

# MEXICO CITY (regional)

**COVERING:** Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama



## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	<b>1,370</b>
Assistance	<b>331</b>
Prevention	<b>2,671</b>
Cooperation with National Societies	<b>562</b>
General	-

▶ **4,934**

of which: Overheads 301

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>91%</b>
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## PERSONNEL

Expatriates	<b>10</b>
National staff (daily workers not included)	<b>34</b>

## KEY POINTS

In 2010, the ICRC:

- ▶ familiarized over 1,700 members of the Central American, Guatemalan, Honduran and Mexican armed forces with IHL and the rules governing the use of force in law enforcement
- ▶ in cooperation with the National Societies, provided health care to border communities in Panama and first-aid, ambulance and limb-fitting services to injured migrants in Central America and Mexico
- ▶ with the judiciary authorities, held Mexico's first national conference of forensic services, resulting in the creation of a working group to establish a national protocol for the identification of dead bodies
- ▶ under the auspices of the Mexican Foreign Ministry, organized an international conference of national IHL committees from Latin America and the Caribbean
- ▶ following an earlier agreement with the Mexican navy, welcomed the willingness expressed by Mexico's National Defence Secretariat to cooperate on the integration of IHL and human rights norms by the army and air force
- ▶ in Honduras, signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education on an "Opening Humanitarian Spaces" project to address the consequences of violence affecting inner-city schools

The Mexico delegation opened in 1998, becoming a regional delegation in 2002. It strengthens the capacities of the region's National Societies, works with them to meet the needs of violence-affected people, including those in Panama affected by the conflict in Colombia, and vulnerable migrants, monitors detainees' conditions, and endeavours to ascertain the fate of missing persons, particularly in Guatemala. It helps integrate IHL into armed forces' doctrine and into academic curricula, and human rights norms applicable to the use of force into the doctrine, training and operations of security forces. The delegation hosts the regional advisory service on IHL.

## CONTEXT

Growing violence linked to the expansion of organized crime meant that the region's governments frequently deployed armed forces alongside police to ensure law and order. Social tensions often led to protest movements and, occasionally, violence. In Mexico, armed confrontations between drug cartels and security forces had severe consequences for civilians caught in the crossfire and exposed many, including Red Cross workers, journalists and human rights defenders, to deadly dangers. In Guatemala, the government declared a state of siege in Coban in December to curb organized crime.

Tensions between Costa Rica and Nicaragua arose over their San Juan river border dispute. Panama continued to feel the

spillover effects of the conflict and drug trade in Colombia, particularly in the Darién border region. In Honduras, following the overthrow of the previous government in June 2009, the new government continued to seek recognition by the Organization of American States (OAS).

Migrants headed for the United States of America risked abuses, physical injury and even death on their hazardous journey. The region remained affected by the issue of people unaccounted for as a result of past and current violence and by migration.

In Cuba, after the hunger strike and death of a human rights activist, the authorities released the majority of a group of 75 detainees allegedly held for political reasons.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS			
PROTECTION			
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>			
<b>Red Cross messages</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>UAMs/SCs*</b>
RCMs distributed		2	
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>Women</b> <b>Minors</b>
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		2	
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2010 (people)		3	1
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)<sup>1</sup></b>			
<b>ICRC visits</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>Women</b> <b>Minors</b>
Detainees visited and monitored individually		84	3
Detainees newly registered		53	2
Number of visits carried out		40	
Number of places of detention visited		21	
<b>Restoring family links</b>		<b>Total</b>	
RCMs collected		1	
RCMs distributed		1	
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		2	
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		6	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		2	

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Honduras, Mexico and Panama

ASSISTANCE				
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)<sup>2</sup></b>				
<b>Health</b>			<b>Total</b>	<b>Women</b> <b>Children</b>
Health centres supported	Structures		3	
Average catchment population			2,290	
Consultations	Patients		662	
	<i>of which curative</i>	Patients		54      334
	<i>of which ante/post-natal</i>	Patients		18
Immunizations	Doses		337	
	<i>of which for children aged five or under</i>	Doses	201	
	<i>of which for women of childbearing age</i>	Doses	136	
Health education	Sessions		2	
<b>WOUNDED AND SICK</b>				
<b>Physical rehabilitation<sup>3</sup></b>				
Centres supported	Structures		4	
Patients receiving services	Patients		36	
New patients fitted with prostheses	Patients		36	
Prostheses delivered	Units		36	

