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Dag Hammarskjölds samml.

Laos - 1961

Refugees in Laos

- a.) Schnyder, Felix (High Commissioner for Refugees, Palais des Nations, Geneva)
- 1 letter to D.M., 23 Aug.
 - 1 letter to the Foreign Minister of Laos, 22 Aug.
 - 1 letter from D.M., 7 Sept.
- b.) Memorandum ICRC Action in Laos, Geneva, 11 Aug. 61.

UNITED NATIONS

OFFICE OF THE HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES



NATIONS UNIES

OFFICE DU HAUT-COMMISSAIRE
POUR LES RÉFUGIÉS

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Palais des Nations
GENÈVE

15/90

CONFIDENTIAL

23 August 1961

Dear Mr. Hammarskjold,

Further to my letter of 3 August, I have pleasure in enclosing for your information copy of a letter dated 22 August which I have sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Laos concerning the refugees in their territory.

You will see from my letter that I have been in contact with Mr. Durand, the Representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross in South East Asia, who has just returned from his mission to Laos and who has given me an account of the results of his enquiry.

Mr. Durand estimates that there are 31,000 displaced Laotians who are in urgent need of assistance; 25,000 of these persons are isolated in the centres of resistance which constitute enclaves within the opponent's territory. It has been possible to evacuate only 5,000 to 6,000 refugees, who may now be reached relatively easily in the camps in which they are sheltered.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has now decided that it could not participate in a relief action which would involve flying over territory not under the control of the Government of Laos (such flying is in principle prohibited by the opposing forces). It has therefore decided to limit its action to the group of 5,000 to 6,000 refugees referred to above. According to the information given to me by Mr. Durand it would appear that the other 25,000 refugees are being assisted as well as possible by the Government itself.

At all events it is clear that due to prevailing circumstances, only action by the International Committee of the Red Cross, within the general framework of its assistance programme to all victims of the conflict, is likely to be accepted by both parties without entailing the

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold,
Secretary-General,
United Nations,
New York.

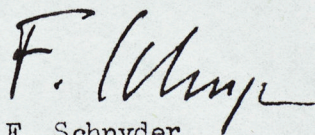
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risk of its being exploited by one or the other or perhaps of complicating the task of the Conference being held in Geneva. I feel therefore that intervention by my Office even to assist the International Committee of the Red Cross to obtain the funds needed to assist this group of refugees might prejudice the overall humanitarian action which it is carrying out for all the victims of this conflict, irrespective of the party to which they belong.

I believe, for the same reason, that it would be inopportune, at least for the time being, for my Office to launch an appeal on behalf of these refugees. However, I informed the I.C.R.C. that I would be happy to transmit, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1388 (XIV), any contribution from governmental or other sources which may be placed at my disposal for assistance to these refugees.

... I am also enclosing for your information copy of the Aide Memoire prepared by the I.C.R.C. on its action in Laos. I shall not fail to keep you informed of any additional information which may be communicated to me by the I.C.R.C. or which may be received from its special representative in Laos, Monsieur J.J. Muralti.

Yours very sincerely,



F. Schnyder
High Commissioner for Refugees

22 août 1961

Monsieur le Ministre,

J'ai l'honneur de me référer à ma lettre en date du 28 juillet répondant à la démarche effectuée auprès de M. le Secrétaire général des Nations Unies par M. le Chargé d'Affaires par intérim de la Mission permanente du Laos auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies au sujet des réfugiés qui se trouvent présentement dans la zone du Gouvernement Royal.

Ainsi que je vous l'avais indiqué, je me suis tenu depuis lors en contact avec le Comité international de la Croix rouge et ai reçu ces jours derniers la visite de son délégué, M. Durand, qui a bien voulu me faire un compte rendu verbal sur les résultats de la mission d'information que le Comité lui avait confiée au Laos.

De l'ensemble des renseignements ainsi recueillis il résulte que le CICR est, de toute évidence, l'organisme le plus qualifié, dans les circonstances présentes, pour apporter, en accord avec votre Gouvernement, une aide utile aux réfugiés en question. Il est apparu clairement, en conséquence, que l'intervention d'une autre instance ne pourrait en fait à l'heure actuelle que risquer de gêner l'action du CICR et d'en compromettre éventuellement les résultats.

S'il ne me paraît donc pas opportun que le Haut Commissariat pour les réfugiés prenne l'initiative de lancer lui-même un appel à la communauté internationale en faveur de ces réfugiés, je serais tout disposé, par contre, selon les termes et l'esprit de la résolution 1388 adoptée par l'Assemblée générale lors de sa 15^{ème} session, à transmettre éventuellement au CICR les dons que des gouvernements ou des groupements privés voudraient bien me remettre pour venir en aide aux réfugiés en question. Le Comité de la Croix rouge a été informé de cette possibilité.

