

9 JULY 1999

RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 50

This report is published twice weekly as a general update on Red Cross Red Crescent activities during the Balkans crisis, primarily for the Movement's components and supporters. Today's text can also be found on the Internet at www.ifrc.org and www.icrc.org

LATEST EVENTS

Nearly 620,000 refugees and displaced people have now returned to Kosovo, leaving nearly 140,000 still in the Federal Yugoslav Republic of Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia, as well as some 90,000 in third countries, according to the latest figures from UNHCR.

The general transfer of humanitarian personnel and resources into Kosovo from neighbouring states/republics continues. In Albania, plans are being made to consolidate the remaining refugees in a few camps and collective centres.

The president of the International Federation, Dr. Astrid Heiberg, who has been visiting the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), warned the world not to lose sight of the enormous humanitarian needs there. "I appreciate the clear commitment of the international community to help refugees and displaced people now returning to Kosovo. Yet, I am gravely concerned that assistance will not be as generous to the humanitarian operations in Serbia and Montenegro," she said.

In Kosovo itself, the Federation is addressing the difficult task of rebuilding the local Red Cross.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia)

Overview: International Federation President, Dr Astrid Heiberg, finished a four-day visit to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). During her stay, she met with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Federal Minister for Refugees, IDPs and Humanitarian Affairs, as well as the President of Montenegro. Dr Heiberg's visit was hosted by the International Federation Delegation in FRY and the Yugoslav Red Cross. At her press conference Dr Heiberg stressed the enormous humanitarian needs she observed during her visit to FRY. The situation of more than 500,000 refugees from the previous wars in the former Yugoslavia is particularly difficult. The Federation President emphasized that huge humanitarian needs in all parts of Yugoslavia should be covered in a balanced way, as there is already clear commitment of the international community to assist vulnerable people in Kosovo.

New IDP arrivals from Kosovo have been registered in the southern municipalities of Serbia proper, notably Kursumlija, Prokuplje and Bujanovac. The same trend has been observed in Kolasin, Montenegro. In Montenegro, out of over 11,000 people recently arrived from Kosovo

-- mostly Serbs and Montenegrins -- some 650 are living in four collective centres in Berane and one Andrijevisa, with the number expected to increase to approximately 1000.

In Serbia, the Red Cross is in the final stages of preparations for the soup kitchen programme, while in Montenegro it will supply supplementary food parcels (WFP, CRS and MCI having taken up covering staple food) and food for kitchens in the collective centres. Once the soup kitchens are running, an assessment of winter needs will be made. It is envisaged that some 50,000 families will be provided with winter clothes.

The project for providing glass for institutions damaged in the bombing is about to start with a school and hospital in Belgrade and will be expanded through the Joint Field Offices. In the health domain, a round of meetings with local Public Health Institutes and water boards has been completed and a study has been prepared on integrated assistance to laboratories which carry out water/environmental pollution control.

Relief: Since it was set up, the Nis Field Office, covering 36 local Red Cross branches in the Zajecar, Nis and Vranje areas, has distributed some 15,000 hygiene parcels, 2000 mattresses, 11,000 blankets and over 13,000 square metres of plastic sheeting. In addition, emergency food supplies have been provided to IDPs arriving from Kosovo. The region is presently accommodating some 13,000 of them, with about 1000 new arrivals in Bujanovac adding to the previous caseload of 12,000.

On 8 July, three trucks brought over 21 MT of bulk food (wheat flour, sugar, vegetable oil, pasta and yeast), as well as 1000 hygiene parcels, 128 baby kits and a number of stoves, to Bujanovac, which now has about 4000 IDPs from Kosovo. There are six reception centres in the town.

The Belgrade Joint Field Office, in charge of 54 local Red Cross branches and three regional warehouses, has been assisting 38,130 IDPs from Kosovo. The largest concentration is in the central Serbian town of Kragujevac, with 10,500 IDPs, which has been supplied with close to 60 MT of bulk food which was originally intended for soup kitchens but had to be redirected to the arriving IDPs.

All the Joint Field Offices have been actively preparing the launching of the soup kitchen programme, and in some areas a school kitchen programme.

Health: On 6 July, the Red Cross medical team delivered a surgical unit to Novi Pazar hospital and drugs to the humanitarian pharmacy and muscular dystrophy special hospital in the town. The latter had not received any drugs in the previous six months.

An assessment of the water situation in a reception centre in Bujanovac has been carried out, with the first delivery of disinfectant.

A financial allocation has been given to the Kragujevac Red Cross branch for the rehabilitation of five collective centres in the town.

Protection: The Nis Field Office is in the process of setting up a tracing mobile unit, which will enable IDPs to make direct contact with their relatives. In each of the last 3 weeks, the ICRC

Belgrade tracing agency has been receiving an average of 60 people coming to inquire about relatives.

