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The ICRC in Iran endeavours to clarify the fate of POWs it registered during the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war and acts as a neutral intermediary between the parties. It also works to strengthen its partnership with the Iranian Red Crescent Society, particularly in the fields of tracing, the promotion of IHL, the implementation of the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme and mine-risk education. The ICRC maintains two logistical and supply bases in Iran in support of ICRC operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It has been present in Iran since 1978, with some interruptions.

EXPENDITURE (IN CHF ,000)

Protection	921
Assistance	-
Prevention	1,108
Cooperation with National Societies	480
General	2

► **2,510**

of which: Overheads 153

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	86.2%
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PERSONNEL

5	expatriates
42	national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2005, the ICRC:

- ▶ worked with the Iranian authorities in the framework of a joint mechanism to exchange information on issues still outstanding from the Iran-Iraq war and clarified the cases of hundreds of former POWs previously unaccounted for; issued certificates of detention for thousands of former Iraqi POWs;
- ▶ acted as a neutral intermediary to facilitate the repatriation from Iraq of members of the Mojahedin-e Khalq who had expressed their wish to return to Iran; repatriated Iranian nationals from Afghanistan and the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station;
- ▶ restored contact between people in Iran and family members in Iraq and Afghanistan; located Iranians sought in Iraq by their families; reunited Afghan refugees with their families abroad;
- ▶ supported the Iranian Red Crescent Society in carrying out mine-risk education sessions for Afghan and Iraqi refugees and Iranian civilians living in mine-affected areas;
- ▶ supported the Iranian IHL committee in its work to promote the integration of IHL and its basic principles into national legislation, academic curricula and the teaching and training programmes of the Iranian armed forces;
- ▶ maintained a logistical supply capacity in Iran in support of ICRC operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

CONTEXT

In June, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won a resounding victory in Iran's presidential election, defeating former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in a run-off ballot. Mr Ahmadinejad replaced Mohammad Khatami, who stepped down after serving the maximum two consecutive terms in office provided for under Iran's constitution.

After being sworn in in August, the new president pursued efforts already undertaken by his predecessor to establish closer political, trade and security cooperation with other countries in the region. Iran also tightened security along its borders with Afghanistan and Iraq and in certain parts of the country inhabited mainly by ethnic Arab and Kurdish minorities, where anti-government rioting was reported between April and August. It furthermore increased security cooperation with Pakistan to prevent the infiltration of armed groups and cross-border drug smuggling.

The Iranian authorities repeatedly asserted that the country's nuclear programme was designed for peaceful purposes only, despite concern expressed by certain countries after its announcement in August that it had resumed uranium enrichment.

Iran welcomed the setting up of a new government in neighbouring Iraq and pledged its readiness to assist Iraq's political and economic development. The country also maintained significant support for the reconstruction of basic infrastructure in Afghanistan.

A series of high-level bilateral talks between Iran and Iraq covered a wide range of topics, including unresolved issues stemming from the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war. As a further sign of warming relations between the two countries, Iran and Iraq signed an agreement authorizing their nationals to visit pilgrimage sites on both sides of their common border. Iran also lifted visa restrictions for Iraqi citizens wishing to enter the country. Both countries agreed to remove leftover landmines along their common border.

Iran remained host to large numbers of mainly Afghan and Iraqi refugees. Following a meeting with Afghan officials and UNHCR, the Iranian authorities set 21 March 2006 as the new deadline for Afghan refugees to leave the country. However, under proposed revised laws, Iran planned to grant citizenship to Afghan children born in the country and to allow Afghan nationals entering the country legally to apply for residency.

Iran signed defence cooperation agreements with Algeria, Nigeria and Tajikistan and proposed similar agreements with Gulf Cooperation Council member States. It also continued discussions on building a gas pipeline linking Iran, Pakistan and India.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	260
RCMs distributed	250
DOCUMENTS ISSUED	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	3,661

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC reinforced cooperation with the Iranian authorities and with key sectors of Iranian society to address humanitarian issues of mutual concern and to promote implementation of IHL.

In the framework of a joint mechanism agreed to in February 2004, significant progress was made towards resolving cases of POWs unaccounted for in relation to the Iran-Iraq war. Several hundred such cases were clarified through research activities carried out by the Iranian authorities and information collected by the ICRC through contacts with families in both Iran and Iraq.

In parallel, discussions were held with the Iranian authorities on the creation of a mechanism to tackle the issue of people unaccounted for – both Iranians and Iraqis – in relation to the Iran-Iraq war.

The ICRC continued to support the work of the Iranian IHL committee set up to oversee and promote the national implementation of IHL. It also stepped up efforts to have IHL incorporated into the theoretical and practical training programmes of the Iranian armed forces and to promote the inclusion of the subject in academic curricula.

Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC facilitated the voluntary repatriation from Iraq to Iran of hundreds of members of the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) movement. It also repatriated a number of Iranian nationals after their release from detention/internment in Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay and Iraq.

Cooperation was developed with the Iranian Red Crescent in the fields of mine-risk education, tracing and the promotion of IHL. The ICRC and the National Society signed a “statement of intent”, aimed at forging closer ties at both national and international levels.

A logistics and supply base was kept open close to Iran’s borders with Iraq in support

of ICRC humanitarian activities in Iraq. Iran also became the focal point for the procurement of mainly water and sanitation materials for ICRC projects in Afghanistan, Georgia and countries in Africa.

