

KUWAIT (regional)

COVERING: Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates



The ICRC has been in Kuwait since the 1990–1991 Gulf War. It focuses on humanitarian needs remaining from that war or arising from current armed conflicts and other situations of violence in the wider region. Its work includes activities for people deprived of their freedom in the countries covered and the promotion of IHL and its own role as a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organization, among governments and other influential circles. Strengthening partnerships with the Red Crescent Societies of the region is another priority, along with resource mobilization and coordination with other actors.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2016

- ▶ People detained in Saudi Arabia in connection with the conflict in Yemen received ICRC visits and had their families notified of their situation; these were the organization's first such visits to detainees in the country since 1994.
- ▶ The region's authorities engaged the ICRC in dialogue on the findings of its visits to detainees. Bahraini, Kuwaiti and Qatari authorities discussed best practices in health-care provision in prisons.
- ▶ Members of families dispersed by conflict, detention or migration kept in touch via RCMs, phone calls and other family-links services. People contacted relatives detained abroad or seeking asylum at the Jordan–Syria border.
- ▶ Military officers in Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia learnt more about IHL at ICRC-supported courses. Dialogue with Saudi Arabian authorities on the conduct of military operations in Yemen continued.
- ▶ Two experts hired by the ICRC continued their comprehensive review of the data held by the commission in charge of clarifying the fate of persons missing in relation to the 1990–1991 Gulf War, and the methods for collecting them.

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	2,438
Assistance	446
Prevention	2,279
Cooperation with National Societies	717
General	38
Total	5,918
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	<i>361</i>

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	84%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	14
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	40

YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

PROTECTION	Total
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)	
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	26
RCMs distributed	16
Phone calls facilitated between family members	169
Tracing cases closed positively (subject located or fate established)	3
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	13,748
Detainees visited and monitored individually	351
Number of visits carried out	85
Number of places of detention visited	38
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	300
RCMs distributed	67
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	17

CONTEXT

The Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) continued to exert influence in the region and beyond. Saudi Arabia led an international military coalition in Yemen, and several GCC Member States took part in military operations against the Islamic State group in the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria).

GCC governments and National Societies, either jointly or on their own, assisted people affected by the armed conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere. Saudi Arabia coordinated its humanitarian aid for Yemen through the King Salman Centre for Humanitarian Aid and Relief. For the fourth consecutive year, Kuwait co-hosted an international pledging conference to strengthen NGOs' humanitarian action for victims of the Syrian conflict.

Socio-political developments in the wider region fuelled protests. In Bahrain, tensions between the government and opposition groups caused unrest, and led to arrests during security operations.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC's regional delegation in Kuwait strove to raise awareness among GCC Member States and organizations of the plight of conflict-affected people in the region, and to foster support for IHL. At regional forums, high-level meetings and other events, representatives of governments and civil society – international and intergovernmental organizations, Islamic charities and UN agencies – were urged to support the Movement's neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian activities in the region and beyond. Salalah, Oman, remained an important logistical hub for the ICRC's assistance operations to aid conflict-affected people in Yemen.

Detainees in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia – including migrants – were visited in accordance with standard ICRC procedures; particularly vulnerable inmates were monitored individually. Findings from these visits were confidentially shared with the authorities concerned, with a view to helping them improve detainees' treatment and living conditions. Following discussions with the Saudi Arabian defence ministry, the ICRC visited 297 people – including minors – detained in relation to the conflict in Yemen; these were the first such visits of the organization to detainees in the country since 1994. At the request of the defence ministry, the ICRC assisted in the repatriation of 52 Yemeni minors after their release from detention.

Families in the region used Movement family-links services to restore or maintain contact with relatives separated from them by armed conflict, detention or migration. Families contacted relatives held at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba; some did so through video calls. The ICRC enabled former internees resettled in Oman to spend time with their relatives, during ICRC-organized visits. In relation to the 1990–1991 Gulf War: former Iraqi POWs received attestations of captivity for use in processing State assistance and legal claims; and the ICRC-chaired Tripartite Commission reviewed its approach to searching for remains of missing persons.

