

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF



◆ ICRC mission + ICRC office/presence

The ICRC has been in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with some interruptions, since 1977. It seeks to clarify the fate of POWs registered during the Iran-Iraq war or identified through RCMs. It works in partnership with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the fields of tracing, physical rehabilitation, international relief efforts and IHL promotion, for which the national IHL committee is also an important partner. It is engaged in a dialogue about IHL and Islam. The ICRC supports mine-risk education and access to health care for Afghan migrants.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2015

- ▶ Iranian and Iraqi authorities jointly recovered the remains of 1,023 people, but had few opportunities to develop common procedures to clarify the fate of persons missing in relation to the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war.
- ▶ Islamic scholars discussed the similarities between IHL and Islamic jurisprudence at a domestic conference hosted by the Centre for Comparative Studies on Islam and IHL in Qom, with ICRC backing.
- ▶ Vulnerable people, such as Afghan migrants, accessed preventive care and other health services through a project of a local NGO and the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with ICRC support.
- ▶ The National Society and the ICRC expanded their areas of cooperation, notably holding emergency-care courses, where health/humanitarian professionals from local/international organizations honed their skills.
- ▶ Dialogue/events with/for the authorities and civil society actors, including religious scholars – such as during the ICRC president’s visit – helped broaden acceptance for humanitarian principles/IHL and the ICRC.

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	1,100
Assistance	1,168
Prevention	1,424
Cooperation with National Societies	543
General	52
Total	4,287
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	262

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	86%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	7
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	42

YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

MEDIUM

PROTECTION

	Total
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)	
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	75
RCMs distributed	102
Phone calls facilitated between family members	2
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	62
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
Restoring family links	
RCMs distributed	4

CONTEXT

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, thousands of families remained without information on relatives missing in connection with the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq war. Irregular Afghan migrants, numbering several millions, faced difficulties in accessing basic services on account of their status. People in areas bordering Iraq and those returning to Afghanistan were exposed to the risks of mines/explosive remnants of war (ERW).

In July, the Islamic Republic of Iran signed a long-term international agreement on its nuclear programme. This paved the way for the lifting of sanctions imposed on the country, and boosted its efforts to enhance its international profile. The government continued to monitor security-related developments and humanitarian emergencies in the region, particularly in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued to: help address the issue of persons missing in connection with the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq war; strengthen its partnership with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran; back local initiatives to mitigate risks related to people's health and their exposure to mines/ERW; and foster acceptance of humanitarian principles, IHL and the ICRC.

As a neutral intermediary, the ICRC supported joint Iranian–Iraqi efforts to clarify the fate of persons still missing in relation to the past conflict. It chaired one meeting each of the tripartite committee on missing persons and of the joint working group tasked by the committee to facilitate exhumations and transfers of human remains. These efforts resulted in the recovery and repatriation of the remains of over a thousand people; opportunities to work towards common procedures were, however, limited. To help advance the recovery and identification process, the ICRC enabled Iranian forensic experts to bolster their capacities; for instance, it organized training events with the Legal Medicine Organization (LMO) and sponsored a study tour abroad.

Dialogue and events with/for the authorities and civil society representatives – such as during the ICRC president's visit – helped to raise awareness of humanitarian issues, encourage incorporation of key IHL provisions into domestic law and build acceptance of the ICRC. For example, at one event, national IHL committee members and other decision-makers/experts discussed the IHL framework governing the use of weapons. Progress was made in formalizing the ICRC's legal status in the country.

Sustained support to the Centre for Comparative Studies on Islam and IHL in Qom (hereafter Qom Centre), the national IHL committee and the National Society notably helped promote IHL and its compatibility with Islamic jurisprudence. Hundreds of Islamic scholars/researchers explored the subject during a domestic conference.

Pursuant to their 2012 partnership agreement, the National Society and the ICRC sustained their cooperation in the provision of family-links, mine-risk education and physical rehabilitation services, and in promoting humanitarian principles/IHL. Cooperation in other areas was explored – for instance, through the organization of a war-surgery seminar and a Health Emergencies in Large Populations (HELP) course for health/humanitarian professionals, and coordination on responding to some humanitarian needs in the region.

Activities for vulnerable people were jointly implemented with the National Society and other local organizations. Vulnerable Afghan migrants, including refugees, and Iranians accessed health care and learnt more about good hygiene/health practices through an ICRC-backed project implemented by a local NGO and the National Society. The National Society and the ICRC raised people's awareness of safer behaviour around mines/ERW and facilitated assistance for mine victims whose needs were not covered by national programmes. Although formal renewal of the cooperation agreement with the Iranian Mine Action Centre (IRMAC) remained pending, the centre continued to draw on ICRC input to develop its capacities as central coordinator of mine/ERW-related activities.