CIVILIANS

Restoring family links

Afghan and Iraqi refugees in Iran were able to locate and re-establish contact with family members in their home countries through the ICRC’s RCM network, operated in conjunction with the National Societies of the countries concerned.

The ICRC, assisted by the Iranian Red Crescent, also continued to restore links through the RCM network between people in Iran and family members detained/interned abroad (Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay).

- ▶ 260 RCMs collected and 250 distributed from and to people in Iran, including Afghan refugees, and their family members located or detained/interned abroad
- ▶ 3 Afghan refugees, including 2 unaccompanied minors, resettled in third countries
- ▶ 48 of 138 tracing requests concerning Iranian nationals sought in Iraq resolved

Tracing people unaccounted for from the Iran-Iraq war

Significant progress was made in the framework of a joint mechanism agreed to with the Iranian authorities in 2004 to clarify the fate of registered POWs unaccounted for in relation to the Iran-Iraq war. In 2005, information collected through internal investigations conducted by the Iranian authorities and contacts made by the ICRC with families in Iraq and Iran resulted in the clarification of almost half of all pending cases.

Consultations were held with the Iranian authorities with a view to establishing a further mechanism to clarify the cases of

thousands of people other than POWs listed as missing in connection with the Iran-Iraq war. In support of this process, the ICRC worked on the completion of a Farsi version of an ICRC document entitled *The Missing*.

- ▶ 473 cases of former Iraqi POWs unaccounted for resolved
- ▶ 3,661 certificates of detention issued for former Iraqi POWs to enable them to qualify for financial allowances provided by the Iraqi authorities

Repatriating Iranian nationals from Iraq and elsewhere

Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC carried out several operations to repatriate members of the MEK in Iraq who wished to return to Iran. It also repatriated Iranian nationals after their release from detention/internment abroad.

- ▶ 187 MEK members repatriated to Iran from Iraq
- ▶ 2 Iranian nationals repatriated after their release from detention/internment in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay

AUTHORITIES

ICRC support for the Iranian IHL committee, an interministerial body hosted by the Iranian Red Crescent, contributed to the organization of events to promote IHL within the armed forces, academic circles and the media. The ICRC concluded an agreement with the committee to establish a reference library and research centre on IHL available to all sectors of Iranian society.

Contact was maintained with the Tehran-based Parliamentary Union of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to discuss future projects on raising IHL awareness in its member States. The ICRC provided the organization with a standard library on IHL.

In cooperation with the Qom Institute of Theology and other prominent local

partners, the ICRC finalized preparations for a regional conference on Islam and IHL scheduled to take place in Qom in 2006.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Meetings were held with military officers and training instructors on the integration of IHL into military doctrine, operating procedures and instruction and training programmes. At their request, the ICRC submitted a draft of a top-level order regarding the introduction of IHL in military teaching and training programmes, together with models of ICRC training programmes on the subject.

Consultations were also held with the national IHL committee on the possibility of sending Iranian military officers on IHL courses in San Remo.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The Iranian Red Crescent, the national IHL committee and the Ministry of Education concluded an agreement on the launch of the Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) programme on an experimental basis in Iranian schools. A steering committee was established to oversee the process and EHL teaching tools were translated into Farsi. Teacher-trainers presented the programme to hundreds of youths in summer camps to assess how it was perceived before being pilot-tested in schools as of early 2006. Two teacher-trainer courses on EHL were organized for 40 senior educational instructors.

The ICRC reached an agreement with a prominent university for the development of post-graduate courses in IHL, and lectures on the subject were given in several law faculties. In addition, the ICRC sponsored the participation of two law students in a course on IHL in Bangalore and that of a number of law professors and students in a similar course in Beirut. Discussions were also initiated on the possibility of Iranian students participating in an IHL moot-court competition.

The Iranian media were regularly briefed on ICRC activities in Iran and worldwide. In cooperation with the national IHL committee, a seminar on IHL was organized for journalists, and the ICRC sponsored the participation of an Iranian journalist in a regional media seminar on IHL in Dubai.

A photo exhibition highlighting ICRC and Red Crescent humanitarian activities during the Iran-Iraq war was inaugurated at the National Society's headquarters. The exhibition was due to be shown across the country in 2006.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

In April, the president of the Iranian Red Crescent held talks with the ICRC president in Geneva to discuss the further development of bilateral cooperation in Iran and at the international level. In August 2005, the National Society and the ICRC signed a "statement of intent" outlining potential areas of cooperation in the international field as well as in national programmes.

The Iranian Red Crescent continued to provide assistance in tracing activities to restore contacts between refugees in Iran and family members abroad and between families in Iran and relatives detained/interned abroad.

A regional basic training course, aimed at preparing delegates for Red Cross/Red Crescent missions overseas, was held in Tehran in August in cooperation with the International Federation and the Iranian Red Crescent. Ten representatives from the Iranian Red Crescent and 12 from other National Societies in the Middle East and Europe participated.

A tracing workshop was organized for Red Crescent staff and, to facilitate its work, the ICRC provided the National Society with a computer, a scanner, a Farsi version of an ICRC publication and two ICRC video presentations on tracing techniques.

With ICRC support, the Iranian Red Crescent designed a set of mine-risk educational tools, including visual aids, leaflets, posters and pocket calendars, and delivered safety messages to more than 20,000 civilians in the five provinces worst affected by mine contamination along Iran's borders with Iraq and Afghanistan. The ICRC continued to provide technical support to the Iranian Red Crescent, in particular on data collection on mine incidents and victims.