GCC National Societies drew on the ICRC's support to reinforce their capacity to respond to local and international emergencies. For example, National Society staff and volunteers trained in applying the Safer Access Framework, and attended a course on large-scale health emergencies. At training sessions, the ICRC

emphasized the importance of conducting humanitarian activities in line with the Fundamental Principles and in coordination with other Movement components. Regular meetings among the region's National Societies helped reinforce this message and promote coordination. The ICRC's partnership with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society became more operational after the signing of four agreements on providing assistance to people in need in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria.

CIVILIANS

Following dialogue with the Saudi Arabian authorities, the ICRC visited for the first time and checked on the situation of nine people resettled in a counselling and care centre in Riyadh, after their release from the Guantanamo Bay internment facility. In Bahrain, the authorities and the ICRC continued their dialogue on the protection concerns of people arrested in relation to the ongoing unrest.

Members of dispersed families keep in touch through visits, video calls or RCMs

Family members separated by armed conflict, detention or migration maintained or restored contact through family-links services offered by GCC National Societies and the ICRC. Families contacted relatives at the Guantanamo Bay internment facility; some made video calls for the first time, and/or sent RCMs or parcels to them. Nine former internees who had resettled in Oman spent time with their relatives, during ICRC-organized visits (see also *Yemen*). Three tracing cases were resolved; the families were put in touch with their relatives at the Jordan–Syria border (see *Jordan*).

With the ICRC's support, GCC National Societies strove to expand their capacity to provide family-links services across the region. The Kuwait Red Crescent Society took steps to improve the delivery of these services to migrants (see also *People deprived of their freedom*). The Qatar Red Crescent Society incorporated an action plan on family-links services in its contingency planning and disaster preparedness. The ICRC continued to urge the Bahraini, Emirati, Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian National Societies to incorporate family-links services in their contingency planning. It met with migrant communities and the relevant agencies in Kuwait to gain a fuller understanding of the humanitarian needs of vulnerable migrants and of the existing mechanisms for referring them to the appropriate services.

Experts review data on persons who went missing during the 1990–1991 Gulf War

With the ICRC chairing and acting as a neutral intermediary in the Tripartite Commission – comprising Iraq, Kuwait and former coalition States (France, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America) – and with the UN Mission in Iraq as an observer, the parties involved pursued efforts to clarify the fate of persons missing in relation to the 1990–1991 Gulf War. Two experts hired by the ICRC – a researcher and a forensic expert – continued their comprehensive review of the data held by the commission and the methods for collecting such data.

The commission organized several exhumation missions in Iraq and Kuwait, but no human remains were recovered. However, following announcements made by the commission through the media, a few witnesses came forward with new information on possible locations of some remains of people.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detaining authorities in the region discuss how to improve the delivery of health-care services

The ICRC visited detainees in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia in accordance with its standard procedures. Particularly vulnerable people – foreigners, women, people arrested in relation to the ongoing unrest in Bahrain, and security detainees in Kuwait – were followed up individually. In Kuwait, more migrants detained in police stations were visited than in past years. In Saudi Arabia, following dialogue with the defence ministry, the ICRC visited 297 people – including 59 minors – detained in relation to the conflict in Yemen (see below); these were the first such visits of the organization to detainees in Saudi Arabia since 1994. With the help of ICRC delegates, the detainees sent news of their whereabouts to their families – who had yet to be informed of their relatives' detention – in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and other countries.

