

## ***PALESTINE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE***

17 January, 2001

*appeal no. 01.41/2000*

*situation report no. 2*

*period covered: July - December, 2000*

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*Despite the recent events, the Palestine Red Crescent Society PRCS Primary Health Care Programme has proved to be a success. This Community Based programme is an important element in the process of building capacity within the National Society and the communities involved, as well as the basis for more sustainable delivery of health services in Palestine. Institutional Development support as well as the Disaster Preparedness Programme, with the important component of Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment study (VCA), are crucial for the PRCS to continue. The PRCS is leading in the DPP process in Palestine, working with the authorities and UNICEF.*

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### ***The context***

The Autonomous and Occupied Territories (A/OT) in the West Bank and Gaza have their political and legal origins in the Middle East conflict, i.e. the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, as well as the ensuing Israel-Arab wars of 1948 - 49 and 1967. With the signing of a declaration of principles between the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Oslo in 1993 (the Oslo Accords) a framework for a peace-for-land deal was outlined which was intended to culminate in a final status agreement. However, after the creation of a set of autonomous areas for the Palestinians, scattered across the territories, no further significant results were achieved between 1994 and 1999, a period which saw continued Israeli settlement expansion on the West Bank.

Of the 2.9 million Palestinians living in the A/OT, 65% reside in the West Bank, and 35% live in Gaza, one of the world's most densely populated areas. Three decades of occupation and Israel's continuous direct and indirect control over life in the West Bank and Gaza have hampered the development of a social and economic fabric that could address important humanitarian needs. The limited independence

enjoyed by the Palestine Authority in areas scattered across the West Bank and Gaza makes it very difficult to create the institutions and infrastructure needed to alleviate the wide range of hardships facing Palestinians. The fragmented health care system is one example. Diseases resulting from poverty are prevalent throughout the A/OT, but especially in Gaza where some 40% of the population are living in poverty. Preventable respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases, largely caused by poor sanitation and living conditions, are widespread and represent important causes of child mortality and morbidity. Maternal welfare services reach only a minority of women. On an individual level, the psychological stress generated by a sense of oppression and humiliation, plus the difficulties associated with unemployment, affect health and well-being.

Given the situation, the objective of Federation support to the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is to encourage the development of a community-based Society providing services that respond to local priorities and needs. To achieve this aim, the building of a clear organizational structure and a performance oriented approach to service delivery is being encouraged. Programme progress is intended to keep pace with the political process to reach a final status agreement, so that when this is achieved, a unified National Society is in existence and better prepared for recognition by the Movement. The Federation's approach to institutional development assistance is to support management and planning, branch development and communications and information. Through training and workshops it has focused on the development of integrated, community services in core programme areas. These priorities are intended to reinforce PRCS efforts to meet its principal challenge: to develop, maintain and consolidate the services expected of it by the Palestine Authority and the Palestinian people in its role as the most important humanitarian organization in the A/OT.

## *Latest events*

With the arrival of a new Israeli Government in 1999 under Prime Minister Ehud Barak the peace process was restarted. A summit meeting in August 2000 between Palestinian and Israeli delegations, facilitated by the American Government, took place in Camp David, USA. No final agreement was signed and the two leaders, Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, returned home to an even more unclear future. The Palestinians postponed the date of proclaiming the State of Palestine, which was set for 15 September 2000. Tension arose between the two sides, and on 29 September following the visit of a senior Israeli Government Official to the Haram Al-Sharif outside the El-Aqsa Mosque, what is referred to as the new "El-Aqsa Intifada" had started.

Events during the second part of 2000 can be divided into two distinct periods. From July to 28 September 2000 the general security situation was calm, but political uncertainty grew with increasing international pressure on the Palestinians not to take any unilateral decisions concerning the status of Palestine. The Palestinian people expressed growing disappointment and frustration over the lack of progress and general lack of improvements in terms of living conditions.

The September 29 visit of a senior Israeli official to the symbolically sensitive site of Al-Aqsa ignited hostilities, with Palestinian demonstrators throwing stones against heavily armed Israeli soldiers. Out of the estimated total of 370 casualties, 330 are believed to be Palestinian. Around 12,000 Palestinians have been wounded since the start of the demonstrations. Tension between Israeli settlers and the nearby villagers has reached a dangerous level with killings on both sides.

Despite the ongoing intensive efforts by the American Government in facilitating negotiations to a final agreement, the Palestinians and the Israelis continue to discuss such complex issues as questions of borders, Jewish settlements, water supply, return of refugees and the status of East-Jerusalem. Unfortunately, what began as a year of increased hopes for a historic peace agreement has dissolved into increased uncertainty about the future course of events in the Middle-East at the end of the 2000. Following this latest serious confrontations with the Palestinians, the Prime Minister of Israel has announced a new general election to be held in early February 2001.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

Prior to the recent hostilities and despite the growing tension and uncertainty about the future course of events, most activities continued in line with the objectives and according to agreed programmes. The technical cooperation between the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and the Federation Representative Office focused on qualitative development of integrated projects in the areas of Primary Health Care, Community Based Special Education, Disaster Preparedness with a Vulnerability & Capacity Assessment (VCA) project, and on Branch Development. The targeted issues included policies, protocols, relevance, standards, performance and interaction with other players, governmental and non-governmental. The Federation efforts towards Institutional Development focused on Branch Development, on the National Society headquarters planning and reporting procedures, as well as strengthening management systems and human resources required for the implementation of new projects. The PRCS is developing a community-based approach through its network of Primary Health Care, which also includes Home Care Nursing. Rehabilitation centers, nurses and social workers are also addressing vital priorities endorsed by the communities.