Iranians used National Society/ICRC family-links services to contact their relatives abroad, as did Afghan and Iraqi migrants, including refugees, and Afghan detainees.

CIVILIANS

Joint Iranian–Iraqi efforts lead to recovery of the remains of some 1,000 people

The Iranian and Iraqi governments sustained their joint efforts, supported by the ICRC as a neutral intermediary, to clarify the fate of people missing in connection with the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq war. In line with its existing agreements with these governments, the ICRC continued to chair both the tripartite committee on missing persons and its joint working group.

Excavations in the two countries, facilitated by the working group, led to the recovery of the remains of 1,023 people. Through the efforts of both governments and under ICRC auspices, the remains of 684 people were handed over to the Iranian authorities; the remains of 37 people, exhumed from Iranian sites, were transferred to the Iraqi authorities.

The working group and the tripartite committee each held one ICRC-chaired meeting, where Iranian and Iraqi authorities and forensic experts discussed challenges encountered in their work, such as the limited opportunities to work towards common procedures. They agreed on a 2016 action plan, which included strengthening their coordination – through regular meetings, for example.

Iranians build their understanding of forensic best practices with ICRC support

Institutions involved in the identification of human remains continued to boost their capacities. The LMO and one genetic laboratory received equipment and financial assistance; their personnel obtained advice from a forensic geneticist, whose five-day visit was organized by the ICRC. To help ensure proper human-remains management during emergencies, the LMO organized a course on the subject for its staff, along with personnel from the National Society and other pertinent organizations.

Local forensic professionals shared their experiences and honed their proficiency during various events. These included: a study tour in Cyprus, which involved meetings with specialists from the Committee on Missing Persons; a round-table on humanitarian forensics in Saudi Arabia (see *Kuwait*); and a regional course on forensic anthropology in the Islamic Republic of Iran, jointly run with the LMO.

The defence and foreign affairs ministries and other parties concerned, continued to be engaged by the ICRC on the issue

of missing persons, with a view to advancing the recovery/identification process and increasing awareness of the potential psychological needs of the families affected.

Relatives separated by detention exchange news

Iranians connected with kin detained in neighbouring countries or held at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba through RCMs, phone/video calls and/or oral messages relayed by ICRC delegates.

Some 500 Iraqi ex-POWs received attestations of detention, facilitating their application for State benefits and other proceedings.

At their request, five former members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) were repatriated from Iraq, with the Iranian authorities' approval and under ICRC auspices. The ICRC remained ready to meet with former PMOI members who had returned from Iraq, towards monitoring their prospective humanitarian concerns.

Afghan and Iraqi migrants, including refugees, and Afghans detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran also contacted their relatives using Movement family-links services. National Society staff enhanced their ability to deliver these services through ICRC training.

Vulnerable Afghan migrants address some of their health needs

In the Golshahr district of Mashhad city, thousands of vulnerable Afghan migrants, including refugees, and Iranians accessed preventive care and other health services through an ongoing project of a local NGO and the National Society, supported by the ICRC with advice and funding. About 5,190 people received basic care during home visits by the NGO's staff; some 5,470 people, including those visited, sought consultation at the NGO's clinic and/or obtained referrals for further diagnosis and treatment. Others benefited from the National Society's mobile health caravans.

Women and children learnt more about good hygiene/health practices at information sessions. Community members trained in such areas as first aid and disaster preparedness.

As the project expanded its range of services, hundreds of people availed themselves of psychosocial support or services to mitigate the consequences of drug use. Those in need of social assistance were referred to other NGOs in the area.

People learn to deal with mine/ERW-related risks more effectively

Over 162,640 people – Iranians living in western provinces and Afghan returnees passing through eastern provinces – better acquainted themselves with safer behaviour around mines/ERW during dissemination sessions conducted by National Society staff/volunteers, with ICRC financial/technical support. Towards ensuring that people affected by radiological hazards could receive appropriate aid, some National Society personnel furthered their pertinent skills during an ICRC workshop.

In Kordestan province, 42 civilian mine victims whose needs were not covered by government assistance programmes accessed physical rehabilitation services through a National Society/ICRC project. They were among the 100 victims identified by the IRMAC through a needs assessment completed in 2014.

Formal renewal of the cooperation agreement with the IRMAC remained pending, but the centre continued to draw on ICRC input to develop its capacities as central coordinator of mine/ERW-related activities. Plans to explore the possibility of launching a livelihood project for mine/ERW victims did not push through.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

Dialogue and events – notably during the ICRC president's visit – with/for the authorities and civil society representatives, including Islamic scholars, helped build support for humanitarian principles/IHL and the ICRC, and raised awareness of humanitarian issues in the region, such as the protection/management of water infrastructure during emergencies.

