June to local Red Cross organizations in Kursumlija, Novi Pazar, Zubin Potok and Leposavic. These municipalities received goods including 15 MT of flour, 1 MT of rice, 3,000 cans of food, 240 litres of food oil and 260 kg of biscuits. The Red Cross will continue to provide emergency food assistance for the new influx of displaced Serbs from Kosovo.

(Kosovo) Some 50 Serb displaced persons who arrived in Pristina on Sunday received ICRC distributions the following day. They were also able to use ICRC telephones to inform their relatives in the north of their impending arrivals.

An ICRC delegate left Pristina on 17 June for Kosovska Mitrovica to assess the situation there and to visit the Smrekovnica prison. Many Serbs have already left the town of Prizren.

On Wednesday 16 June, delegates distributed two truckloads of relief goods to the Metehi displaced near Podujevo, while a further three truckloads went to beneficiaries in the Sribica area.

Delegations: The ICRC currently has 11 expatriate staff in Kosovo and since 18 June they have been back in Prizren.

Participating National Societies: The steering group has issued on 18 June a special note to all National Societies with the title "Return to Kosovo - a new phase in the operation". In this note the steering group calls for continued co-ordination within the movement in order to respond to the needs inside Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, while maintaining our services to refugees staying behind in Albania, Macedonia and Bosnia. The note describes procedures for missions to Kosovo, planned activities and the relationship with the media. The steering group takes the opportunity of issuing this note to thank National Societies for their unfailing commitment and support so far and asks for continued co-ordination of our collective response as a Movement.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Overview: According to UNHCR, the number of refugees returning to Kosovo from the FYRO Macedonia is building, about 2,800 on Tuesday (15 June); another 3,300 on Wednesday (16 June) and over 5,000 on Thursday (17 June). Most of the returnees had been staying in host families. Many refugees are leaving through the main crossing at Blace in cars, although there are increasing numbers travelling by foot. On Thursday (17 June) three private buses filled with returnees and their belongings crossed at the Blace border. In the first days, the returnees were mostly men, but now include whole families. On Thursday, about 600 men were crossing back into Macedonia to get their families and return again to Kosovo.

Logistics/Relief Distribution: On Thursday afternoon (June 17), a record number of 18 large transport trucks were lined up ready to unload relief goods at the Federation and ICRC warehouses in Skopje. The stock will bolster Federation programmes for refugees and social cases in Macedonia, and ICRC relief operations in Kosovo. Two more ambulances for the Norwegian Red Cross hospital have arrived and there are two more in the pipeline.

The Macedonian Red Cross MRC is distributing water and high protein biscuits to refugees as they travel back to Kosovo. According to the Macedonian Red Cross as of 17 June there were

	Received	Distribution		
RELIEF SUPPLIES		Refugees	Host families	TOTALS
Mattresses (German Red Cross)	5,447	4,671		4,671
Blankets (IFRC)	9,990	1,020		1,020
Blankets (American Red Cross)	11,790			0.00
Hygiene parcels (Netherlands)	1,680	2,017		2,017
Hygiene parcels (Swiss Red Cross)		494		494
Hygiene parcels (IFRC)	1,512		1,570	1,570
Hygiene parcels (American Red Cross)	1,022	1,022		1,022
Hygiene parcels (French Red Cross)		1,531		1,531
Baby parcels (Swiss Red Cross)	6,654	6,333		6,333
Baby food		7,360		7,360
Sugar (1 kg packs)	37,380			0.00

(Logistics and relief distribution)

Stores of perishable food and non-standard goods have been donated to local charitable and non-profit organisations, including: 2,614 cans of mixed vegetables, 1,200 baby food, 5,250 chicken paste, 1,309 bed sheets, 573 towels, 409 sleeping bags.

Health: After mine explosions killed two returning refugees on Tuesday (15 June), the ICRC has stationed a private ambulance and paramedic at the Blace border for health emergencies, to provide evacuation to the German Red Cross hospital. On Thursday (17 June), a returnee was wounded by gunfire about 30 kilometres across the border, the Macedonian Red Cross ambulance took him to the German Red Cross hospital at Stenkovec camp.

The German Red Cross hospital is the referral facility for Stenkovec I & II and Radusa camps and the Blace transit camp, serving a population of 48,900. Although the population in the Stenkovec I and II camps was stable, the number of out- and in-patients increased at the German Red Cross field hospital. There were a total of 554 patient consultations. The average number of out-patients reached 79 per day, 7 daily admissions on average. The average bed occupancy for the week ending 10 June was 62%. There were 8 births, one death, and 20 surgeries performed from 4-10 June. There have been no epidemics of communicable diseases. There were two referrals to Macedonian state hospitals.

At the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) hospital in Cegrane camp, the total number of admissions have decreased to 46, but there is more need for a higher level of patient care particularly special cases of respiratory and mental illnesses. Last week there were 558 out-patients at the hospital. The average bed occupancy for the week was 35%. There were 15 babies born, no deaths and 14 surgical operations from 7-13 June.

