

Middle East

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross**

Band (Jahr): - **(1972)**

PDF erstellt am: **23.07.2024**

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Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, and of the Polish Red Cross.

Middle East

The ICRC continued its action for prisoners of war, civilian internees and detainees, and for civilian populations who were suffering as a result of the conflict between Israel and the Arab countries. It maintained delegations in Israel and the occupied territories, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. It had twenty-one delegates in the field and a large local staff.

In the Arabian Peninsula, the ICRC concerned itself with the well-being of prisoners of war, refugees and political detainees in the Yemen Arab Republic.

From 20 to 23 April, Mr. Jean-Pierre Maunoir, Assistant Director and acting delegate-general for the Middle East, went to Israel to study current problems and the solutions thereto with the government authorities.

In July, Mr. Jean-Pierre Hocké was appointed delegate-general for the Middle East, succeeding Mr. Maunoir who became acting director of the ICRC Operations Department. In renewed approaches to all States parties to the Geneva Conventions, with a view to increasing ICRC resources, several financial prospecting missions proceeded to the Middle East. The first, from 24 November to 20 December, covered Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. It later went to Qatar and Oman, where government authorities were contacted regarding those two States' accession to the Geneva Conventions and the establishment of National Red Crescent Societies.

Conflict between Israel and the Arab countries

ICRC as substitute for Protecting Power

In December 1971, three members of the ICRC, Mr. Max Petit-pierre, Mr. Frédéric Siordet and Mr. Victor Umbricht, were in the

Middle East. The first went to the Arab Republic of Egypt, the second to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and the third to Israel. They informed government authorities in the countries visited that the ICRC was prepared to offer all States parties to the Middle East conflict its services as a substitute for the Protecting Power, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 10 common to the First, Second and Third Geneva Conventions, and Article 11 of the Fourth Convention.

The President of the ICRC confirmed and explained the ICRC's position in the matter at the second session of the Conference of Government Experts on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law, early in June.

In September 1972, the ICRC sent the five Governments concerned a note in which, after stressing that the procedure for supervising the application of the Conventions was not yet being put into effect, it drew the attention of the parties to the conflict to the hardship which this omission caused the victims and formally offered its services as the Protecting Powers' substitute.

PRISONERS OF WAR

The ICRC continued its assistance to prisoners of war in Israel, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

Its delegates visited prisoners of war regularly, on average twice a month. They were able to talk with the prisoners without any witnesses. They distributed books, games, food and cigarettes, inquired about their personal needs, and transmitted family mail.

The ICRC constantly reminded the various governments concerned of the obligation to repatriate any prisoners of war still held on either side, in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the Third Geneva Convention.

Israel

At the beginning of 1972, there were 105 Arab prisoners of war in Israel, namely sixty-two Egyptians, forty-two Syrians and one Jordanian.

In March, with no prospect of an early repatriation of prisoners of war held on either side, and as some had developed physical

and psychological ailments as a result of prolonged captivity, the ICRC proposed to the Israeli, Egyptian and Syrian Governments that the prisoners be visited by a doctor-delegate or a joint medical commission such as provided for in the Third Convention.

The Government of Israel having responded favourably to the proposal, an ICRC doctor-delegate was in Israel from 25 to 29 April. His report was conveyed to the detaining power and to the prisoners' own governments.

On 16 April, three Syrian prisoners of war escaped from a military prison camp. One of them was recaptured on the same day. The ICRC delegates asked to be allowed to visit him on 16 April. They were authorized to do so on 19 April.

On 18 April, during a riot of Egyptian prisoners of war, a prisoner was killed. His body was repatriated under the auspices of the ICRC, at El Qantara on 21 April. On the day following the riot, ICRC representatives went to the prison and heard statements about the incident from the prisoners and the authorities responsible for supervision. A further visit was made on 23 April. The delegates' report was promptly communicated to the two governments concerned. The ICRC subsequently transmitted to the prisoners' own government the official report on the inquiry carried out by the detaining Power, and to each government the communications which it had received from the other.

On 21 June 1972, five Syrian senior officers, one Lebanese officer and one soldier, and three policemen, were captured during a foray into Lebanese territory. Immediately after the event, the ICRC sent the governments concerned various proposals regarding the repatriation of prisoners held on either side. The proposals were not accepted.

The matter was brought before the United Nations Security Council, which adopted resolution 316 of 26 June 1972.

The positions of the Governments of Syria and Israel differ with regard to the status of the prisoners taken by the Israeli armed forces on 21 June. The ICRC, for its part, is not qualified to settle a dispute which has been referred to an international body. It will be recalled that Article 4 of the Third Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war confers prisoner-of-war status

and treatment, *inter alia*, to members of the armed forces of a party to the conflict who have fallen into the power of the enemy.

