

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1958)

Rubrik: Near East

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 27.04.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

consisting of gifts of artificial limbs and orthopaedic equipment valued at 20,000 Swiss francs.

Representations concerning missing Spanish nationals. — Other representations were made by the International Committee in Morocco during 1958 (which did not, unfortunately, lead to any positive result) in behalf of Spanish civilians and military personnel reported missing since the events in the Ifni and Spanish Sahara areas towards the end of 1957. The International Committee's delegate in Morocco, Mr. C. Vautier, has made repeated efforts to trace these missing persons presumed to be in the hands of the " Armée de libération marocaine ". In April 1958 he made further enquiries in Goulimine, South of Agadir, which were unsuccessful. ¹

The Cameroons

The ICRC received several requests in summer and autumn 1958 (in particular from the " Union des populations du Cameroun ", an organisation with headquarters in Cairo), for a mission to be sent to the region to visit political detainees and internees. Approaches were made by the ICRC to the French authorities, who did not consider it appropriate, however, for any action to be taken in the matter.

NEAR EAST

Lebanon

The serious upheaval which shook Lebanon in 1958 led the ICRC to undertake one of its most important missions of the year. It was directed by Mr. D. de Traz, General-Delegate of the International Committee in the Near East.

Mr. de Traz, whose usual residence is in Beirut, was already well acquainted with this country where the ICRC had made numerous con-

¹ In spring 1959, following the requests made by the ICRC, 40 Spanish civilians and military personnel were released, unconditionally, by the Moroccan authorities; reference to this matter will be made in the next annual report.

tacts in various circles through his offices. As the General-Delegate was faced with a still heavier burden through the worsening of the situation, he was assisted by another delegate, Mr. P. Courvoisier, from the end of June.

On the outbreak of the disturbance the General-Delegate recalled with insistence to the Lebanon authorities, the Lebanese Red Cross, the leaders of the armed forces on both sides, the Government and the opposing party, the humanitarian principles set forth in Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions, which have been signed by Lebanon. This article, which refers to the case of "an armed conflict not of an international character", was applicable to the events in Lebanon.

Article 3 stipulates that persons taking no active part in the hostilities must be treated humanely; it prohibits cruel treatment and torture, the taking of hostages and the passing of sentences and carrying out of executions without previous judgment by a regularly constituted court; it also protects the wounded and sick who must be collected and cared for; finally, it stipulates that an impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services to the parties to the conflict. This article thus provided the delegates from Geneva with a juridical basis for their work in this field.

Having duly recalled the terms of Article 3 to all concerned, the delegates of the ICRC carried out practical activities, took numerous steps to alleviate the suffering caused by the conflict, endeavoured to obtain the release of hostages, visited persons under detention and distributed considerable quantities of relief supplies. From their headquarters in Beirut they travelled all over the country from Tripoli in the north to Saïda and Tyr in the south, as well as Hermel, Bekaa and the Chouf mountain region, in fact in every area affected by the upheaval and hostilities in Lebanon.

The two delegates had a few motor vehicles at their disposal: a car, two jeeps painted white, a trailer and a lorry and, when needs required, a few other vehicles, in particular ambulances of the Lebanese Red Cross.

For the entire duration of their mission the delegates from Geneva maintained close and useful co-operation with this National Society. Medicaments held by the ICRC delegation were pooled with those of the Lebanese Red Cross and were given out by a Lebanese nurse, Miss Araman, a holder of the Florence Nightingale Medal. When the delegates

of the ICRC had to take medicaments to any place in Lebanon, they drew supplies from the pool.

From their headquarters in Beirut, the General-Delegate and his assistant thus travelled all over Lebanon. In order to meet the most urgent requirements, they distributed considerable quantities of medicaments for the treatment of gunshot wounds, antibiotics, anti-gangrene and anti-tetanus drugs, serums and blood plasma.

When the stocks of the Lebanese Red Cross were getting low in September, the delegates informed this Society that the League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva had decided to make available 7 tons of medicaments drawn from stocks warehoused in Vienna. This consignment was sent through the ICRC delegation and was gratefully received.

