

23 JULY 1999

RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 54

This report is published 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

Both the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and the UN will issue their revised appeals for the Balkans early next week.

UNHCR says that returns to Kosovo now number more than 720,000, but because of the difficulty in verifying the number of Kosovo Albanians still outside the province the agency will no longer give estimates for people remaining in their regular reports. UNHCR says most of the fewer than 95,000 still thought to be outside Kosovo are staying with host families -- many of whom are relatives or friends -- and of these "quite a few" are among those who left Kosovo after the outbreak of conflict in March 1998 and before the NATO air strikes began a year later.

In Kosovo itself, around 90 different NGOs have registered their presence in the province and others are arriving daily. UNHCR is holding regular coordination meetings at the Pristina office of its Inter-Agency Coordination Centre and seven other offices outside the Kosovo capital. ICRC coordinates PNS activity for the Movement and in addition an International Federation coordination delegate has now arrived.

The number of non-ethnic Albanians estimated to have left Kosovo in the parallel exodus over the past month is 170,000. There is greater confidence about this figure as it has been partly verified by local authorities, Red Cross branches and (in Serbia) the Refugee Commissioner's Trustees.

Kosovo Albanian returnees from third countries under IOM auspices now number more than 6000, with another 14,700 going home independently from Turkey.

CORRECTION: In the Latest Events section of the report previous to this one, please read as follows (inserting underlined words): A WHO survey has found that some 150 Kosovo Albanians have been killed or maimed by mines or unexploded ordnance in the month since the return to the province began.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia)

Relief: The supply of the soup kitchen programme was the main relief activity in the first half of this week. Since Monday, over 20 trucks/trailers transported a total of over 330 MT of bulk food (wheat flour, rice, vegetable oil, pasta, canned meat and vegetables, spices, yeast, sugar and salt) to seven destinations all over Serbia. Two of them, Sabac and Kraljevo, also received over 5000 individual food parcels for those soup kitchen beneficiaries who are unable to reach the kitchens to get cooked meals. The latter category is receiving one individual parcel with approximately 10 kg of food items and 10 kg of wheat flour. In the same period, a total of 106 MT of food was also sent to Podgorica for the Montenegrin caseload of IDPs and soup kitchen beneficiaries.

With the arrival of 15,970 ECHO-funded hygiene parcels, this particular programme for refugees totalling 143,720 hygiene parcels has been completed. So far, 15% of the entire quantity has been distributed to regional warehouses.

Health: The conditions in some IDP centres are a major concern and the Red Cross has intervened to improve the situation. In both Bujanovac and Kursumlija IDPs now comprise about one third of the total population. In the Salvatore tent camp in Bujanovac, the ICRC has contracted a local company to install six showers, four toilets, timber flooring in each tent, a protected area for washing clothes, and electricity. The work is to be completed by the end of next week. In Kursumlija, some 400 IDPs are presently living in an abandoned and partly completed concrete structure. It has no water, no walls and no windows, and the living conditions are deplorable. The Red Cross has asked the local authorities to find an alternative location for these IDPs and a piece of land has been allocated for the ICRC to set up a tent camp and equip it with water and sanitary facilities. Meanwhile, the RC is setting up a water point at the existing structure.

The water/sanitation team is currently also making an assessment of the local water authorities' requests for assistance with pumps and chlorinators for several municipalities in southern Serbia.

After last week's initial assessment of the Muscular Dystrophy Institute in Novi Pazar, Red Cross water engineers are considering proposals for interventions at this centre. The problems it faces include lifts which are not functioning between its five floors, damage to roofs and ceilings caused by bombing, poor water supply and heating.

The medical team has made a survey of the needs of the Valjevo hospital and the local Red Cross branch. Essential drugs were delivered to a new humanitarian pharmacy in Sid (western Vojvodina). An assessment of the health situation in the Roma IDP settlement in a Belgrade municipality has been completed. A survey of the medical needs of IDPs, health centres and hospitals of southern Serbia, with a special focus on the Roma groups, has just started.