On 19 September 1972, five members of the Lebanese armed forces including one officer were captured by the Israeli army in the course of a raid on Lebanese territory. The ICRC delegation in Tel Aviv visited them immediately and then informed the Israeli military authorities that, under the terms of the Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war, such army men should be repatriated.

On 27 December, the Israeli authorities asked the ICRC to repatriate three Egyptian prisoners of war for health reasons.

At the end of 1972, there were 114 Arab prisoners of war in Israeli hands, namely fifty-eight Egyptians, forty-six Syrians and ten Lebanese.

Arab Republic of Egypt

ICRC delegates made fortnightly visits to the ten Israeli prisoners of war interned in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Under the provisions of Articles 109 and 110 of the Third Geneva Convention, the ICRC approached the Egyptian authorities to request the repatriation of an Israeli prisoner of war wounded at the time of capture, in December 1969, and suffering ever since from the sequelae of his wounds. By the end of the year the ICRC had received no reply to its request.

Syria

During the first half of the year ICRC delegates visited once a month the three Israeli prisoners of war in Syrian hands. In the second half, they made two visits a month. On each occasion they interviewed the prisoners privately although, despite their efforts, they did not have access to the actual detention quarters.

Jordan

During the first three months of 1972, ICRC delegates continued to visit, in the Zerka military camp, the four Israelis who had been granted prisoner-of-war status by the Jordanian authorities. The

ICRC acted as intermediary between the governments concerned in the repatriation of the four Israelis across the Allenby Bridge, on 17 April. The Jordanian prisoner of war held by the Israelis was repatriated on the same day.

FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION

Application of the Fourth Geneva Convention

During his talks with Israeli authorities, in December 1971, Mr. Umbricht had again stated the ICRC's position, namely that the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 was applicable in occupied territory. The Government of Israel, for its part, again declared that it left the question of the applicability of the Fourth Convention in occupied territory open.

In the circumstances, while maintaining its position, the ICRC continued its pragmatic approach, from one case to another, to ensure as complete as possible an implementation of the provisions of the Fourth Convention. Thus, in several matters, the facilities granted by the Israel authorities enabled the delegates, as in the past, to intervene on behalf of the victims of the conflict.

In some other cases, however, as mentioned further on in this chapter, owing to the stand taken by Israel, the ICRC failed or only partly succeeded in obtaining satisfaction. Its action, therefore, has been confined to remedying for protected persons the effects of measures taken by the Israeli authorities.

CIVILIAN DETAINEES AND INTERNEES

Arab civilian detainees in Israel and occupied territory: ICRC delegates continued to visit some 2,500 Arab civilian detainees in thirteen places of detention in Israel and occupied territory. They made six rounds of visits, reports on which were sent by the ICRC to the detaining Power and the prisoners' own governments.

At the end of the period of interrogation, usually limited to a month after arrest, the delegates were able to see and talk privately with so-called security cases—whether sentenced, charged or

in preventive custody—and with prisoners sentenced or charged under ordinary law.

The ICRC delegates contacted the Israel authorities in various matters connected with detention conditions. With regard to medical care, they supplied dentures, artificial limbs, spectacles, etc. They recommended a larger number of workshops and courses of tuition in places of detention. They continued to supply the necessary books, copy-books and pens, and introduced a method for teaching illiterates. The Israel authorities, for their part, largely complied with the ICRC's recommendations.

The ICRC delegates continued their monthly distribution of parcels to detainees who received no family visits. In 1972, the number of parcels (containing 5 kg of fruits, biscuits, cigarettes and soap) exceeded 7,000. Winter parcels (underwear, towels and footwear) were given to all detainees who were nationals of Arab countries or whose family was unable to supply such a parcel. After numerous approaches, the delegates secured permission to transmit individual parcels sent by the Egyptian Red Crescent for civilian detainees in Israel and occupied territory.

The ICRC continued to provide transport once a month for detainees' families. It organized and largely financed more than a thousand bus trips and thus enabled some 39,000 relatives to visit detainees.

ICRC delegates arranged for the repatriation of a number of civilian detainees to neighbouring Arab countries. Before proceeding with the repatriation operations—fourteen to Jordan, one to Syria, one to Iraq and seven to Lebanon—they made sure that the persons concerned wanted to return home.

While the Israel authorities did not consider themselves bound by the provisions of the Fourth Convention in regard to notification, owing to their stand in the matter of the applicability of that Convention, they nevertheless agreed to inform the ICRC delegation, after an eighteen-day inquiry, of the names of Arab nationals arrested by the army or the police. The ICRC delegates visited them in prisons in accordance with the procedure described above.