Mention may be made of some special aspects of this relief action:

South Lebanon. — At *Tyr* the insurgents occupied the old town built on a peninsula. As all access to the spot was blocked by the Government forces, the rebels were sometimes isolated for fairly long periods. This led to the piling up of refuse in the narrow streets and as the sanitary installations were primitive, epidemics were to be feared.

The General-Delegate of the ICRC then arranged with the military commander of the sector for the passage through the lines twice weekly of an ambulance and a doctor. Thus it was possible to take essential medicaments into the area to give treatment to the sick and wounded and to evacuate the most serious cases.

The delegates also distributed food supplies to the population in *Tyr*, and in *Saïda* where conditions were similar. There also the insurgents were shut up in the old town and were in need of medicaments.

Mountain regions. — In the early summer, 1958, there was no hospital in the Chouf area, i.e. the southern mountain region. An improvised operating theatre had been set up by a doctor (Dr. Dahan) in the village school at Moukhtara, where he performed major operations, laparotomy for instance, on a kitchen table without anaesthetics. The delegates made several visits to this area and supplied equipment sufficient for setting up an operating theatre, as well as radioscopic and radiographic apparatus, which is of great assistance to the doctor to locate bullets lodged in patients' bodies. Other equipment, an ambulance and medicaments were

also made available and thus through the personal effort of the General-Delegate of the ICRC in the Near East a hospital was opened in Moukh-tara.

In Bekaa, north of the well known city of Baalbek, the inhabitants of the *Hermel* rough mountainous district were also affected by the events. The few hospitals in the area had been closed on the outbreak of the disturbance. An improvised infirmary had been opened in the village of Laboué, 30 km. to the north of Baalbek, which the delegates of the ICRC supplied with blood transfusion equipment, medicaments and foodstuffs, and in particular several hundred kg. of powdered milk.

North Lebanon. — To Tripoli, the second important town in Lebanon, where the disturbance was particularly serious, the delegation of the ICRC sent supplies of medicaments and powdered milk every week and sometimes more often. These supplies were handed over to the principal town hospital and later distributed to the dispensaries in the various areas. Some hundred tons of flour and sugar were also distributed. The delegates made efforts to send relief supplies from Tripoli to the *Haut-Akkar* province, a rough mountainous district which is difficult of access. On account of the events the transport of supplies was an extremely dangerous undertaking; the roads were blocked or mined and several bridges had been destroyed. Nevertheless, in spite of many difficulties, a few consignments of medicaments were carried to this remote region to meet the most urgent needs. The relief action of the ICRC in Lebanon came to a close at the end of September, when the situation had become more settled. The work which remained to be done was taken over by the Lebanese Red Cross, with which the International Committee enjoyed close and efficient co-operation, for the purpose of alleviating, so far as possible, the suffering caused by the conflict.

Israel

The activities of the ICRC in Israel were mainly related to the Suez and Sinai conflicts.

Many of the former Egyptian prisoners of war released early in 1957¹ lodged complaints which in most cases concerned confiscation by the

¹ See Annual Report for 1957, pp. 21 to 23.

Israeli authorities of money in the prisoners' possession at the time of their capture. This matter is still under discussion.

Numerous enquiries from Egyptian families were received by the ICRC — direct or through the Cairo Delegation — concerning persons missing since the Sinai campaign. These enquiries were forwarded to the Israeli authorities who replied in each case that they no longer held any such prisoners.

The efforts made by the ICRC to arrange for the exchange of persons detained in Israel and Egypt were also unsuccessful. These representations concerned "fedayin" (snipers) held in Israel and Zionists imprisoned in Egypt.

Although it was not possible to arrange for the exchange of these detained persons, some have been visited by the ICRC, in particular Ali Ahmed Osman (to whom frequent reference has been made in the Egyptian Press) the leader of the mutiny which broke out in August in Shatta Prison, Israel, where a number of "fedayin" were under detention.