After receiving additional technical monitoring and diagnostic equipment, the number of patients referred to Tetevo and Gostivar hospitals has been reduced, but the workload for NRC hospital staff has increased. There is now an agreement with Gostivar hospital to have a psychiatrist come to the NRC hospital once a week to supervise the treatment of serious cases of mental illness. In a week and a half a specialist from the British Red Cross will arrive to make an assessment for field treatment of patients with mental illness.

Tracing: Since the beginning of the crisis, the ICRC Tracing Agency has received 1,637 tracing requests and registered 1,662 vulnerable people (the majority of whom are unaccompanied children, but also include elderly, physically and mentally disabled persons). Cumulative through Thursday 17 June: 619 families have been reunited. For the week ending 17 June, the ICRC tracing offices (Skopje, Tetevo and seven camps) have received 4,535 visitors and 569 phone calls, and 283 names were given for broadcast. There were 481 registrations on the ICRC website <http://www.familylinks.icrc.org>; and 56 Red Cross messages received.

Macedonian Red Cross: Over two hundred children celebrated the opening session of the Red Cross camp in Struga. The opening ceremony included greetings by the president of the Macedonian Red Cross, who acknowledged the support and donations received from several Red Cross societies and the Federation, and encouraged the children to enjoy themselves. The general secretaries from the Skopje, Tetevo, Ochrid and Struga branches of the Macedonian Red Cross attended.

Located on the scenic Lake Ochrid, the camp offers 10-day programmes of sports, games, boating, swimming, and instruction about Red Cross history and principles, for boys and girls age 8 to 16. The camp was built in 1957, there were additions and renovations done in 1993, including an impressive mural depicting the founding of the Red Cross by Henri Dunant. This summer, refugee children will join with children from social case families, orphans and disabled children to enjoy recreation and social activities at the camp.

Participating National Societies: The French Red Cross is planning to distribute a 3-day food supply to returning refugees as they pass through the Blace border camp area.

External Relations, information and publicity: International Red Cross and Red Crescent Information delegates conducted interviews or briefings with the following media on Tuesday-Thursday (15-17 June): Dutch TV, Canadian Army Press, Radio Canada, Australian TV, Radio Macedonia, American News Agency, *Sidney Morning Herald*, CBC-Alberta, APTV, National Public Radio/USA, *Oslo Dagbeadet* newspaper, Dallas Morning News, *Chicago Tribune*, A1/Macedonian TV, Channel 5/Macedonian TV, Thessaloniki Press, Reuters, Macedonian National TV, *The Scotsman* newspaper. Two press releases were dispatched to the local media.

Albania

With the news of the peace agreement spreading across Kosovo, the influx of internally displaced persons into neighbouring Albania has almost completely stopped. Refugees have been streaming back into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from Albania and the organised relocation of refugees from Kukes to places in the south has completely stopped.

Despite the UNHCR warnings about shortages in accommodation and medical services, refugees have been loading cars and tractors and heading for the Morini border crossing. The line stretches kilometres back from the border point.

The context and operating environment in Kukes has been very fluid and fast moving over the past few days. Several refugee camps and collective centres in Kukes have emptied in 24 hours, whilst others only have around 50% of their original caseload. The movement of refugees into Kosovo has been far swifter than anticipated. Refugees have sent family members to assess and establish the situation, and the following day(s), the remainder of the family have departed for Kosovo. This is especially the situation for families from Prizren, which is only 40 minutes drive from the Morini Border. Other families are moving back together. The road from Kukes to the border is fairly blocked with the movement of tractors and other vehicles moving north. Security problems in some camps during the night of 17 June were encountered, which could have led people to decide to depart to Kosovo more quickly than initially planned.

The Sub-delegation has made it clear to the local authorities that the Albania Red Cross, supported by the Red Cross Movement, will be fully operational until the last refugee leaves and beyond.

Relief distributions: Since the beginning of the crisis in Kosovo until the end of week 22 the following relief goods were distributed by the Federation's delegation in Tirana to the 36 districts and areas in Albania:

v 911, 292 food parcels (six varieties) totalling close to 8,000 MT of food. If one takes an average population of 300,000 refugees since the beginning of the crisis, this figure means every refugee would have received from the Red Cross Red Crescent about 27 kgs of food, over a period of three months, or 9 Kgs a month per family of six would have received an average of 54 Kgs of food a month .

v Almost 4,000 MT of wheat flour were distributed as well , which averages out to 13.5 kgs of wheat flour per refugee for the period.

v 102,531 blankets distributed or roughly two blankets per family.

v 6,700 mattresses and 11,400 tarpaulins.

v Almost 21,500 hygiene kits.

These figures do not include distributions which were directly made by PNSs.