Palestinian combatants: With the capture of further Palestinian combatants during Israeli armed raids into Lebanon, in September,

the head of the ICRC delegation in Tel Aviv renewed his approaches to the Israeli authorities and asked that the combatants be granted prisoner-of-war status or, failing that, treatment such as was laid down in the Third Geneva Convention. The Israel authorities refused to comply, deeming that Palestinian combatants, even if captured wearing a uniform and openly carrying weapons, did not belong to one of the parties to the conflict or conduct their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war, in the manner laid down in Article 4 of the Third Convention. The ICRC considered that it should nevertheless pursue its approaches.

Civilian infiltrators in Israel and Lebanon: The ICRC delegates arranged for the repatriation of various civilian infiltrators who had crossed the frontier between Israel and Lebanon.

Israel civilian detainee in the Arab Republic of Egypt: The ICRC approached the government authorities in the Arab Republic of Egypt and requested permission to visit an Israeli imprisoned in Cairo.

REUNITING OF FAMILIES

In December 1971, Mr. Umbricht reminded the Israel authorities that the ICRC attached great importance to the reuniting of families and that such operations should be actively pursued. He suggested that the criteria adopted by the Israel authorities in the matter be broadened and that the procedure be speeded up.

The proportion of cases submitted by the ICRC in which permission for repatriation was granted was not, however, in keeping with the assurances received by the ICRC representative.

Arab Republic of Egypt and Gaza-Sinai: In 1972, six family reuniting operations between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the occupied territories of Gaza and Sinai were organized under the auspices of the ICRC. They enabled some 400 persons from Egypt to join their families in the Gaza Strip and Sinai, and 520 from the Gaza Strip and Sinai to join their people in Egypt.

Lebanon and the occupied territories: In August 1972, the ICRC arranged for the transfer, via Ras Nakoura, of fourteen persons from the West Bank of the Jordan to Lebanon, to join their relatives.

Syria and the Golan Heights: In 1972, thirty-six persons were able to join their families on the Golan Heights through four operations organized at El Quneitra (Ahmedia) under the auspices of the ICRC.

Jordan and the West Bank: As in previous years, the ICRC's action was confined to endorsing those applications made to the Israel authorities which were of special humanitarian interest and which had failed under the normal procedure. Fifty-five persons benefited under the hardship procedure during 1972. It should be noted that during the second half of the year the ICRC delegates observed a marked drop in the ratio of acceptances; out of the fifty-six applications submitted, only ten were accepted. In the circumstances, the ICRC decided to resume its study of the other cases with the Israel authorities.

STUDENT TRAVEL

Arab Republic of Egypt and Gaza Strip: The ICRC succeeded in organizing the passage into the Arab Republic of Egypt of several hundred students from Gaza who, after graduating in occupied territory and intending to continue their studies in Egyptian universities, had been granted the requisite permission by the Arab Republic of Egypt and Israel. Students already enrolled in Egyptian universities and allowed to return to their families in Gaza for the holidays or on completion of their studies also crossed the Suez canal under ICRC auspices.

Five operations took place at El Qantara from 3 to 26 July, enabling 1,652 Palestinian students to spend their summer holidays in Gaza. In four operations conducted between 29 August and 20 September, 1,601 students returned to the Arab Republic of Egypt, while 779 new students went to Cairo on 27 September and 5 October to take up study at the university.

Syria and Gaza Strip: In the middle of June, the ICRC delegates made arrangements at El Quneitra (Ahmedia) for 175 Gaza students to cross over into Syria to attend Damascus university.

Lebanon and Gaza Strip: Again, on 11 January the ICRC delegates arranged for forty-seven Gaza students to cross over into Lebanon

to attend Beirut university. They returned to Gaza on 7 August for their summer holidays.

ACTIVITIES OF CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

In 1972, the ICRC transmitted some 100,000 family messages between Arab countries, on the one hand, and Israel and the occupied territories, on the other. By the end of the year, the number of messages exchanged since June 1967 had reached 1.7 million.

Some 200 inquiries about army men or civilians missing during or following the June 1967 hostilities were taken up with the competent authorities and National Societies. More than thirty persons sought by relatives were found during that period.

STUDY OF HEALTH SITUATION IN THE GAZA STRIP AND SINAI

From 27 August to 16 September, an ICRC doctor-delegate made a survey of the medical situation in the Gaza Strip and Sinai. In the Gaza Strip, he visited four hospitals administered by Israel authorities: Shifa Hospital, Khan Younis Hospital, Nasr Hospital and Eye Hospital (formerly Fever Hospital). One of the purposes of the mission was to analyse the steps taken by the Health Services to remedy the shortage of medical and para-medical personnel and the obsolescence of hospital installations.

