



ICRC

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR
UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Washington, 22 April 2008
WAS 08/130

Dear Dr. Maxner,

We would like to thank you for your letter of 16 January 2008 and apologize for the tardy response. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) acknowledges the importance of humanitarian wants in many diverse contexts. As such, we share with you one area of priority activity for the ICRC and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies—that is the importance of family links between detainees and their families.

The task is often extremely challenging due to disruptions to communication systems. To address this, the ICRC sets up and coordinates a network, both in areas directly affected by conflict and in those receiving displaced people and refugees. This network is both a postal service that collects and delivers family news and a tracing service. The ICRC focuses primarily on offering persons directly affected by war—such as internally displaced persons, refugees, and inhabitants remaining in conflict zones—the means to reassure their relatives living in non-conflict areas and inform them of their whereabouts. The means vary from one emergency to another, depending on the prevailing conditions and on the resources available, with the most frequently used method being the Red Cross message delivery service.

In addition, the ICRC is mandated by the international community, under the Geneva Conventions, to visit prisoners of war and civilian internees to verify whether they are being treated according to relevant international standards. Such visits enable ICRC delegates to reassure families about the fate of their relatives and, by means of the Red Cross message network, allow the prisoners and their families to correspond. ICRC medical staff always accompany delegates on their visits to assess the health status of detained persons. These visits aim to ensure respect for the life and dignity of prisoners of war and other detainees and to prevent torture, ill-treatment, or abuses, which violate essential rights and the basic principles of humanity.

Stephan F. Maxner, Ph.D.
Director, The Vietnam Center
Texas Tech University
Box 41045
Lubbock, TX 79409-1045

1100 Connecticut Ave, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 587-4600 • Fax: (202) 587-4696

We have enclosed several publications that describe the ICRC's activities in more detail, which we hope you find informative.

Thank you for your interest in the ICRC, and best wishes for a successful opening celebration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Loane".

Geoff Loane
Head of Delegation