

ICRC

UPDATE

Geneva, 7 August 2002

**Federal Republic of Yugoslavia:
facts & figures on recent ICRC action (April-June 2002)**



ICRC

Executive Summary

- This fact-sheet outlines the ICRC's activities in these fields in the FRY in the second quarter of 2002.
- The ICRC is working throughout the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) to see that civilians and detainees are protected and to help them cope with the psychological and material consequences of the internal and international conflicts that affected the country. It supports the families of missing persons and seeks to ensure that the basic needs of vulnerable groups are met, focusing on support to key public services and structures at community level.

CONTEXT

Ten years of conflict in the Balkans have had an impact that still affects the lives of hundreds of thousands in Yugoslavia today. Their loved ones are missing, displaced, detained or left behind to fend for themselves. For them, the Red Cross Movement works to provide protection, alleviate suffering and help to find answers as to missing persons, provides psychological support and material assistance. It also promotes the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

This fact-sheet outlines ICRC activities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in the second quarter of 2002.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Civilians

Shedding light on the issue of missing persons

After a decade of armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia, the fate of nearly 25,000 missing persons is still unknown, leaving their families torn between hope and despair. From the very start, the Red Cross Movement has worked on behalf of these families, who come from all communities, to assist them in their efforts to determine the fate of their loved ones.

In FRY, the ICRC is working on cases related to the conflicts in the Republic of Croatia (2,670 missing cases), Kosovo (3,709 missing cases) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (18,015 missing cases).

- Collecting information from the families:
As part of its joint effort with the Yugoslav Red Cross Society (YRCS) to actively trace missing persons, the ICRC has published two editions of the *Book of Persons Missing in Kosovo*, hoping to gather more information from the public, the authorities and possible witnesses.

- Submitting information to the authorities:
Lists and reports on missing persons have regularly been submitted to the authorities, reminding them of their obligation to provide information on the fate of those unaccounted for to their families.
- Facilitating the identification process:
To support the identification process, the ICRC has been transporting the families of missing persons to locations where they could possibly confirm identifications.

Early this year, over 500 families from Serbia and Montenegro were transported to a display of personal belongings and clothing found on 350 mortal remains exhumed in Kosovo.

In relation to last year's exhumations in Croatia, 181 family members were transported to identify 112 mortal remains at the Zagreb forensic institute. Identification was confirmed in 80 cases, while, for the rest, blood samples for DNA testing were taken from the relatives. In 111 cases - for close family members living as refugees in FRY who wished to bury their kin in their place of origin - transport was provided for funerals.

This year in Novi Sad, an ICRC team observed the exhumation of 60 bodies, of which 25 identified ones were handed over to the Croatian authorities.

With regard to exhumations in Serbia proper related to the Kosovo conflict, the ICRC has been granted access to the sites and to photo documentation of clothes and personal belongings. The documentation will be used for compiling the *Book of Belongings* that will serve as a tool in working on identification with families of missing. To support the ongoing activities in this field, equipment and other material was donated to the FRY Commission for Missing Persons and Belgrade's Institute of Forensic Medicine.

As for Ante Mortem Data (AMD) collection, close to 900 pieces of data related to Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina (Republika Srpska) and Kosovo have been collected and submitted to the authorities by joint teams made up of the ICRC, YRCS and family members.

- Supporting family associations:
The ICRC firmly believes that the families of the missing deserve full support in the search for answers to their questions and in coping with the pain of missing family members. It therefore continues to provide moral, material and logistics support, as well as guidance in the area of communication, to three family associations. In cooperation with the local Red Cross and experts in the field, efforts are being made to offer adequate psycho-social support to those who need it. In particular, two pilot projects have been launched, aiming at the establishment of support networks involving different institutions through regular group discussion meetings focusing on the needs of the families.

In parallel, the ICRC is gathering information regarding the legal problems which families of the missing may face, in order to provide them with guidelines on how to overcome legal obstacles. It also offers recommendations to authorities on how to improve the legal status of family members of the missing through adaptations of the administrative and legal set-up.

Protecting civilians in southern Serbia

Since the peaceful settlement of the crisis in southern Serbia, the ICRC has continued to monitor the situation there. Special attention has been paid to the return of displaced persons from Kosovo to their homes in southern Serbia. In addition, ICRC teams pay regular visits to all communities and, if needed, intervene with the authorities.

Maintaining links between separated family members

Besides its traditional Red Cross message service, the ICRC provides transport to families who are unable to travel - for security or financial reasons - in order to visit their detained relatives. Family members from Serbia regularly visit some 40 persons detained in Croatia. Ad-hoc support is also provided to families visiting their relatives detained in Scheveningen, The Hague.

Since 1999, almost 500 vulnerable persons (children, single mothers, the elderly, psychiatric and serious medical cases) have been reunited with their families mainly coming *from* Kosovo to the rest of the FRY, but also going *to* Kosovo or Macedonia.

Assisting Displaced Persons

Since June 1999, the ICRC has provided, together with the YRCS, significant quantities of food and non-food assistance to the internally displaced population from Kosovo. Targeting the most vulnerable among the displaced, the Red Cross will continue to distribute food assistance and hygiene parcels to 50,000 beneficiaries - old-age pensioners, the disabled, single-parent families and low-income families with children under the age of 10.