The doctor-delegate's mission to Sinai comprised the following tasks:

- in Northern Sinai, first and foremost a survey of health conditions at El Arish, followed by surveys at Massoura, Sheikh Zwayed and places visited by the mobile clinic;
- in Central Sinai, four-day trips by mobile clinic to El Bakna, Tamad, Bir el Hissi, Khassam, Taref, El Sura, Ain Furtaga and Wasset;
- in Southern Sinai, visits to medical installations at Abu Rodeis, Sharm El Sheik and St. Catherine, and a trip to Wadi Firan with the doctor in charge of the mobile clinic.

The observations and recommendations made by the ICRC doctor-delegate regarding the installation and modernization of

some hospitals, the establishment of infirmaries and the need to remedy the shortage of nurses, were embodied in a report sent to the two Governments concerned.

ACTION FOR THE DISABLED

The German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany having made a further financial contribution to Magen David Adom (MDA), the ICRC delegates in Israel pursued their activities on behalf of the disabled in the territory occupied in March 1972.

RELIEF

Under its relief programmes, in April the ICRC shipped 300 tons of flour donated by the Swiss Government for civilians on the West Bank of the Jordan—in the Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus, Ramallah, Jericho, Bethlehem and Hebron areas. Some 30,000 needy persons (old people, sick persons, pregnant women, widows and orphans) received 10 kg each.

A further 300 tons of flour from the Swiss Government was shipped in September, and 200 tons of unskimmed powdered milk from the same donor left for Ashdod in November.

In December, the ICRC sent 2,000 tons of flour, a gift from the European Economic Community, to the civilian population of Jordan.

In September, two donations of the Egyptian Red Crescent, totalling 650 tons of food and 40,000 metres of fabric, were transmitted by the ICRC to the Gaza Strip and Sinai. They were distributed to the needy population during the following month.

EXPULSIONS

While the ICRC received no assurances in response to repeated requests to the Israel authorities to put an end to the expulsion of nationals of occupied territories suspected of activities against the State's security, no further cases were brought to its notice after July 1972.

Earlier, delegates in Jordan had access to provisional internment centres for those expelled. They visited the Mahatta prison, in Amman, and the Ma'an and Zerka prisons nine times. The ICRC delegation in Israel dealt with one case after another to ensure that persons expelled were allowed to return to their families in occupied territory.

EXPROPRIATIONS

In its concern regarding the principle and the human implications of expropriation, the ICRC repeatedly drew the attention of Israel civil and military authorities to the effect of expropriating land under cultivation or fixed property and establishing Israel settlements in the occupied territories.

As the Government of Israel declared that it did not want to enter into any discussion in the matter, the ICRC delegates were compelled to submit human problems to the authorities as and when they arose.

DESTRUCTION OF HOUSES

The position of those victimized by the Israel Army's destruction of houses in occupied territory was a matter of continued concern for the ICRC, which regarded such action as being contrary to Articles 33 and 53 of the Fourth Convention.

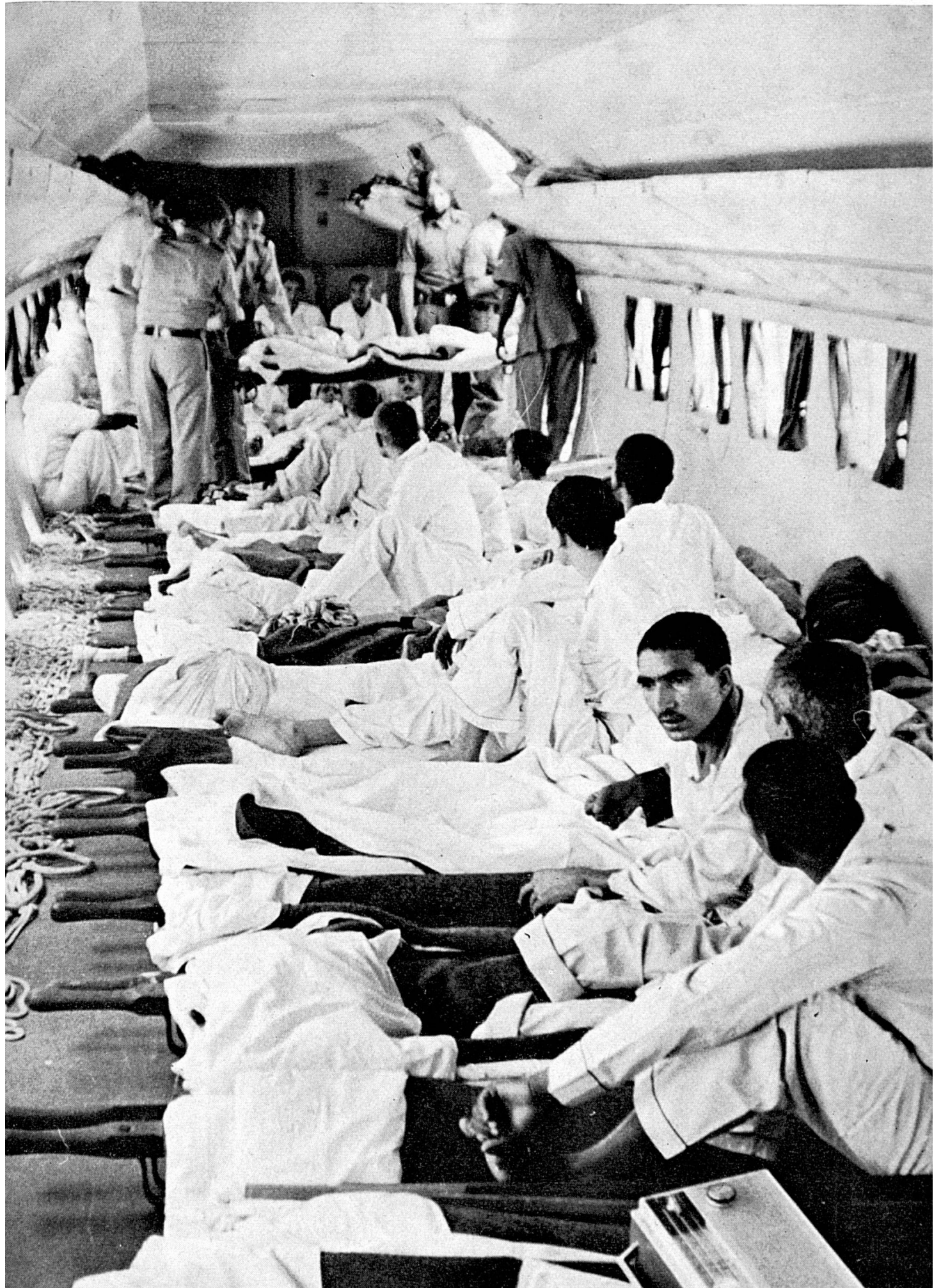
In February, the delegation learnt that twenty-eight families had been evicted in an operation involving the destruction of forty-three houses lying near the El Arish Military Governorate.

