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PRESS RELEASE

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ICRC STEPS UP ITS ACTIVITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Geneva (ICRC) - Prompted by the sharp deterioration in the living conditions of the population in Iraq and neighbouring countries. the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has just launched an appeal for 10L1 millioun Swiss francs for its relief activities in the region. further to its previous appeal made' on 17 January 1991.

The financial support which the ICRC hopes to obtain hen: the international community will enable the institution to continue and step up its humanitarian activities on the spot. now that an official cease-fire has put an end to the hostilities between Iraq and the countries of the coalition.

To meet the large-scale humanitarian needs created by the conflict. ICRC delegates have been focusing on the repatriation of prisoners of war and civilian internees. visits to places of detention. tracing missing persons and. in cooperation with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. providing emergency relief designed to prevent epidemics.

The ICRC is also doing its utmost to provide assistance and protection for the victims of the internal conflict which broke cut in Iraq in early March. It has reminded the civilian and military authorities on several occasions that they are duty bound to do everything possible to ensure respect for the basic humanitarian principles which must be preserved in such situations.

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The International Committtoo of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of the Red Cross Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. is one of the three components of the International Red Cross.

An independent humanitarian institution. the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances. it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in th e world