During a private visit to Israel Mr. Carl J. Burckhardt, former President of the ICRC, had several useful discussions with the authorities. He also saw the heads of the "Magen David Adom" (Red Shield of David), the equivalent of a National Society, which has not been accorded official recognition on account of its special emblem. Mr. de Traz, General-Delegate of the ICRC for the Middle East, was received on two occasions, in August and December, by the President of the Republic of Israel, Mr. Ben Zvi.

Egypt

The ICRC Delegation in Cairo, headed by Mr. E. Muller, continued in 1958 its activities in behalf of stateless persons, mainly Jews, living in Egypt¹. This work consisted, in particular, of assisting these persons with administrative formalities to enable them to leave the country.

These departures continued throughout the year but were particularly numerous in July and August. The principal country of destination was the United States, but there were also departures for Brazil, France,

¹ See Annual Report for 1957, pp. 25 and 26.

Great Britain and Australia. At the end of the year, after an increase in the emigration movement as a result of facilities granted by the United States, departures became fewer. During the year nearly a thousand families were thus assisted by the ICRC.

On several occasions the ICRC Delegation in Cairo also intervened in behalf of persons of various nationalities detained or interned by the authorities of the United Arab Republic.

The General-Delegate for the Near East, Mr. D. de Traz, visited Cairo several times during the year in order to discuss with the authorities various questions still in abeyance between Israel and Egypt in connection with the 1956 conflict.

Cyprus

Visits to detained persons in the Island of Cyprus were first started by the ICRC in 1955. In 1958, as in the three previous years, these visits were continued ¹

Mr. de Traz, General-Delegate for the Near East, went to Cyprus in June and December and visited five places of detention at Kokkino-Trimithia ("Camp K" visited twice), Hayos Lucas, Mammari and Pyla. As customary the comments of the International Committee's representative on his visits were duly noted in a report sent later to the British authorities. The report also mentioned the remarks and suggestions made verbally to the delegate by the detained persons or their representatives.

As the political situation in Cyprus was particularly tense in 1958 the ICRC was unable, as it would have wished, to make more frequent visits. The General-Delegate's work was to some extent facilitated by the British authorities and he was able to speak without witnesses with a good many persons detained in the camps.

The Committee's representative did not hesitate, in some cases, to make a direct approach to the Governor of Cyprus, Sir Hugh Foot. These representations contributed towards improvements in the detainees' conditions.

Another delegate, Mr. P. Courvoisier, was sent to Cyprus to enquire into the living conditions of some persons whom the events had obliged

¹ See Annual Report for 1957. p. 37.

to leave their homes. With the approval of the authorities this mission took place in June and July.

The ICRC made available, as in previous years, ten thousand Swiss francs from its own funds for assisting political detainees in Cyprus.

AMERICA

Cuba

On July 4, 1958, the International Committee received an appeal from Mr. Fidel Castro, the head of the rebel forces in Cuba, proposing to hand over the wounded and sick of the regular armed forces in his hands to a Commission of the Cuban Red Cross. He requested the ICRC to get in touch with the Cuban Red Cross and to arrange for this delicate operation to be carried out as soon as possible.

The ICRC transmitted this message immediately to the Cuban Red Cross, offering at the same time to lend its services and those of the delegate whom it was ready to send at once to Havana for the purpose of facilitating any humanitarian action consistent with its customary activities and the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. Communication with the rebel chief in the Cuban "maquis" had to be made through the Swiss Short Wave Service, as his exact address was unknown.

The delegate of the ICRC, Mr. P. Jequier, arrived at Havana on July 10. After numerous discussions, he obtained the consent of the Government to the proposed operation and was afforded the necessary facilities by the military authorities and the Cuban Red Cross.

The place and date of the transfer of wounded and sick prisoners had then to be arranged and approved by both parties concerned. This was a very difficult matter since on account of the mountainous and inhospitable nature of the area, the seriously wounded were likely to suffer great discomfort during their transport. It was seen that in the circumstances the Cuban Red Cross would be unable to undertake the operation alone and that the assistance of the Government army services would be required.

Since the essential aid of the army services would result in a meeting of the Parties to the conflict, special care had to be taken in choosing a spot where the needs of safety and of humanity could be guaranteed.