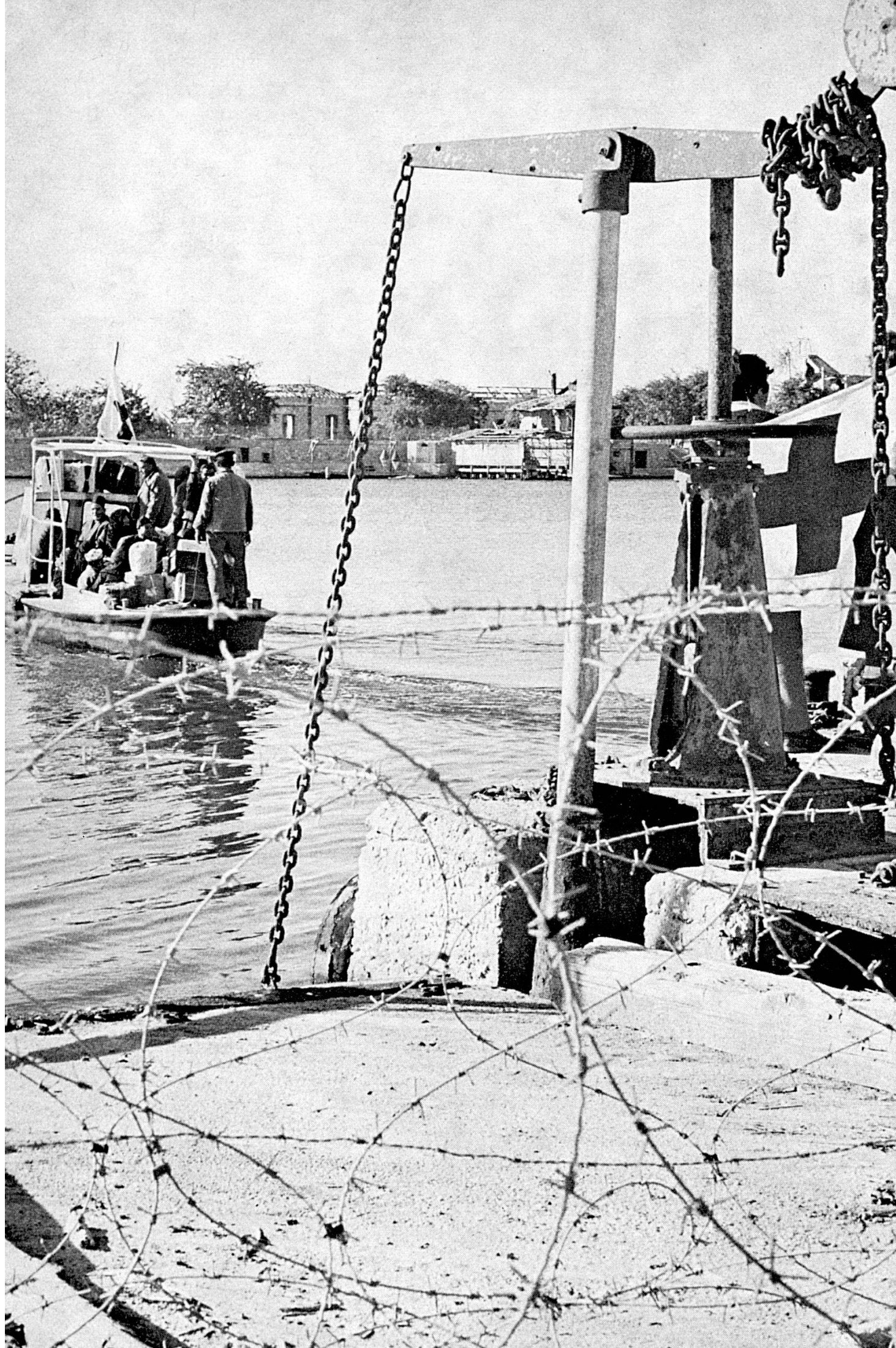
On numerous occasions, the delegation expressed its serious concern about the destruction and asked the Israeli authorities to ensure that adequate steps were taken to provide the victims with alternative accommodation.