2. Panama only

3. Guatemala and Mexico

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

As a priority, alongside cooperation on IHL integration, the ICRC strengthened its dialogue with Mexican and Central American armed and security forces, including, at the regional level, the Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CAFC), on international human rights norms applicable to law enforcement operations. After completing the training of Mexican federal police instructors in human rights norms and humanitarian principles, the ICRC pursued discussions with the Public Security Secretariat regarding the integration of these norms into police doctrine and education. In Guatemala, similar activities resumed. A joint assessment of the state of IHL integration in the military started in Guatemala, based on a previous exercise conducted in El Salvador.

In Mexico, the ICRC stepped up visits to people detained for alleged links with armed groups or arrested during confrontations with security forces, mainly in the southern states. In Panama, visits continued to detained Colombian nationals allegedly linked to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In Honduras, as in Mexico, comprehensive agreements giving the ICRC access to detainees in any prison were being studied. The ICRC addressed the overarching issue of detainee health by, among other things, sponsoring relevant officials from the region to participate in an ICRC prison health seminar in Peru (see *Lima*).

In meetings with the Guatemalan authorities, the ICRC stressed the need to address the issue of persons missing as a result of confrontations in the 1970s and 80s, including the support due to their families. In parallel, it provided technical and financial support to relevant State institutions and NGOs and helped families deal with administrative, legal and economic problems arising in connection with the disappearance of a relative. With the Mexican authorities and forensic services, it started the process of building national forensic and institutional capacities to improve the management and identification of dead bodies.

In Panama's Darién region, the Red Cross Society of Panama and the ICRC assessed and then reoriented their joint health activities to also meet the longer-term water and sanitation needs of border communities. The ICRC signed a headquarters agreement with the authorities formalizing its presence in the country.

The ICRC continued to fund Guatemalan, Mexican and Salvadorean Red Cross services for vulnerable and injured migrants and increased its support to prosthetic/orthotic centres treating them.

In cooperation with the International Federation and other Movement partners, Mexican and Central American Red Cross Societies continued to receive ICRC support in implementing the Safer Access approach in situations of violence. Across the board, National Societies worked to develop a regional family-links strategy for migrants and natural disaster victims. To help address youth violence, the ICRC continued supporting a project run by the Guatemalan and Spanish Red Cross Societies in Guatemala

City and worked with Honduran education professionals to develop a project for inner-city schools, building on the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme.

The ICRC participated in regional fora, including the OAS and the Central American Integration System (SICA), to ensure that topics of humanitarian concern, in particular the missing persons issue, stayed on the agenda, to contribute IHL and humanitarian expertise to their deliberations, and to foster understanding of its neutral, impartial and independent stance. The Mexico City-based IHL advisory service for Latin America and the Caribbean continued to work with national authorities to promote the ratification and implementation of IHL treaties. The ICRC coordinated its activities with Movement partners and other humanitarian players, as appropriate.

## CIVILIANS

Addressing the issue of persons missing as a result of armed conflict, other situations of violence, natural disaster or migration remained a key concern across the region, requiring forensic, legal, psychological and social expertise. In April, a Guatemalan Red Cross representative and Mexican forensic expert updated their knowledge of human-remains management at an ICRC-led course in Geneva, Switzerland. Meanwhile, 10 psychological and social counsellors from 5 countries covered by the Mexico delegation shared best practices with their colleagues at the second World Congress on Psychosocial Work in Exhumation Processes, Forced Disappearance, Justice and Truth, held in Bogotá (see *Colombia*).