The International Federation is currently assisting the Yugoslav Red Cross summer camp programme for vulnerable children -- orphans, children suffering from war trauma and social cases. During July and August, 1000 children will spend holidays in Red Cross summer resorts in Baosici and Sutomore (Montenegro) in 10-day shifts. The ICRC has allocated 20 MT of fuel for the transport of these children to the summer resorts.

Protection: The two-day visit to the place of detention in Nis has been successfully completed, with a census made of over 470 detainees related to the Kosovo conflict. The visit to Leskovac is underway today, while the Vranje place of detention will be visited by the end of the week. This will leave two more places of detention, Novi Pazar and Krusevac, for this round of detention visits, which is to be completed by the end of next week. In the meantime, since the Ministry of Justice notified the ICRC of the names and locations of detainees held in relation to the Kosovo conflict the delegation in Pristina has received hundreds of Red Cross messages from families to be delivered to detained relatives. In the last two days alone, over 360 such messages have been forwarded to Belgrade to be distributed to detainees.

ICRC tracing teams have been approached by IDPs from Kosovo, mostly ethnic Serbs but also Roma and Albanians, reporting loss of contact with their relatives who stayed behind and are presumed to be either at home or at the places where the remaining non-Albanians have congregated. These people are instructed to write Red Cross messages which are then forwarded to Kosovo and delivered by ICRC mobile units. The first replies to such messages have started to arrive.

A number of cases of people, mostly children, who have been undergoing treatment in Serbia and should now be reunited with their parents/relatives in Kosovo are being followed up. At the moment, the Red Cross is following about a dozen such cases from Belgrade.

PNS: The Japanese Red Cross has expressed interest primarily in the programme of humanitarian pharmacies, the Finnish Red Cross in the Roma programme, while the German Red Cross and the British Red Cross have taken steps towards taking on regional soup kitchens in the Nis and Novi Sad Joint Field Office areas respectively.

Kosovo

Relief: ICRC distributions continue in Pristina. 160 MT of food and four MT of non-food to relief have been delivered to 85,436 people since the beginning of the week.

Health: An additional 25 wells have been cleaned and disinfected in Glogovac municipality, bringing the total to date to 207.

Mobile teams will provide psychological support to rural villagers in the most devastated areas of Kosovo, including the defusing and debriefing of traumatic stress.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Overview: The latest estimates say there are about 7500 ethnic Albanian refugees in the four remaining camps, and about 20,000 Kosovo Albanians staying in host families. On the other hand, Serbs and Roma people from Kosovo are moving into Macedonia, and Albanians in one of the remaining refugee camps will be moved so that 1500-2000 Roma can be housed there. The 2000 Serbs live mostly in host families. Some 350 Roma are now sheltered at the Dare Bombol center in the outskirts of Skopje. According to UNHCR, 160 Romas have crossed into Macedonia during the past few days.

UNHCR has started using the railway for shipping relief goods into Kosovo to avoid problems with road congestion. A first shipment of 5000 tons of timber for house repair is to be sent to Pristina by rail. Road convoys also continue to ferry aid into Kosovo from Skopje.

Relief: The social case programme aimed at bringing relief to 275,000 needy people in 71,000 families is underway. Major donors have pledged support for the programme until the end of the year.

Logistics and Relief Distribution 19-21 July

Supplies	Received	Distributed to refugees	Distributed to social cases
Mattresses (Swedish RC)	-	4	-
Blankets (American RC)	-	4	-
Hygiene parcels (American RC)	181	-	5,826
Hygiene parcels (French RC)	2,723	-	-
Hygiene parcels (Spanish RC)	2,794	-	-
Hygiene parcels (Netherlands RC)	-	22	-
Flour (Bulgarian RC)	-	-	35
Underwear sets (German RC)	2	-	-
Diapers	-	4,824	-
Washing powder (American RC)	1,024	-	-

ICRC relief shipments for Kosovo for week to 17 July

Relief items	Received in Skopje	Dispatched to Kosovo
Individual food parcels	63,796	88,168
High thermal blankets	18,38	-
High protein biscuits	1,815	-
Wheat flour (kg)	417,312	224,64
Blanket	624	-
Baby parcels	3,326	-
Tents	447	-

Protection: Since the beginning of the crisis, the ICRC has registered 1746 vulnerable people, among whom were 886 unaccompanied children. Cumulative figures to 22 July are: 376 family reunion requests closed and 132 family reunions organised; for the week ending on that date 912 visitors were received and 372 phone calls made.