Progress was made in formalizing the ICRC's legal status in the country. Contact with the defence ministry was maintained (see *Civilians*); a draft agreement on IHL-related initiatives awaited approval.

Iranian authorities discuss the IHL framework governing the use of weapons

During national IHL committee meetings, which the ICRC attended at the committee's invitation, members continued deliberations on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a law on the emblem. They were briefed on the Strengthening IHL process and other topics pertinent to the 32nd International Conference. At forums to foster the integration of key IHL provisions into domestic law, committee members and other decision-makers/experts discussed the rights of chemical-weapon victims, the IHL framework governing the use of weapons, and the need to safeguard health-care delivery (see also *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*).

Actors involved in promoting/implementing IHL enhanced their capacities with ICRC support. National IHL committee members contributed to an international conference (see *Sri Lanka*), and a judge to an experts' meeting in Switzerland. National IHL committee and National Society representatives attended an advanced course in San Remo, Italy. Foreign ministry officials and National Society staff joined courses abroad (see *New Delhi and Pakistan*).

Iranian officials and the ICRC hosted a round-table on environmental emergencies; participants included policy-makers from neighbouring countries.

Scholars help promote similarities between Islamic jurisprudence and IHL

Islamic scholars/researchers enriched the dialogue on Islamic jurisprudence and IHL, partly through the activities of the Qom Centre, which was supported by the national IHL committee, the National Society and the ICRC. For example, some 300 scholars and others discussed the topic and the ICRC's activities at a conference and at a workshop, held by the centre with a partner institute. An international conference on Islam/IHL was postponed to 2016 amid administrative constraints.

The Qom Centre published a revised study on weapons of mass destruction, translated IHL/Islamic references from Farsi into Arabic/English, and distributed/promoted its publications among scholars in the region. With prominent scholars/institutions, the centre conducted research on humanitarian concerns, such as the protection of medical services, and, through its library, supported students/researchers' work.

A teacher of Islamic jurisprudence in seminaries added to his knowledge of IHL at a regional course (see *Lebanon*).

Iranian universities bolster their ability to teach IHL

Iranian academics, with ICRC support, attended advanced courses (see *New Delhi*) and produced scholarly publications; a study tour in Switzerland enabled some to gain added insight into developing an IHL master's programme. One university agreed to ICRC support for IHL curricular integration; others obtained IHL references. University students participated in conferences (see *Armenia*) and/or moot court competitions hosted locally or abroad (see, for example, *Pakistan*).

Two editors/journalists learnt more about humanitarian reportage at a conference (see *New Delhi*). Students of a journalism university run by the country's official news agency were similarly briefed; the agency and the ICRC extended their agreement on training activities.

The general public better understood humanitarian concerns and the ICRC through media reports, events, including an ICRC-supported film festival, and ICRC print/audiovisual materials.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

National Society enables health/humanitarian professionals to hone their emergency-care skills

Pursuant to their 2012 partnership agreement, the National Society and the ICRC worked to assist vulnerable people and promote humanitarian principles/IHL (see *Civilians* and *Actors of influence*).

In accordance with a separate agreement, the two organizations continued to cooperate in the area of physical rehabilitation, through joint activities undertaken locally (see *Civilians*) and abroad, such as establishing a physical rehabilitation department in a hospital (see *Lebanon*) and conducting orthotics workshops in Madagascar and Tajikistan. Movement partners convened in the country to discuss the rights/social inclusion of disabled people.

The National Society and the ICRC explored other areas for cooperation, notably health. At a war-surgery seminar organized with the National Society and a local medical association, doctors honed their skills and learnt more about the Health Care in Danger project and the ICRC. With a local medical university and the ICRC, the National Society organized a HELP course, enabling its personnel and health/humanitarian professionals from international/local organizations to better respond to large-scale health emergencies. The National Society and the ICRC coordinated on responding to some humanitarian needs in the region.

The National Society supported the ICRC's dialogue with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (see *Iraq*) and discussed improving coordination/cooperation at Movement meetings, including with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (see also *Afghanistan*). National Society staff/volunteers augmented their grasp of the Fundamental Principles at ICRC briefings.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
Red Cross messages (RCMs)			UAMs/SC*		
RCMs collected		75			
RCMs distributed		102	3		
Phone calls facilitated between family members		2			
Reunifications, transfers and repatriations					
Human remains transferred/repatriated		37			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		153	41	38	34
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		5			
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		62			
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		1			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		212	48	43	38
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		14			
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)					
Restoring family links					
RCMs distributed		4			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		508			

*Unaccompanied minors/separated children