### Guatemalan families assisted in their search for information on missing relatives

Guatemala's non-international armed conflict, which spanned three decades, left tens of thousands of people unaccounted for. Their families continued to encounter administrative, legal and economic problems. A draft law on the establishment of a permanent commission on missing persons was still awaiting final approval in Congress. In meetings with the ICRC vice-president in February, the authorities discussed the problems experienced by missing persons' families and the need to create a national search committee to inject fresh momentum into the process of clarifying the fate of the disappeared. The authorities received an ICRC report providing them with essential guidance on these issues.

Families continued to receive assistance from State institutions and NGOs working to ascertain the fate of missing persons, reunite families and provide psychological support; 14 NGOs and more than 20 local committees in 5 departments received funding and/or technical and material support, including computer equipment and training, from the ICRC; a total of 19 NGOs were trained in the use of the national ante/post-mortem database, based on specially designed ICRC software to facilitate data centralization and management. Thanks to the work of institutions and NGOs, 362 families started searching for missing relatives, while another 395 families whose relatives' remains had been found were able to give them a proper burial. Thirty-five people who had been

separated from their families as children were reunited with kin. Nearly 650 birth, death and marriage certificates were delivered to facilitate administrative procedures for missing persons' relatives.

Preparations were made to commission a study aimed at identifying ways of speeding up legal procedures for the exhumation of human remains.

### **Mexico takes steps to establish a national protocol for the identification of the dead**

In Mexico, inadequate investigation and identification procedures reportedly resulted in unidentified human remains, including those of many migrants, being disposed of in a way that precluded any possibility of recovery for future identification. In their dialogue with the ICRC, the authorities were urged to create a national protocol and mechanism to standardize and facilitate the search for missing persons and identification of the dead. To enable Mexican agencies and investigators to share information and expertise with their counterparts from abroad, the Federal District Supreme Court of Justice and the ICRC co-organized the country's first national meeting of forensic services in Mexico City, with the participation of armed forces and police representatives and experts from abroad. The meeting resulted in the creation of a working group to draw up a national protocol for the identification of dead bodies. The proposal to establish such a protocol was approved by the conference of directors of forensic services under the public prosecutor at year-end, which enabled the working group to start the drafting process, with ICRC guidance.

### **Efforts made to reduce the effects of excessive use of force**

Across the region, governments opted for robust policies to fight expanding organized crime. Social unrest frequently led to clashes between demonstrators and law enforcement agents. As part of ICRC efforts to address the excessive use of force in these situations, Central American and Mexican armed and security forces were reminded of international human rights norms applicable to law enforcement operations (see *Armed forces and other bearers of weapons*). Violence also affected many urban areas, prompting Red Cross initiatives to help their inhabitants. A project run by the Guatemalan and Spanish Red Cross Societies enabled 100 residents and National Society volunteers in two violence-affected neighbourhoods of Guatemala City to receive ICRC-funded training in first aid and the Safer Access approach. An ICRC assessment prepared the ground for future health activities.

### **Struggling communities and injured migrants access medical care**

In Panama's Darién region, indigenous families and Colombians who had fled the violence in their home country had extremely limited access to primary health care services and lived in precarious hygiene conditions. In the course of three field visits carried out jointly by Red Cross Society of Panama/ICRC mobile health teams in April, August and October, 662 people in 6 communities had medical consultations and learnt about hygiene measures; training for community health workers was in preparation. Uprooted families were offered ICRC services to locate or restore contact with

relatives. The April tour had to be interrupted because of security concerns raised by the authorities but was completed in July. An assessment of the communities' longer-term needs undertaken during the April visit resulted in plans to improve their access to basic health care, clean water and emergency assistance, to be provided by the local branch of the Panamanian Red Cross and the ICRC. The National Society branch premises were being refurbished in the latter part of the year in preparation for these activities.