In 1972, some twenty cases of destruction designed to counter subversive activities and affecting almost 170 persons, were reported to the ICRC delegates in Gaza. On the West Bank of the Jordan, fifteen destruction operations affecting about a hundred persons were reported.

As the position of the Israel authorities remained unchanged, the ICRC delegates concentrated on assistance to the victims. In

Repatriation of severely wounded Pakistani prisoners of war.
Photo Kurz/ICRC





1972, with the agreement of the Israel Ministry of Social Welfare, forty-seven tents and 525 blankets were distributed to the homeless.

TRANSFER OF POPULATION

Sinai: Early in February, the ICRC delegation received many complaints about population transfers from the Massoura and Sheikh Zwayed areas to Rafah, in the north-eastern part of Sinai. Fourteen Bedouin tribes, a population of around 10,000, were affected.

A few days later, the delegation learnt that in January twelve tribes living in the Kusseima area (Central Sinai) had been forced to move to a rocky zone further south. The transfer, involving about 6,000 persons, had been due to Israel army manoeuvres in the area. Despite the assurances they had been given, the tribes were not allowed to return to their land when the manoeuvres ended.

Following the transfers, a number of approaches were made through Israel's permanent mission in Geneva and the ICRC delegation in Tel Aviv. The ICRC expressed deep concern about the plight of the displaced tribes and the hope that they would soon be allowed to return to their land. Further, it asked that tribes whose dwellings and cisterns had been destroyed should receive adequate compensation and be provided with new means of subsistence.

The Israel authorities replied that the transfers had been necessary for security reasons, adding that those expropriated would be compensated and helped to settle elsewhere. After a talk between the Israel Minister of Defence and an ICRC representative, on 22 April, the 6,000 Bedouins from Central Sinai were allowed to return to their land.

ICRC delegates made several visits to the displaced Bedouin tribes. They continued their efforts, particularly on behalf of the 10,000 Bedouins from Rafah who were not allowed to return to their land.

West Bank of the Jordan; The ICRC delegates endeavoured to improve living conditions for a Bedouin tribe of about 260 who, in December 1971, had been moved from an area near the Dead Sea to the Bethlehem district. The delegates noted that the Israel

authorities had provided them with materials for the construction of permanent dwellings.

HIJACKING OF AIRCRAFT TO LOD AIRPORT

In the afternoon of 8 May, four members of a Palestinian resistance organization hijacked an airliner to Lod airport (Tel Aviv). At the Palestinians' request, the ICRC agreed to act as intermediary between the two parties, and the Israel authorities did not object. Members of the ICRC delegation in Tel Aviv therefore proceeded to Lod airport in the night of 8 to 9 May and began to transmit proposals and counter-proposals regarding the release of the hostages. In the afternoon of 9 May, however, Israeli armed forces boarded the aircraft by surprise and took control.

Following the event, the ICRC stated its position in a press release issued on 10 May and quoted below:

“ The International Committee of the Red Cross was asked to act on behalf of the passengers and members of the crew of a Boeing of the Sabena airline held as hostages by a Palestinian commando at Tel Aviv airport. With the agreement of the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian commando and solely with the purpose of coming to the aid of innocent persons threatened with death, it agreed to serve as an intermediary between the two parties.

The intervention of the Israeli armed forces took the delegates by surprise. The ICRC cannot admit that anyone should use its humanitarian action for military or political ends.

The ICRC therefore firmly rejects both the attempts to manoeuvre it and the accusations that it willingly lent itself to such a manoeuvre.