ONS: The Macedonian Red Cross (MRC) is starting a blood donation campaign in the beginning of August.

PNS: The British Red Cross is conducting a programme for educational rehabilitation for refugees in camps, host families and MRC summer camps. The assessment in Macedonia is complete and the first shipment of kits has arrived in the country. The programme will distribute three types of kits: the student kits contain materials for 40 students, including exercise books, pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, chalk and holders; the teacher's kit includes a blackboard, register book, rulers, felt-tip pens and a clock; the recreation kit includes tambourines, skipping ropes, cymbals, flutes, skittle games, modelling clay, volley balls, footballs and related equipment. The original programme was designed to support Kosovo refugees in camps and host families in Macedonia and Albania. It will also support returnees in Kosovo after an assessment is completed.

The French Red Cross is involved in the social case programme, supporting around 6500 families. They have sent half of their delegates to work in Kosovo, and currently have three delegates working in Macedonia.

Albania

Overview: Daily return numbers are dwindling rapidly and most of the traffic passing through Kukes seems to be people returning from abroad -- vehicle registration plates are mainly from Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The UNHCR has now entered the second phase of its organised return plan under which trains have been replaced by buses.

Relief: Final preparations were made for the relief workshop to be held over the weekend (24-25 July). Participants include delegates from Albania and Macedonia, PNS and the Albanian Red Cross.

Health: Medical goods and supplies were despatched to the university hospital in Tirana. Hospitals in Bajram Curri and Kukes also received similar shipments. Hygiene materials have also been provided. A donation of eight ambulances to the Albanian Ministry of Health, via the Albanian Red Cross and donated by the Norwegian Red Cross, will take place on Friday 23 July.

Sanitation programmes have resumed in the Kukes area.

Shelter: The dismantling of the Austrian Red Cross camp in Shkoder is underway. Equipment and materials will be handed over to the Albanian Red Cross and to the local authorities. The Emergency Management Group's rehabilitation cell issued a standard project profile format to NGOs, local government and donors to allow it to track rehabilitation projects.

Protection: Family reunifications took place in the Kukes area. Five children were accepted by the Prizren ICRC team at the Morini border for reunification with relatives in Germany and in the province of Kosovo. Helicopter transport to Tirana was provided for four persons for a family reunification in Switzerland.

Tracing calls via satellite telephone

	18 July		19 July		20 July		21 July	
	calls	people	calls	people	calls	people	calls	people
ICRC Office Kukes	175	227	85	115	131	185	102	108

Totals	200	384	85	115	141	210	118	184
--------	-----	-----	----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

PNS: The Swiss Red Cross operation in Albania received its vehicles and is now fully operational.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Overview: UNHCR estimates that nearly 8000 of the Kosovo Albanians who sought refuge in BiH have returned home. At the peak, there were nearly 22,000 Kosovar refugees in BiH, of whom about half arrived between the start of the conflict in Kosovo and the beginning of NATO bombing in March.

Twenty-eight refugee camps are still open in Bosnia -- 14 in each entity. According to the local Red Cross, 19,700 FRY refugees are still living in the Serb entity, and more are arriving because of the latest developments in FRY itself.

Logistics cell contacts are Goran Zuber, Federation, and John Wert, ICRC -- tel: 4122 730 2143 or 4122 730 2204; fax: 4122 730 2876; email: fedicrbalkanlog.gva@icrc.org

For further information from the International Federation, please contact Martin Faller for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia & Herzegovina -- tel: 4122 730 4439; email: faller@ifrc.org and Penny Elghady for Albania and Macedonia -- tel: 4122 730 4319; email: elghady@ifrc.org

For further information from the ICRC, contact External Resources Department -- tel: 4122 734 6001 or Pierre Kraehenbuehl -- tel : 4122 730 2256; email: 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