PNS: The Japanese Red Cross has completed its assessment mission in Serbia, showing particular interest in getting involved in the humanitarian pharmacy programme and/or a regional soup kitchen.

Kosovo

Overview: International Federation efforts are focusing on reconstruction of the local Red Cross structure in order to re-establish its operational capacity. A senior Federation representative dedicated to this issue is now based in Pristina and working in close coordination with the ICRC and the PNS. This means rehabilitation of the Kosovo Red Cross branches damaged during the conflict through reconstruction, rebuilding, provision of office equipment and direct support to the Red Cross branches' structures and staff. A first assessment of the Red Cross structures in Kosovo, after the three-month conflict, indicates considerable destruction. A large number of municipal and local branches have no infrastructure after the premises were looted and burned down.

At the same time, efforts have to be made to reach a provisional solution regarding the status of the Red Cross authorities in the province as well as the working relations of the Red Cross with other organisations.

Relief: As well as continuing to respond to ad hoc requests, the ICRC has also commenced regular deliveries to the towns of Suva Reka and Vucitrn, where other agencies have had difficulties reaching full capacity.

Distributions of food were carried out at the following locations:

Suva Reka: 36 MT for 13,000 people

Novi Badovc: 5 MT for 500 people

Saskovac: 15 MT for 500 people

Lipljan: 10 MT for 8000 people

Junik: 10 MT for 2800 people

Vucitrn: 32 MT for 28,000 people

Decane: 34 MT for 25,000 people

Health: Close cooperation with PNS is continuing for finalising proposals for the second phase of the implementation of health projects. Thirty water wells were cleaned and disinfected in Glogovac municipality. In addition, an initial assessment of the Pristina water supply was undertaken.

Protection: With three Mobile Tracing Units now active in Kosovo, over 1700 telephone calls have made in the past week, with approximately 80% of people successful in contacting their families. ICRC visits to people detained by KFOR in Kosovo have commenced with visits carried out this week in Pristina and Prizren to 65 people.

PNS: The French Red Cross carried out a first distribution in the municipalities of Klina and Cubrelj in central Kosovo. A total of 6000 received a parcel put together by the French

population as well as a radio and three batteries. They also received wheat flour and oil provided by the World Food Programme. The American Red Cross is supporting ICRC tracing operations with funding for five mobile communication modules. Each module contains two vehicles with radios and satellite telephones. The German Red Cross Kosovo programmes include four soup kitchens in Pec, food relief in Strpce, water engineering assessment and also funding for ICRC mobile tracing units.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Overview: Under 15,000 refugees are now left behind in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, according to the latest figures from the UNHCR, and the movement of people at the main border crossings is gradually returning to normal levels, with travellers and business people coming and going every day. The Macedonian Red Cross has provided assistance to about 300 Serb refugees from Kosovo in the past few weeks. Arrangements are being made to ensure orderly repatriation from third countries to which Kosovo Albanians were evacuated during the crisis.

Relief: The expanded programme of relief distribution to social cases is underway, with the goal of assisting 250,000 persons living in 71,500 families throughout the country. The Macedonian Red Cross is distributing the ICRC's emergency stock of 1.5-litre water bottles and high protein biscuits to refugees as they pass border points, and 12,162 bottles of water were dispatched to Blace and Jazince.

Logistics/Relief Distribution 5-7 July

| SUPPLIES | Received | Distributed to social cases |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Mattresses (Swedish RC) | 3,648 | - |
| Hygiene parcels (Netherlands) | - | 3,747 |
| Hygiene parcels (American RC) | - | 316 |
| Hygiene parcels (French RC) | 3,834 | 608 |
| Sugar (1 kg packs) | - | 2,021 |
| Flour (Bulgarian RC) (1 kg packs) | 789 | - |

Protection: For the week ending 8 July, the ICRC tracing offices (Skopje, Tetevo and four camps) have received 1677 visitors and 505 phone calls. There were 78 Red Cross messages received for distribution, 16 were distributed, 115 were sent back to sender as the intended recipient could not be located and 222 messages were sent out for distribution.

ONS: The Macedonian Red Cross (MRC) information centre in Skopje provides advice, psychological counselling, and other services for refugees. In June, the centre conducted interviews with 897 people, had 736 information requests by telephone, provided medicine and related support for 706 people and gave psychological counselling or referral for 23 people. These services will be expanded to the MRC Tetevo and Gostivar branches this month.

PNS: The American Red Cross is supporting ICRC relief distributions in Kosovo with warehouse space and forklift trucks based in Macedonia. The German Red Cross (GRC) has expanded its activities in Macedonia and is supporting three summer camps for refugee children and children from social case families by providing meals, beds, a doctor and social workers. The GRC is also supporting the Dare Bombol refugee camp in Skopje with rehabilitation of facilities and food.