Finally, it once again severely condemns acts of air piracy, the taking of hostages and any other attempts at blackmail that imperil the lives of innocent human beings.”

In September 1972, after reconsidering its position regarding the taking of hostages, the ICRC adopted the following line of conduct:

1. The ICRC condemns acts which violate the principles of law and humanity, particularly acts which destroy or threaten in-

nocent lives. In this, as in every other sphere, it is guided solely by the interest of the victims and its desire to aid them.

2. ICRC delegates may, if need be, render material assistance or, by their presence, moral comfort to hostages. As a general rule, however, the functions of delegates do not include participating in negotiations between the authorities concerned and the authors of such acts.
3. If the victim's interests should require it and provided there is no direct contact or any other intermediary, the ICRC may, as an exception, deal with the matter at the request of one of the parties concerned and with the agreement of the other parties. The parties concerned must undertake not to resort to force, take any steps detrimental to the hostages or hamper delegates in their freedom of action, for as long as contacts are established between them.
4. The delegates shall request full facilities in assisting the victims and shall ask that, wherever possible and advisable, those in need of special care (wounded or sick persons, children, etc.) be removed to safety.
5. Whether delegates take part in negotiations or merely serve as intermediaries, the parties concerned shall alone be responsible for any proposals transmitted, decisions taken or acts committed. The delegates shall not guarantee the execution of the decisions or of the conditions fixed by the parties.

Jordan

ACTIVITIES OF CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

ICRC delegates in Jordan continued to visit all refugee camps on the east bank of the Jordan twice a month, to maintain contact and perform the various duties of the Central Tracing Agency, such as tracing missing persons, reuniting families and, above all, transmitting family messages. For the same purpose, the delegates made weekly visits to Zerka and Irbid, in the north, and monthly visits to Ma'an, Karak and Aqaba, in the south. In these activities it co-operated with the Jordan Red Crescent.

As the ICRC delegates on the West Bank regularly sent the Amman delegation a number of permits for visits, the latter informed recipients in Jordan or any other Arab country that such permits were deposited with it.

PERSONS DETAINED OWING TO THE EVENTS

The ICRC delegates again asked the Jordanian authorities for permission to see persons detained as a result of the events. On several occasions, they sent the competent services parcels, items of clothing and family messages for detainees in the Mahatta Jafr and Irbid prisons.

In December, they were authorized to distribute 250 standard parcels direct to detainees in the Jafr prison.

The ICRC delegation in Amman endeavoured to secure permission to visit detainees regularly. The Amman delegation made arrangements for about thirty bus trips for families who could not afford the fare to visit detained relatives. This action, which started in June 1972, provided free travel for 1,500 relatives of detainees.

ACTION FOR THE DISABLED

The residue of the funds for relief action undertaken at the time of the September 1970 events was used for financing the extension of the Cheshire Home orthopaedic centre for the disabled, in Amman.

A project for the extension of the premises was drawn up with the aid of a Finnish expert, and on 5 November an agreement on the project was signed by the Jordanian Ministry of Health, the ICRC and CARE.

The agreement provides that:

- the Ministry of Health shall be responsible for the construction of the centre and shall, if need be, meet any expenditure exceeding the estimates;
- the ICRC shall make a financial contribution of up to 20,000 Jordanian dinars to the construction of the centre;
- CARE shall supply building material.

RELIEF

In February, the ICRC shipped 500 tons of flour, a gift from the European Economic Community, to Aqaba. It was distributed to needy families by the Jordan National Red Crescent Society.

Syria

In March, the ICRC sent medical supplies including 100,000 Mexaform tablets to Syria for persons displaced from the Golan Heights. In August, 540 tons of wheat donated by the Swiss Government were shipped to Latakia, for distribution by the Syrian Red Crescent to some 54,000 persons displaced from Golan as a result of the June 1967 conflict.

Lebanon

Following raids which Israel armed forces carried out in Lebanese territory, the ICRC handed over medical supplies, in particular to the Lebanese Red Cross, in support of its action on behalf of the victims.

In September, the ICRC received two complaints from the Lebanese Government regarding the Israel army's violations of the law of war and, in particular, of the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of poisonous substances for military purposes. In reply to the second communication, the Israel authorities categorically denied that their troops had used such substances.

ICRC delegates in Lebanon visited several refugee camps to ascertain medical and other needs and make the family message system better known. Medical supplies were provided for dispensaries operated by the "Palestinian Red Crescent".

Iran and Iraq

At the end of 1971, the Iranian Government and the Red Lion and Sun Society asked the ICRC to intervene on behalf of some 50,000 Iranians who had been driven out of Iraq.

In January 1972, the ICRC sent a delegate to Iran to inquire into the position of persons expelled, who had been provided with

shelter in camps set up by the Red Lion and Sun Society, and particularly about families who had been separated.