- Community-Based Projects

Community-based projects aim at helping the internally displaced population not to feel isolated or left on the sidelines of society by providing opportunities for interaction within the local community. Activities are established through the existing YRC network of youth and old people's clubs and community centres in Belgrade and Kraljevo regions.

- Income-Generation Projects

The goal is to develop projects that address the mid-term security needs of internally displaced people. This is being achieved through a variety of income-generation activities throughout Serbia and Montenegro. The programme is currently assisting more than 2,100 rural family members with 384 projects related to greenhouses and vegetable and livestock production. Sustainable urban projects as well as the mechanisms for their implementation have been designed and initiated. Meetings are also conducted with NGOs, Red Cross branches, municipal representatives and field staff to prepare new types of projects

Supporting health developments

- Basic Health Services Pilot Project in Kraljevo

Last year, a three-year integrated Basic Health Services Pilot Project was agreed on with the Ministry of Health of Serbia. The project is designed to meet the primary health care needs of the population in Kraljevo municipality, which has the country's largest number of internally displaced persons (25,700), refugees (6,269) and social cases compared with its population of 150,000. Designed in such a way that the entire resident population will benefit, the project will support:

- Improvement of local capacity to manage health programmes.
- Development of a sustainable primary health-care system based on cost-effective interventions and priority public health programmes with a specific emphasis on meeting the needs of internally displaced persons and vulnerable groups.
- Reduction of the disease and disability burden among the target beneficiaries and the rest of the resident population.

In the first phase, the project will facilitate the planning and implementation process among decision-makers, programme managers, health professionals and civil society, with a view to establishing and piloting the organizational and financing model of a Basic Health Services Package for primary health care in Kraljevo. To this end, the management model for the Basic Health Services pilot project DZ Kraljevo in 2001-2003 has been prepared by the project team (including ICRC staff and local health institutions) and approved by the Ministry of Health.

Since March, capacity-building activities are held in the *Henry Dunant* resource centre, which was refurbished with project funds. The official project site www.phckraljevo.org was launched.

People deprived of their freedom

Prison visits and transport of released detainees

Since July 1999, almost 2,000 detainees in respect of whom the ICRC has a mandate have been released from FRY prisons and escorted home by ICRC teams. Following the March transfer of 157 detainees to Kosovo, the ICRC continues to visit persons arrested in connection with the situation in southern Serbia, ethnic Albanians who remain in custody after the transfer, as well as those convicted for or accused of war crimes in Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina. In Kosovo, members of minority groups held in UNMIK/KFOR places of detention are also visited.

Armed forces and other bearers of weapons

Promoting knowledge of IHL

In December 2001, a Cooperation Protocol was signed with the FRY Ministry of Defence. A detailed plan of IHL courses tailored for the army, airforce and navy was finalized and the first two refresher courses for 43 army officers (prepared jointly by ICRC and YRC IHL experts), took place in May this year.

Following the success of two workshops on human rights organized in November 2001 for the Serbian and Montenegrin police respectively, two more workshops covering command and management in the police were held in the two republics in mid-May.

Together with the YRC, the ICRC takes part in the Multi-ethnic Police Training Courses organized by Belgrade and the OSCE for newly recruited policemen of Serb and Albanian origin from the municipalities of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac.

Authorities

Promoting knowledge of IHL

The ICRC also organized training seminars to promote IHL, in particular in southern Serbia and Kosovo. These dealt with topics related to the Red Cross Movement and its activities, and highlighted issues such as the protection of journalists during conflicts. Furthermore, dissemination seminars for local authorities and opinion-makers were held in municipalities bordering Kosovo to boost further knowledge and understanding of the Red Cross Movement and the Geneva Conventions.

In March this year, the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade, supported by the ICRC and the YRC, launched the first Specialized Studies on IHL, a one-year postgraduate course. The first generation of students includes staff from the Federal Ministries of Defence, Justice and Foreign Affairs and Serbian Ministry of the Interior. The opening of the course also provided an opportunity for the launching of the ICRC publication's Serbian translation of the book *How Does Law Protect in War*.

Civil Society

Women and War

In close collaboration with the local Red Cross societies, an extensive "Women and War" campaign, addressing the plight of women and girls in armed conflicts, was mounted throughout Serbia and Montenegro in March/April this year. A series of travelling photo exhibitions and press conferences were organized, attracting not only the general public, but also numerous members of the media and women's rights organizations.

Exploring Humanitarian Law

An education package for adolescents was presented to the Ministries of Education of Serbia and Montenegro, and other actors involved in the education reform. Programme modules were used at a seminar for youth leaders of the YRC and have been included in all other youth workshops planned for 2002. The first training of teachers and YRC volunteers was already carried out in June.

Mine-Awareness

Mine-awareness activities targeting children continued, with posters, leaflets and brochures distributed to the population. In order to mobilize communities to come to grips with the problem of mines/unexploded ordnance (UXO) themselves, a network of volunteers from both the Serb and the Albanian communities in Presevo and Bujanovac was established. Regular meetings to discuss mine/UXO clearance, mine awareness and assistance for mine victims are organized on a monthly basis with the representatives of the local community, the civil defence, army, police, the YRC and the ICRC.

For further information, please contact the External Resources Division.