The Red Cross Red Crescent operation is continuing to meet the needs for 100% of its caseload in Albania. The warehouses are fully stocked and goods are being dispatched on a "by request" basis where goods are sent to regions based on the requests of relief delegates.

Dispatch figures for Monday through Thursday are: 78 MT of wheat flour and 11,560 Swedish Red Cross food parcels to Tirana; 8,640 Swedish Red Cross food parcels to Shkoder; 42.4 MT of wheat flour and 3,520 Swedish Red Cross food parcels to Elbasan; 58.4 MT of wheat flour and 3,360 Swedish Red Cross food parcels to Fier; and 7,840 Swedish Red Cross food parcels to Durres.

During this week the food pipeline has been fully operational, with trucks arriving with food supplies for three days in a row. Due to the change in the refugee situation, the Relief Team expect the present caseload of beneficiaries assisted by the Red Cross Red Crescent to decrease, as people return to Kosovo.

Emergency food rations have been requested by the Kukes Sub-delegation, to enable the team to distribute to refugees arriving in Kukes en route to Kosovo. The Sub-delegation is also aware that the trend in refugee departures for Kosovo may change, resulting in refugees staying in transit in Kukes for longer than at present.

Health: The primary health concern is the maintenance of basic hygiene of refugees while they are in transit. Medicines have been shipped to Shkoder and Kukes. Kukes received five Emergency Health Kits. A water-sanitation assesment was performed in the Kukes area, while a medical assessment will begin on 18 June.

The Finnish Red Cross basic health clinic in Kukes was established on 16 April, with the capacity of treating 20,000 patients over a three month period. As of 16 June, the staff has treated 17,750 patients. The clinic, however is still short on staff. At the beginning of this week the clinic treated 1,085 patients and vaccinated 46 children on 14, 15 and 16 June. However, on 17 June, the number of patients dropped dramatically.

Social welfare: In order to assist the refugee population, brochures will be prepared with information and advice. The first brochure will focus on children/youth and how parents can assist them. The second is to aid adults with understanding the psychological impact of the events that have occurred, and contains advice on helping themselves and others. Distribution of these brochures will be done to refugees with host families and host families themselves, refugees in camps, and to those refugees waiting to cross the border--a "mobile team" will be created to distribute the brochures to those people on the roads.

Tracing: The latest figures for Albania are follows; 5,604 visits; 27,622 telephone calls; 25,138 radio messages prepared; 234 unaccompanied vulnerable registered; 148 parents having lost children; 189 unaccompanied children; 456 family reunions opened and 54 closed; and 58 Red Cross messages in and 17 out.

In light of the rapid changes taking place, the Protection Team is currently discussing options for contingency plans. The Protection team are finding that many of the people who have previously registered cases with them are returning to Kosovo. Whilst some people have informed the office of their future plans, many others have not done so. Consequently special

radio messages are being broadcast to advise registered refugees returning to Kosovo, to inform the office about their future plans and contact details.

There have been large queues of returning refugees, especially early in the morning, outside of the Satellite Telephone office wanting to make a last call to their relatives overseas, to inform them of their plans. As such, the number of satellite telephones available has been increased from three to five. Demands have decreased significantly for the radio message service facilities.

Participating National Societies: A second PNS Health coordination meeting is scheduled for 22 June in Tirana. Three satellite telephones were prepared for the Japanese Red Cross. The Danish Red Cross received a computer and re-established a datalink between the field operation and the headquarters in Copenhagen.

External relations, information and publicity: The media has progressively disappeared from Kukes since KFOR entered Kosovo. During the daily UN Press briefing on 14 and 15 June, journalists were briefed on Red Cross Red Crescent ongoing activities. Emphasis was also put on the fact that once the refugees return to Kosovo, the Red Cross Red Crescent Sub-delegation will continue to support and develop its activities with the Albanian community. Interviews were given to *Stars and Stripes* (print) on mine action/awareness. There have been a number of telephone enquiries, over the past three days, most notably, from CNN about mine awareness.

Delegations: The Kukes Sub-delegation remains focused on its operation for assisting refugees and host families, while remaining flexible and open to other operational needs as the situation arises. The Sub-delegation has made plans to respond in a co-ordinated way to the expected influx of refugees through Kukes.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Relief distributions: The International Federation completed the distribution plan of humanitarian aid donated by the Red Cross of the Czech Republic. Distribution is to start next week. This donation includes: mineral water, instant soup, baby diapers, bathing soap, toilet paper, paper handkerchieves, sanitary napkins, bandages and shirts. The same distribution will include a donation from the British Red Cross of 44 bales of baby clothing.

Outstanding Needs

In Albania, additional stocks of Meals-Ready-to-Eat are necessary in the Kukes area, which is the transit area for those refugees returning to Kosovo.

In Macedonia the Norwegian Red Cross hospital needs to set up a computer registration and statistical system Epi-Info, as was set up in the German Red Cross hospital.

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