Many US-bound Central American and Mexican migrants were seriously injured travelling north in dangerous conditions and were left stranded in border regions, with little chance of access to physical rehabilitation. Sick or injured migrants were transported home by Guatemalan and Mexican Red Cross ambulance services, with the ICRC covering the costs. To that end, Guatemalan Red Cross volunteers of the Tecun Uman branch received first-aid training and supplies. Migration officers were trained in first aid by the Salvadorean Red Cross, enabling them to treat migrants if needed. People who had injured or lost a limb had access to appropriate care delivered by an ICRC-trained technician at a physical rehabilitation centre in Mexico and at three centres in Guatemala, all supplied by the ICRC with equipment and raw materials to produce prosthetic/orthotic devices. With ICRC sponsorship, three technicians from Honduras and Mexico were trained in ICRC polypropylene technology. In total, 36 patients regained mobility through ICRC-supported services, three times the number assisted in 2009.

## **PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM**

In Mexico, people detained for alleged links with armed groups or arrested in connection with political unrest, mainly arising from social, ethnic and land issues in Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca states, were visited by delegates according to standard ICRC procedures. They checked on detainees' treatment and living conditions and provided confidential feedback to the authorities. Intensified contacts with authorities and an increased ICRC presence in the southern states led to more frequent visits. Detainees on hunger strike in Chiapas state were visited by an ICRC doctor, who provided the authorities with written recommendations regarding their health, in line with World Medical Association guidelines. Six detainees were visited by family, with transport costs covered by the ICRC. In the state of Guerrero, the Mexican Red Cross branch and the ICRC concluded an agreement aimed at providing immediate assistance to families of people detained there. Federal prison guards were trained in detention standards as part of the ICRC train-the-trainer programme on human rights and humanitarian principles for federal police (see *Armed forces and other bearers of weapons*). Efforts to secure a comprehensive agreement on visits to detainees in any prison were ongoing with the public security authorities.

In Honduras, a similar agreement was being discussed with the new authorities. Two people detained in the aftermath of political upheaval in 2009 were visited.

In Panama, one person still detained in connection with the 1989 US military operation and other people arrested for alleged links with the FARC were similarly visited by ICRC delegates. Acting on ICRC recommendations, the authorities transferred four detainees from a transitory to a permanent detention facility in March.

To enhance their expertise on prison health issues, one Guatemalan and six Mexican officials took part in the ICRC's fourth Latin American seminar on prison health (see *Lima*). Following an assessment of the prison health system in Guerrero state, the ICRC looked into the possibility of providing the authorities with technical support in this domain, including training in HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis management for prison doctors. As Guatemala's national mechanism for the prevention of torture was not yet functioning, ICRC training plans for members were postponed.

## AUTHORITIES

Dialogue with the region's governments focused on rules governing the use of force in law enforcement operations (see *Armed forces and other bearers of weapons*). The Guatemalan authorities were urged to address the missing persons issue (see *Civilians*) and consulted the ICRC on the creation of national search and reparations mechanisms.

States worked with the ICRC to promote IHL through their national IHL committees, inspired by events such as an international conference of IHL committees from Latin America, the Caribbean and Suriname, hosted by Mexico's IHL committee and attended by representatives of 17 countries and the OAS. The third Universal Meeting of National IHL Committees held in Geneva, Switzerland, (see *International Law and Cooperation*) helped galvanize processes, including the revision of national penal codes by the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico. Guatemala and Panama ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Dominican Republic ratified the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Additional Protocols I to IV, while Honduras and Panama ratified Additional Protocol V to that Convention. Honduras also ratified the Environmental Modification Convention. Mexico and Panama were encouraged to ratify, respectively, Additional Protocols II and III to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Inter-American institutions helped promote IHL in their member States. The OAS Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs co-organized with the ICRC the fourth annual IHL course for OAS officials and members of permanent commissions and the eighth OAS special session on IHL, and requested ICRC expertise on the International Criminal Court (see *Washington*). The Inter-American Court of Human Rights held another IHL study day and exchanged expertise with the ICRC, as did the Inter-American Juridical Committee.

Based on their 2009 agreement, SICA and the ICRC discussed cooperation possibilities.

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

### Armed forces urged to apply rules on the use of force alongside IHL

The Guatemalan, Honduran and Mexican armed forces were urged to apply rules governing the use of force and firearms in law enforcement, in addition to incorporating IHL. Nearly 1,700 armed forces' legal advisers, defence officials, military trainers, and military and civilian personnel were familiarized with such rules, as well as with IHL, through ICRC presentations and training sessions.