After these visits, the authorities in the countries concerned received confidential feedback and, where appropriate, recommendations for improving detainees' living conditions and treatment – particularly during arrest and the initial stages of detention – and for reinforcing respect for judicial guarantees and the principle of *non-refoulement*. Dialogue between the authorities and the ICRC also focused on improving penitentiary services to better address issues related to detainees' health care. Based on these discussions, the ICRC developed training programmes for penitentiary personnel in Bahrain and Kuwait, with a view to implementing them in 2017. At an ICRC regional workshop in Kuwait, around 25 prison health staff from Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar exchanged best practices in providing health-care services in places of detention.

Moreover, the Kuwaiti government supported the participation of three officials from the health ministry and one from the interior ministry in an ICRC-organized seminar on fostering respect for medical ethics in places of detention (see *Jordan*). With ICRC support, two prison doctors from Bahrain attended a course on prison health care in Basel, Switzerland. Authorities in the region learnt more about designing and managing detention facilities during study tours abroad.

Yemeni children are repatriated, upon their release from detention

At the request of the Saudi Arabian defence ministry and with the agreement of all parties concerned, the ICRC assisted in the repatriation of 52 Yemeni children. With ICRC support, Kuwaiti authorities resumed the use of a video-call system in a women's prison; subsequently, three women contacted their families abroad.

Through the ICRC, some migrants whose countries did not have diplomatic representation in Kuwait requested for travel documents from their embassies outside the country. Some 120 documents were delivered to the migrants by the ICRC, thereby reducing the time that they spent in detention prior to their deportation.

A total of 2,315 former Iraqi POWs who had been held in Saudi Arabia during the 1990–1991 Gulf War received attestations of captivity, which enabled them to apply for financial assistance in Iraq or helped facilitate legal procedures in the third countries where they had resettled.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

GCC States and organizations support ICRC activities for conflict-affected people in the region

During high-level meetings and other events, the ICRC's dialogue with the GCC authorities sought to further their awareness of IHL and humanitarian issues, and to gain their support for the organization's activities in the region, particularly in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. In Oman, dialogue with the authorities facilitated the transport of emergency aid, such as food, for conflict-affected people in Yemen, through the ICRC's logistics base in Salalah and across international shipping lines. During a visit to Oman, the ICRC's president and the national authorities discussed ways to strengthen the ICRC's presence in the country. Elsewhere in the region, the King Salman Centre in Saudi Arabia and the foreign affairs ministry of the United Arab Emirates pledged their support for the ICRC.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	Bahrain	Kuwait	Qatar	Saudi Arabia
ICRC visits				
Detainees visited	4,112	6,977	2,362	297
<i>of whom women</i>		1,326	191	
<i>of whom minors</i>	152	26		59
Detainees visited and monitored individually	12	37	5	297
<i>of whom women</i>		13	2	
<i>of whom boys</i>		57		
Detainees newly registered	8	32	4	297
<i>of whom women</i>		13	2	
<i>of whom boys</i>		19	2	36
Number of visits carried out	6	73	4	2
Number of places of detention visited	2	30	4	2
Restoring family links				
RCMs collected		118		182
RCMs distributed		67		
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		17		
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC				52
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		2,315		

To supplement these efforts, the ICRC organized or participated in country-level and regional forums. Representatives of governments, National Societies, regional or multilateral bodies, civil society and faith-based organizations from the wider Arab world learnt more about the ICRC's activities in the region – including the Health Care in Danger project – at forums on humanitarian action organized in Kuwait for both local and regional entities. Humanitarian actors in the region and the ICRC also exchanged views on specific humanitarian issues, such as the role of technology and innovation in their operations and post-traumatic psychological disorders among humanitarian personnel.

The ICRC maintained contact with State and humanitarian agencies throughout the region, such as the GCC secretariat, with a view to discussing possibilities for cooperation.

Kuwaiti and Qatari military personnel and legal experts strengthen their grasp of IHL

The ICRC continued to remind the GCC States taking part in the military coalition in Yemen of their obligations under IHL; it also engaged the Saudi Arabian authorities in dialogue on the conduct of military operations in Yemen.

