

ICRC Belgrade Regional Delegation initial response to COVID-19 Pandemic

21 April 2020

Support to Red Cross societies, penitentiaries and authorities

In response to unprecedented situation created by the rapid expansion of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICRC put at disposal its resources to **eight Red Cross societies** in the region in order to support them in meeting immediate needs in their communities but also support in detention, including migrants in migration centres.

Immediate assistance in donations along with financial support was made to Red Cross of Serbia to cover their needs for personal protection equipment (PPE) purchased by the Delegation at the local market. In addition to COVID-19 crisis, Croatia has been faced with a series of earthquakes from 22 March, ranging from 5.5 to 3.0 magnitude. Therefore, the ICRC promptly supported Croatian RC in its response to COVID-19 in the situation aggravated by the earthquake. Funds reallocated from other internal sources have been transferred to Slovenian, Bulgarian and Republic of North Macedonia RC for responding to immediate needs for PPE. Additional requests are under processing in

coordination with International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). Bulgarian RC remained the only RC in the region conducted visits to immigration detention places, using PPE to protect themselves and others.

Meanwhile, ICRC Belgrade Regional Delegation has been exploring opportunities for peer to peer resource mobilization (German and Austrian RC possibilities at this moment) in coordination with IFRC. In addition to immediate assistance provided to Red Cross societies in the region over COVID-19 pandemic, ICRC responded to requests from the **Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic Serbia** to meet direct and urgent hygienic needs in currently 20 all closed centres accommodating 8,878 migrants including asylum seekers. Purchase of contactless thermometers that appeared to be critically needed item that cannot be found locally is obtained through the central supply from Geneva. ICRC is in the process of processing additional request from the Commissariat.



Slovenian Red Cross response in C-19 crisis



Red Cross of Serbia volunteers provide assistance

The ICRC has activated the Crisis Management Mechanism in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The operational approach is to support the Red Cross societies in the region and coordinate with the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) to provide assistance, as possible and whenever required, depending on each context and operations.

Further, the ICRC in coordination with Red Cross societies shared its public note on the **protection of migrants** in face of the COVID-19 pandemic with relevant authorities in the region. The paper was also shared with other stakeholders, such as the US Embassy BEL (PRM) and UNHCR. ICRC also shared with the Red Cross societies the ICRC Guidelines for Health Care in detention and relevant posters related to hygiene to be used in closed migration centres.

As part of its ongoing protection dialogue with authorities of **immigration detention** in Hungary, the ICRC shared information posters, general and specific recommendations on the prevention and management of COVID-19 in confined settings and advocated for the continuation of services through the authorities that were previously provided by the

Hungarian RC. In support of the **detention authorities' response** to COVID-19, the ICRC donated disinfectant and hand-sanitizer to four prisons of North Macedonia. The assistance was sent together with a set of recommendations on prevention and management of COVID-19 disease in prisons. In parallel, coordination with other actors is ongoing in a bid to mobilize additional assistance for the penitentiaries in North Macedonia. In Serbia, ICRC remains in contact with penitentiary authorities with whom the recommendations on prevention and management of COVID-19 disease in prisons were shared, while so far, no request for material assistance has been received. On dead bodies management, relevant general guidance was translated and shared with WHO for further distribution.



Croatian Red Cross volunteers engage in providing of assistance

The Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences are negatively impacting family links as preventive measures are increasingly being implemented globally including restrictions on movement, closing national borders, and putting in place quarantine and confinement policies to limit the spread of the virus. As ensuring strong connections between families remains crucial to the wellbeing of many as fear and anxiety grow over the likely impact of the disease, regular meetings with Red Cross societies in the region are established to enable them to

exchange information and experience and seek guidance that would help them adapting their RFL response during COVID-19.

The ICRC offered support to the Associations of the Families of Missing in Serbia to help them respond to COVID-19 related specific needs of their elderly and other vulnerable members that may not be included in the Red Cross or state-run assistance programs.

Visit www.icrc.org for the information on the COVID-19 related activities worldwide.

ICRC is constantly monitoring the situation and is processing several requests for assistance from Red Cross societies and other stakeholders in the region to meet their needs during the COVID-19 crisis.

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