On the basis of the information obtained, the ICRC sent a delegate to Baghdad in February, with instructions to contact the Iraqi authorities and Red Crescent and to propose a meeting between the Iraqi Red Crescent and the Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society.

A preliminary meeting of officials of the two Societies took place at ICRC headquarters in Geneva, on 12 May. During the meeting, which an ICRC delegate attended as an observer, the problem of some 600 separated families was discussed. To work out ways and means of reuniting the families, the two Societies decided to meet again in Baghdad at the end of July.

Arabian Peninsula

In 1972, the ICRC maintained a delegate in Aden, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. When the artificial limb workshop in Sana'a was taken over by the Government of the Yemen Arab Republic (see below), a visiting delegate was put in charge of relations with that country.

Yemen Arab Republic

On 28 March, the ICRC officially turned over to the Government of the Yemen Arab Republic the artificial limb workshop established in Sana'a two years earlier. During that time, 306 disabled persons had received treatment and the workshop had produced 240 prostheses. The orthopaedic expert, who had been sent to Sana'a by the ICRC and who was henceforth attached to WHO, pursued his activities for a few weeks after the handing over of the workshop, to ensure smooth operation during the transition period. Further, in November 1972 the ICRC sent to Sana'a materials required for the manufacture of orthopaedic appliances and the renewal of basic material. It was able to do so through a financial contribution by the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM).

The ICRC visiting delegate carried out three missions to Sana'a: the first from 28 March to 8 April, the second from 11 to 22 July,

and the third from 17 September to 9 December. During the first two missions, the ICRC delegate contacted government authorities and officers of the emerging Yemen Red Crescent. He discussed with the various ministries concerned the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions and the principles of the Red Cross among the armed forces and youth, as well as the development of international humanitarian law. He also inquired about several thousand refugees in the Yemen Arab Republic.

The ICRC delegate returned to the Yemen Arab Republic in mid-September to look into the position of refugees and study their needs. With the agreement of the authorities, he drew up a list of several thousand refugees and went to see them in various places including the Ta'iz and Hodeida areas. Some food distribution took place, even though the mission was essentially for the purpose of fact finding. Early in November, the ICRC sent out a second delegate to support the first. He went to about ten villages in the south-east and south-west, where several thousand refugees were to be found.

A few days after the arrival of the ICRC delegate in the Yemen Arab Republic, in September, fighting broke out on the frontier with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The ICRC instructed its delegate to offer its services to the Government of the Yemen Arab Republic in aiding the victims.

After having contacted the competent authorities, the ICRC delegate sent a preliminary estimate of requirements to Geneva. During the second half of October, the ICRC sent two batches of medical supplies totalling almost a ton to Tai'iz, by air. From 6 to 18 November, an ICRC doctor-delegate was in the Yemen Arab Republic to survey the country's hospital and medical infrastructure.

During fighting on the frontier and in Kamaran Island, late in September and at the beginning of October, armed forces of the Yemen Arab Republic captured a number of South Yemen soldiers and civilians. The ICRC delegate obtained a list of the prisoners and secured permission to visit them at Hodeida (seventeen prisoners), Sana'a (fifteen), in a hospital near the fighting areas (one) and at Ta'iz (five). As usual, the visits were covered by reports which the ICRC sent to the detaining Power and to the prisoners' own government.

Lastly, the ICRC delegates secured permission to visit three Sana'a prisons holding political detainees. They had access to the citadel and to the Rada prison, where they saw about 417 detainees, including some who were being held for offences or reasons of a political nature, and to whom they gave relief supplies and medical care.

People's Democratic Republic of Yemen

Towards the end of January, the ICRC shipped to Aden 20 tons of maize flour donated by the European Economic Community. The flour was distributed to needy families in Socotra Island, Kamaran Island and various provinces of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, as well as in places of detention.

When fighting broke out between the two Yemens at the end of September, the ICRC delegate in Aden approached the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and offered the ICRC's assistance to the victims. He was authorized to visit about thirty North Yemen soldiers who had been captured and interned in the Aden military camp. The visit was made early in November, and the covering report was sent to the detaining Power and the prisoners' own government.

Lastly, relief supplies were sent to Socotra Island for the inhabitants of the flood-stricken area.

CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

During 1972, the Central Tracing Agency received 82,587 requests and communications (47,198 in 1971) and sent out 79,296 letters (50,799 in 1971). This considerable increase in the volume of work was due mainly to the conflict in the Asian sub-continent.

The principal tasks of the Central Tracing Agency consist in obtaining from the competent authorities any information available about their captives and about enemy combatants found dead at the front; registering such data in its card index; informing the casualties' governments and families; opening enquiries where information is lacking; ensuring, or helping to ensure, the trans-