Over 100 senior Kuwaiti and Qatari officers furthered their understanding of IHL, and of the ICRC's mandate and role in armed conflict, at annual courses organized by command and staff colleges and the ICRC. At the request of a military educational institute for field officers in Kuwait, the ICRC lent its expertise for a training exercise where 136 participating students learnt more about taking humanitarian considerations into account while planning military operations. A group of 13 Saudi Arabian military officers learnt more about IHL and related topics at a training session in Geneva, Switzerland.

To encourage the ratification of IHL treaties and respect for the law, the ICRC continued supporting the participation of State officials in IHL-related events. Ten GCC representatives attended a meeting, in Switzerland, of national IHL committees and other IHL-implementing bodies from around the world; the meeting was organized by the Swiss authorities, the Swiss Red Cross and the ICRC. Participants in the meeting discussed best practices among national IHL committees for promoting and helping develop domestic laws and policies to ensure respect for IHL; they paid particular attention to the protection due to IDPs and migrants in armed conflict, and to those seeking and providing health care (see *International law and policy*). In Bahrain, the Judicial and Legal Studies Institute conducted, with ICRC support, an advanced course for government officials, of whom 20 were interior ministry and military justice personnel. Officials from the Saudi Arabian defence ministry attended an advanced IHL course in San Remo.

The ICRC maintained its network of legal professionals, diplomats and academics. Eight legal professionals from Kuwait and Qatar – including a representative from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation – attended advanced IHL courses abroad (see *Lebanon* and *Tunis*). Diplomats and/or academics attended IHL courses organized by the Kuwait Institute for Judicial Studies and a regional IHL seminar at the Emirates Diplomatic Institute; the latter aimed to build the capacities of diplomats specializing in IHL. The delegation also continued to provide publications to universities, with a view to encouraging students to pursue further studies in IHL.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

GCC National Societies strengthen their ability to work in violence-affected areas

GCC National Societies continued to address humanitarian concerns in the region, including the need for separated family members to reconnect (see *Civilians*). Aided by ICRC expertise, GCC National Societies took steps to mitigate violence-related risks faced by their staff and volunteers while working in volatile areas. For example, they enhanced their communication capacities to more efficiently promote IHL, particularly the protection due to health personnel – in line with the Health Care in Danger project – and the red cross and red crescent emblems. At advanced workshops, 35 members of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent's emergency response team learnt more about applying the Safer Access Framework, and about best practices in operating internationally. The Qatari and Lebanese National Societies, together with the ICRC, organized an advanced course on responding to large-scale health emergencies (see *Lebanon*).

The Kuwaiti National Society and the ICRC signed agreements to strengthen their partnership in providing assistance to people in need in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria.

Regular meetings, including those held by the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization, helped ensure coordination among the region's National Societies, thereby maximizing impact (see, for example, *Afghanistan* and *Jordan*). The ICRC emphasized the importance of conducting humanitarian activities in line with the Fundamental Principles, and in coordination with other Movement components, at training sessions, such as a workshop for 20 Bahrain Red Crescent Society volunteers. At their annual meeting, legal advisers from GCC National Societies discussed how to strengthen the managerial capacities, organizational structure and legal bases of their National Societies.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
RCMs and other means of family contact			UAMs/SC		
RCMs collected		26			
RCMs distributed		16			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		169			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		6	3		
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		3			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		1,528	12	2	48
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		1,396			
Documents					
People to whom travel documents were issued		3			
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		2			
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)					
ICRC visits			Women	Minors	
Detainees visited		13,748	1,517	237	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		351	15		57
Detainees newly registered		341	15		57
Number of visits carried out		85			
Number of places of detention visited		38			
RCMs and other means of family contact					
RCMs collected		300			
RCMs distributed		67			
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		17			
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC		52			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		2,315			

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
Health				
Visits carried out by health staff			18	
Places of detention visited by health staff	Structures		5	