As done in El Salvador, the Guatemalan armed forces and the ICRC started a joint assessment of the state of IHL integration, including the integration of rules governing the use of force in military manuals. In December, Mexico's Secretariat of National Defence agreed to cooperate with the ICRC on the promotion of IHL and human rights norms in the army and air force; cooperation with the navy had already started.

In support of CAFC peacekeeping missions, 400 Guatemalan personnel heading abroad were briefed on the ICRC and the Movement; 42 members of the regional body were trained in rules governing the use of force and on the repression of war crimes.

Six representatives in all from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua were sponsored by the ICRC to attend the fourth Senior Workshop on International Rules governing Military Operations in Switzerland (see *International Law and Cooperation*) and IHL training in San Remo.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	HONDURAS	MEXICO	PANAMA
<b>ICRC visits</b>			
Detainees visited and monitored individually	2	63	19
<i>of whom women</i>		3	
Detainees newly registered	1	38	14
<i>of whom women</i>		2	
Number of visits carried out	2	33	5
Number of places of detention visited	1	17	3
<b>Restoring family links</b>			
RCMs collected			1
RCMs distributed			1
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		2	
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		6	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		2	

In Cuba, the IHL study centre run by the National Society with ICRC funding pursued its teaching, research and dissemination activities mainly aimed at armed and security forces.

### **Police trained in human rights norms and proper use of force**

After ICRC training, 3 police officials from Honduras and Panama and 98 federal police instructors and 3 prison officials from Mexico stood ready to coach police and penitentiary personnel in human rights norms and humanitarian principles. Twenty Mexican federal trainers had in-depth training in the proper use of force and the integration of human rights norms into police doctrine and education. Discussions were ongoing with the Secretariat of Public Security on allowing such integration to go ahead. Some 90 federal police officers, state police directors and public security officials involved in crime-fighting were trained in or briefed on the proper use of force and ICRC activities. In Guatemala, 47 officers of the National Civil Police attended a seminar on these topics.

### **CIVIL SOCIETY**

The general public learnt about ICRC activities through the media and ICRC sources, including two photo exhibitions to mark the 100th anniversary of the Mexican Red Cross and an electronic newsletter on mine action. In Guatemala, key media representatives were briefed on the ICRC's mandate and activities so they could report on them more accurately. In Mexico, over 150 journalists and State and human rights representatives attended workshops on security issues and/or ICRC activities.

Contact was maintained with academic institutions, and a lecturer from Mexico was sponsored to attend advanced IHL training in Geneva, Switzerland. The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights in Costa Rica held a multidisciplinary course enriched by ICRC presentations.

In Honduras, to ensure that secondary school pupils would continue to study humanitarian principles after the ICRC's handover of the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme to the authorities, education professionals were trained in project management and specific teaching skills. Simultaneously, the education authorities agreed to an ICRC project entitled "Opening Humanitarian Spaces" to address violence in 20 schools in 5 affected regions.

### **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

With funding and technical back-up from the ICRC and other Movement partners, the National Societies of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama made or updated contingency plans and trained staff and volunteers in the Safer Access approach. In Nicaragua, the new National Society board and chapters were inducted into their responsibilities.

National Societies worked with the ICRC and assisted sick or injured migrants (see *Civilians*); Red Cross representatives participated in the conference of national IHL committees (see *Authorities*).

The Honduran, Italian and Swiss Red Cross Societies continued the "Broadening Opportunities" (*Ampliando Oportunidades*) project in Tegucigalpa, enabling more than 2,500 violence-affected youngsters to learn first-aid, literacy and job skills.

Dominican and Mexican Red Cross volunteers were trained with a view to increasing the pool of family-links experts in the Americas available for emergencies. During the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, all National Societies activated their networks and connected their web pages to the ICRC's. The National Societies of El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico restored family links, with ICRC technical back-up, following a tropical storm and flooding.

The Cuban Red Cross created a dissemination training centre and included family-links provisions in its contingency plans.