Albania

Overview: The latest figures from the Albanian local government ministry show that more than 330,000 refugees have now left the country; fewer than 60,000 remain in camps and collective centres. The Emergency Management Group (EMG) has been restructured around four themes in order to facilitate a timely response to the shifting needs of the refugees during the transitional phase. The new cells are: repatriation, winterisation, rehabilitation and information. The rapid change in situation in Albania means that the delegation is constantly reviewing its needs, particularly in areas of staffing and equipment levels.

Now that all Kosovo regions have been given approval for organised returns, about 2000 people can be received in the organised system on a daily basis. Returnees to Prizren crossing the border in the late afternoon or evening must collect a permit from the UNHCR authorising them to enter the town at night as there is a curfew between 0000 hours and 0500 hours local time. New rules are being set in place by the authorities concerning cross-border traffic. Stricter controls on the import and export of goods are being introduced. Foreign cars entering Albania from anywhere other than Kosovo will be subject to a special tax. Cars without number plates will no longer be allowed to enter Albania after 11 July.

Security concerns remain high and lie behind recent efforts to consolidate camps and relocate refugees in more secure areas. Mines in the busy area around Krume and, to a lesser degree, Morini are a matter of concern. Considerable rain has made some mines visible but buried others more deeply, and has shifted other mines and explosives.

Relief: Over the reporting period relief despatches have included: 5440 Swedish Red Cross food parcels; 88.3 MT of flour and 40 family hygiene parcels to Tirana; 840 hygiene parcels and 23 MT of flour to Durres; 1680 Swedish Red Cross food parcels and 1500 ECHO hygiene parcels to Fier.

The UNHCR is urging the Red Cross Red Crescent operation to begin food parcel distribution to the remaining refugees and affected people in the Has district who were formerly under the responsibility of the NGO Concern. However, distribution is on hold pending the verification of beneficiary lists. The Kukes-based relief delegate will visit each commune in Has district to reassess the exact numbers of refugees remaining in the area.

Health: Lists of vulnerable groups such as the elderly and the disabled have been made and further assessments will be made by incoming nurses. Plans are being made to donate the appropriate and necessary goods to day-care centres, orphanages, homes for the elderly and others. A trip to Fushe-Kruje was made in order to follow up on the Japanese Red Cross mobile clinics and dispensaries.

Shelter: Some refugees have been reluctant to go to consolidated or intermediate camps. For example, 500 refugees in Erseke were reported to be unwilling to move to Korce where they would have to wait for two days for transportation to Kukes and then on to Kosovo. Many preferred to arrange their own private transport.

Very late in the night of 6 July, several hundred people arrived unannounced in Kukes from Elbasan and were directed to Kukes I. They had been hoping to travel on directly to Kosovo but had to overnight in the camp. Many of them slept in the buses as there was not enough space to accommodate them all. The UNHCR received five more Rubb Hall tents. The two from the main square will be erected in Kukes I and Kukes II.

The EMG has compiled a list of expected winterised collective centres in 10 prefectures, with a total capacity of approximately 22,000.

Protection: A Red Cross satellite telephone service has been open since 5 July in Kukes II camp for refugees spending the night there en route to Kosovo. Between 5-7 July, a total of 756 satellite telephone calls were made from the sub-delegation's tracing office and mobile units (including Kukes II).

In the same period 95 visits were made by refugees to the offices of the Tracing Department. For the first time (for a three-day period), no telephone calls were made from the office, though 288 radio messages were prepared for broadcast. Five tracing cases were opened and six others were closed, one family reunion case was opened and six were closed.

Overall figures are: 6570 visits; 35,921 telephone calls; 29,076 radio messages; 281 cases of unaccompanied vulnerable; 54 tracing cases opened and 25 closed; 151 cases of parents having lost children; 204 cases of unaccompanied children; 481 family reunion cases have been opened and 90 have been closed. Finally, 72 Red Cross messages have come in and 17 have gone out.

ONS: The Albanian Red Cross has begun a clean-up campaign in Kukes town. The work will last for two weeks and involves 12 young volunteers. This is part of the ONS's traditional health programme aimed at youth groups, which had to be suspended during the crisis.

PNS: There are no PNS visitors in the country, the focus having switched to Kosovo.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Overview: According to the local Red Cross more than 400 new refugees arrived in the Bosnian Serb entity from Kosovo within the last 10 days. The general situation in the Bosnian Serb entity remains the same, however, with just over 60,000 ethnic Serb refugees from various parts of the former Yugoslavia -- including 30,000 Croatian Serbs who left Croatia during the war there.

From the current Kosovo crisis, there are still 3123 ethnic Albanians and 905 Muslims from the Sandzak region (which straddles Serbia and Montenegro) accommodated in 16 refugee camps in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. But some refugees, mostly Muslims from Sandzak, have left without being registered so the actual outflux is likely to be bigger than reported. As the situation in Kosovo stabilises, a further outflux from Bosnia-Herzegovina is expected.

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