Following the September 29 events, the Federation and PRCS programme was affected by the changing political and security situation of the Palestinian AT/OT, and adjustments were made accordingly. From a climate of development and capacity building, the PRCS, Federation, and ICRC were immediately faced with an emergency situation. The PRCS responded by running the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) in Palestine. With its fleet of around 50 ambulances and with 250 EMS staff, the PRCS has provided a remarkable contribution to the Palestinian people in this very critical time. Under extreme conditions the Society has also been able to provide essential health services from its PHC centres.

### **Health •**

Implementation of the Primary Health Care (PHC) and Women & Children Health (WCH) programmes continued for the third trimester according to plans. Identification of priority health needs and the development of partnership with and training of committees in target communities were carried out. The community-based approach was introduced in all 20 PHC centres in Palestine AT/OT, and the WCH in eight of these centres, of which five are located in the West Bank and three in Gaza. A special Home Care Project was also implemented in the last months.

However, the PRCS Health Care Programme has, like other programmes, been negatively affected by the events with movements in the security zone becoming very difficult. An emergency response to cover urgent needs became necessary, placing development plans on hold. Despite the constraints and pressure on PRCS staff, normal health activities are carried out together with emergency cases. The PRCS PHC Department has been facing enormous problems with transporting medical supplies to the PHC centres, and with vaccination programmes forced to stop there is great concern for the future health condition of the population.

### **Capacity Building •**

A Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment study (VCA) as part of Disaster Preparedness Programme was initiated in June and finalized in September. Focus groups operated in the West Bank and Gaza, conducted by social workers and facilitated by task force members. Cultural and gender issues were covered through the study. Despite the ongoing conflict in the country, a comprehensive VCA document was completed and presented in late December 2000. This document represents a comprehensive piece of work, and will be of interest for other national societies planning to start a similar project.

Due to the change of delegates and to the emergency situation for the last part of the year it has become difficult to maintain the momentum of the Institutional Development programme. Branch development initiatives have also been hampered by the restrictions on movements.

## ***Outstanding needs***

The appeal for 2000 has been almost fully covered. The programmes continue into 2001 and given the events in the area timely funding support is essential to assist the PRCS in meeting its increased obligations and responsibilities.

## ***External relations - Government / UN / NGOs /Media***

The PRCS and its programmes have been presented to a wide range of regional and local stakeholders. Its reputation as an effective provider of health and emergency programmes has attracted the interest of new donors from within as well as outside the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The PRCS web site has for the last months become one of the most popular and frequently used information sources concerning reliable news on the humanitarian situation and needs in Palestine. The Federation Representative Office in Palestine has regular contacts with other organizations and UN agencies working in the country. The Federation is working closely with the ICRC which has the leading role for Red Cross and Red Crescent activities.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

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**This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>**

Palestine RCS						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.41/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED				01/12/01
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>2,078,000</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 95.3%</b>
Balance carried forward from 1999				<b>4,912</b>		
AUSTRALIAN - GOVT		362,294	AUD	361,714	31.07.00	WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S HEALTH PILOT PROJECT
ITALY GOVT				65,000	03.11.00	
IRANIAN - RC		150,000	USD	266,025	18.10.00	2 BLOOD TRANSPORT VEHICLES, 2 VEHICLES FOR SUPPLIES, AND DRUGS
NORWEGIAN - GOVT/RC		4,100,000	NOK	811,698	01/27/00	INST. DEV. 80 % GOVT,20% RC
NORWEGIAN - GOVT/RC		1,176,470	NOK	222,586	08.08.00	COMMUNITY BASED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - RC		5,000	USD	8,850	29.11.00	PALESTINE FEDERATION OFFICE
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH</b>				<b>1,740,785</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>83.8%</b>
<b>KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
IRANIAN - RC		84,617	USD	150,068	18.10.00	MEDICAL EQUIPMENT, BLANKETS, COVERSHEET, ONE AMBULANCE WITH EQUIPMENT, MEDICINE
Norway	Delegate(s)			60,123		
Sweden	Delegate(s)			29,897		
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES</b>				<b>240,088</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>11.6%</b>
<b>ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES		141,000	USD	250,064	13.10.00	PURCHASE LOCALLY 3 AMBULANCES FOR PRCS
LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA				10,000	14.10.00	RUNNING COSTS FOR AMBULANCES, MEDICINE OR PHONES
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED</b>				<b>260,064</b>	<b>CHF</b>	
<b>THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:</b>						
PPS000, PPS001, PPS002, PPS003, PPS160, PPS007						