

THE Message

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ICNA in Bosnia

Tariqur Rahman, Director- ICNA Relief, visited Bosnia in August, after the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa. His purpose was to assess the situation and supervise ICNA Relief's projects. Dr. Shaik Ubaid, our associate editor, interviewed him:

SHAIK UBAID: You have recently returned from Bosnia. The situation has changed dramatically since then and the Government has liberated significant territory. Was this foreseeable?

TARIQUR REHMAN: We had foreseen it a long time back. It was so obvious. The Bosnians are fighting for a just and righteous cause, to defend their families and homes and to liberate their homeland. They have enough men, an abundance of valor. What they needed were weapons, heavy weapons. The Serbian invincibility is a myth, now exposed. The Serbs have been diverted by NATO bombing, Croatian artillery is helping the Muslims: the Muslims were able to achieve what they intended. We have maintained from the beginning that "lift and strike" was the solution.

And I witnessed first hand how much the Bosnian people and Army have progressed Islamically. Especially the volunteers, and the Mujahideen. Islamic knowledge and the Islamic spirit is important, not only to increase morale but also to show magnanimity and forgiveness. The Bosnians have suffered some of the worst atrocities in human history; only Islam can make them act with forgiveness and justice, as the Prophet forgave the Makkans and set the example.

SU: Can we consider the issue in Bosnia settled? Can we let our guard down?

TR: No, absolutely not. The road ahead is a long and dangerous one. The Croats will demand a price for their support. The Serbs still control Muslim lands in eastern Bosnia and their medium caliber artillery still surrounds Sarajevo. The West has put pressure on the Bosnian Government to accept an unjust (indeed ignoble) partition of Bosnia.

Bosnia will need help in rebuilding. The whole country has been destroyed by the Serbs and Croats: industrial and agricultural infrastructure, everything. They are totally dependent on outside help and the help from the West will have strings attached.

SU: There are many relief agencies working in Bosnia. We sometimes hear of fraud. How can we be sure which agency to help?

TR: Most of the Muslim relief agencies are honest. Some may be incompetent but fraud and dishonesty are rare in Muslim agencies. The best way to make sure your money is not being wasted is to seek the Bosnian Government's advice. Call the Bosnian Mission at the UN. ICNA Relief works closely with the Bosnian Government and also with the religious establishment, the Riyasat. We give priority to those projects which they prioritize.



ICNA is not "in the business" of relief. ICNA works for the betterment of humanity and ICNA Relief is one of the ways it tries to do so. We have no qualms in joining the efforts or helping another relief agency in a particular location or field, instead of duplicating efforts, if they are doing a good job.

SU: What areas and projects did you visit?

TR: Mainly the refugee centers in Zagreb, Split and Rijeka (all in Croatia). I visited most of the free Bosnian territory, Zenica, Zavidovici, Vares, Gornji, Vakuf in central Bosnia, Tuzla and Kalesya in the northern part of the country. I oversaw the distribution of emergency assistance in the Tuzla region, overwhelmed with the refugees from Srebrenica; and checked on the ICNA Relief-funded frontline hospital in Kalesya.

ICNA Relief Projects In Bosnia:

- Sponsorship of the frontline hospital in Kalesya, northern Bosnia.
- Sponsorship of the Elementary School in Sarajevo (1,000 pupils).
- Masjid-To-Masjid Project of revitalizing Islamic Centers around the country.
- Emergency food, medical and personal supplies (blankets, etc) for the Srebrenica/Zepa refugees.
- Tuzla Sewing Center for 23 sisters, victims of the Serbian rape campaign. ■