Je vous saurais gré, de toute manière, des informations complémentaires que le Gouvernement Royal voudrait bien le cas échéant m'adresser sur l'état du problème des réfugiés au Laos.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur le Ministre, les assurances de ma haute considération.

Félix Schnyder
Haut Commissaire pour les réfugiés

Son Altesse le Ministre des
Affaires étrangères du Royaume du Laos,
Royaume du Laos,

Vientiane.

JFL/EE

7 September 1961

Dear Mr. Schnyder,

Thank you for your letter of 23 August. I have noted with great interest the actions undertaken by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Laos and the reasons underlying their decision to limit their operations.

I share your opinion that it would be inopportune for the time being for your Office to launch an appeal on behalf of these refugees. At the same time your proposed action under resolution 1388 (XIV) appears to me to be in accordance with the letter and spirit of that resolution. Your offer to keep me informed of any additional information on this matter has indeed been greatly appreciated.

Yours very sincerely,

Dag Hammarskjöld

Mr. Félix Schnyder
High Commissioner for Refugees
Palais des Nations
Geneva



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COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

Geneva, 11 August 1961

MEMORANDUM

ICRC ACTION IN LAOS

I

As mentioned in the press releases of December 1960 and March 1961, for the last 9 months the International Committee of the Red Cross has been carrying out an emergency relief action on behalf of the victims of the Laotian conflict. With the aid of funds assembled so far, which amount to a total of 100,000 Swiss francs, of which 40,000 Swiss francs have been provided by the ICRC, 7,000 victims in the Vientiane area were able to be helped, as well as 500 detainees and prisoners visited in Vientiane, Paksé and Savannakhet. Moreover, the most urgently required medicaments were handed over to the authorities of Xieng-Khouang on behalf of the civilian population in the Northern provinces of Phong-Saly, Sam-Neua and Xieng-Khouang. At the same time, the ICRC forwarded family messages to prisoners, endeavoured to obtain news concerning missing persons and to restore written contact between families separated by the hostilities. An ICRC delegate is on the spot at present.

II

The position of the victims of the conflict remains very difficult, in spite of the cease-fire of early May and the negotiations started between the two Parties at Ban-Namone.

On July 12, therefore, the Vientiane authorities launched an urgent appeal to the ICRC on behalf of 50,000 displaced persons who had left the fighting areas and were without any means of subsistence. The ICRC delegate found that 31,000 persons from among these 50,000 needed emergency relief supplies, especially in the form of foodstuffs, clothing and medicaments. As a first step, the ICRC decided to aid 6,000 displaced persons who could be reached immediately, which requires a budget of over half a million Swiss francs for 6 months, namely for the purchase or dispatch of the following relief supplies:

<u>1) Nourishment</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Value Sw. Frs.</u>
Rice (500 grams per day per person)	540 tons	228,000
Condensed milk for children (3 tins per month per child)	1,050 cases or 50,400 tins	31,200
salt, vegetables, miscellaneous		230,000
<u>2) Clothing and bedding</u>		
Mosquito nets	1,800	11,600
men's, women's and children's clothes	6,000	77,500
blankets	2,400	15,000
mats	3,000	13,000
<u>3) Household goods and miscellaneous</u>		14,000
<u>4) Medical aid estimated at</u>		50,000

The ICRC has taken an advance of 50,000 Swiss francs from its relief fund in order to deal with the most urgent needs.

III

Moreover the ICRC delegate visited Xieng-Khouang and took note of the following requirements in connection with the victims of the conflict in the Northern provinces of Phong-Saly, Sam-Neua and Xieng-Khouang:

metal beds
mattresses
medicaments (i. e. auréomycin ointment - for the eyes -
tifomycin, anti-malaria and anti-dysenteric
products, vitamins)
surgical instruments
portable X-ray apparatus.

The ICRC is preparing a second consignment of medicaments for the hospital at Vientiane.

IV

It can be seen from the above that the present means of the ICRC do not allow it to deal with all the needs which have been brought to its notice by both sides and which its representative has confirmed.

In agreement with the Laotian Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross therefore considers it as its duty to bring this situation to the attention of the governmental and non-governmental organizations, and in particular to the National Red Cross Societies in order to call upon their co-operation in this relief action.

Gifts in cash can be sent to the account of the ICRC at the "Swiss Bank Corporation", Geneva. Gifts in kind should be announced in advance to the Relief Section of the ICRC in Geneva, which will supply all necessary details concerning dispatch and delivery conditions.

The League of Red Cross Societies has been informed of the position by the ICRC and has received a copy of this memorandum.
