

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF



EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	1,691
Assistance	-
Prevention	1,443
Cooperation with National Societies	407
General	-

► **3,541**

of which: Overheads 216

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	81%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	6
National staff (daily workers not included)	44

KEY POINTS

In 2010, the ICRC:

- facilitated the first meetings since 2008 of Iranian and Iraqi representatives aimed at clarifying the fate of people unaccounted for in connection with the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war
- welcomed the commitment to increase cooperation made by the new president of the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ICRC president during a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland
- with the national IHL committee and the Payam Azadegan Cultural Institute, co-organized a conference on the challenges involved in the implementation of the Third Geneva Convention on the protection of POWs
- concluded a three-year cooperation agreement with the Iranian Red Crescent on mine-risk education
- with the National Society, developed a project to assist migrants in 3 provinces after assessing their needs
- pursued a research project with the Qom Institute for Islamic Studies, resulting in the publication of 2 volumes setting out common ground between Islamic law and IHL

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, support to migrants, physical rehabilitation, international relief efforts and the promotion of IHL, for which the national IHL committee is an important partner. The ICRC supports mine-risk education. It also maintains a logistical supply base in the country in support of ICRC operations in the region.

CONTEXT

Following the previous year’s bitterly contested presidential election, the Islamic Republic of Iran remained relatively calm in 2010. For the first time, the UN recognized International Nowruz Day (21 March). Supreme Leader and President Ahmadinejad received the presidents of Afghanistan, Iraq, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in Iran to celebrate the occasion.

The leader of the People’s Resistance Movement of Iran, formerly known as Jundullah, was arrested in February, and his brother was executed in March. The group had claimed responsibility for two bomb explosions in Sistan-Baluchestan province in 2009.

The government started eliminating subsidies for fuel, gas, electricity, water and staple food, instead offering cash allowances

reserved for Iranian nationals to make up for the expected increase in the cost of living.

The country’s standoff with certain members of the international community over its nuclear development programme continued despite the May talks mediated by Brazil and Turkey. The UN Security Council and the European Union imposed additional sanctions in June.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to host large numbers of mainly Afghan and Iraqi refugees and migrants. The government called on the international community to assume a greater share of the resulting financial burden, while accelerating expulsions of irregular Afghan migrants.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PROTECTION

CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)			
Red Cross messages	Total	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected	55		
RCMs distributed	159		
Phone calls facilitated between family members	1		
Reunifications, transfers and repatriations	Total		
People reunited with their families	4		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons¹	Total	Women	Minors
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	97	22	30
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	22		
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2010 (people)	110	29	36
Documents			
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines	2		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)			
Restoring family links	Total		
RCMs collected	281		
RCMs distributed	219		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	473		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Not including people missing as a consequence of the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

During a meeting in Switzerland, the Iranian foreign minister and the ICRC president discussed the establishment of a headquarters agreement formalizing the ICRC’s presence in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The ICRC’s operational priorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran focused on: addressing the humanitarian consequences of the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war; promoting the ratification and implementation of IHL treaties; restoring family links; providing support to ICRC operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; and enhancing cooperation with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The media gave increased coverage to the ICRC’s mandate and work, which helped create a more favourable environment for its activities and acceptance of its humanitarian messages.

The ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary to facilitate Iranian and Iraqi efforts to address the issue of people unaccounted for in relation to the Iran-Iraq war and to help strengthen Iranian forensic capacities through the provision of financial and technical support. It facilitated the first meetings of Iranian and Iraqi representatives since 2008 and continued to work with them on resolving cases of persons previously registered as POWs, presumed POWs, or reported as missing, as well as of human remains. The ICRC also continued to work with the Iranian authorities on clarifying the whereabouts of former Iraqi POWs allegedly released in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The national IHL committee remained a key ICRC partner in promoting IHL treaties. It encouraged the Islamic Republic of Iran’s accession to the 1977 Additional Protocols and finalized a comparative study on Iranian law and IHL.

Leadership changes within the Iranian Red Crescent resulted in the postponement of some joint activities with the National Society; however, the newly appointed National Society president and the ICRC president affirmed their commitment to step up cooperation.

The ICRC/Iranian Red Crescent tracing and RCM services enabled people to restore and maintain contact with relatives detained/interned abroad. The two organizations conducted a joint assessment of migrants' needs, resulting in the development of an assistance project, to start in 2011.

Cooperation on addressing weapon-contamination issues continued with the Iranian Mine Action Centre and other partners. The Janbazan Medical and Engineering Research Centre, the Martyrs Foundation and the ICRC organized a second session to facilitate specialized treatment of young people injured by mines/explosive remnants of war (ERW), aimed at patients who had been unable to attend the 2009 session. Building on their experience of co-organizing a regional seminar the previous year, the National Society and the ICRC signed a cooperation agreement on mine-risk education.

The ICRC maintained contact with religious authorities and institutions, universities and NGOs. It provided funding and technical support for their research and publications relating to IHL and/or common features shared by Islamic law and IHL, co-organized related events with them and sponsored their attendance at events abroad.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to serve as a logistics hub for ICRC operations in neighbouring countries, enabling large quantities of relief goods, water and shelter materials to be procured and/or dispatched to Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as to African countries.

CIVILIANS

Iranian and Iraqi authorities speed up action to clarify the fate of people unaccounted for

Further steps were taken to implement a joint memorandum of understanding signed by the Iranian and Iraqi governments in 2008, with the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary. The agreement aimed to clarify the fate of thousands of combatants and civilians on both sides still unaccounted for in connection with the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war and to relieve the anguish of their families.

The process gained fresh momentum as the Iranian and Iraqi authorities signed the rules and procedures proposed by the ICRC for the work of two tripartite committees intended to meet once a year with the respective tasks of resolving 1) cases of former and presumed POWs still unaccounted for and 2) cases of persons missing or killed in combat. This aimed to facilitate the collection and sharing of information and the exhumation, identification and repatriation of human remains.

In February 2010, nine sets of Iraqi human remains exhumed in the Islamic Republic of Iran were handed over to the Iraqi authorities, while the Iraqi authorities transferred a similar number of Iranian

human remains to the Iranian authorities, under ICRC auspices. In July, the remains of two Iranian soldiers were repatriated by the Iraqi authorities; the repatriation was facilitated by the ICRC.

In October, Iranian and Iraqi representatives met for the first time since 2008 under the ICRC aegis in Geneva, Switzerland, to settle unresolved cases of persons previously registered as POWs, presumed POWs, or reported as missing, as well as of cases of unidentified human remains. In a series of meetings, they clarified cases of missing persons, decided when and where to conduct future joint exhumations, and agreed to meet again in Tehran in January 2011. As a follow-up, the Iranian and Iraqi authorities received updated lists of missing Iranians and Iraqis from the ICRC, as well as answers provided by the respective authorities in some of the cases, enabling the families to be informed.

In the framework of a joint mechanism agreed upon by the Iranian authorities and the ICRC in 2004, new updated lists of former Iraqi POWs released in the Islamic Republic of Iran who remained unaccounted for were handed over to the Iranian authorities for further investigation. In addition, the ICRC issued former Iraqi POWs still in the Islamic Republic of Iran with detention certificates qualifying them for State allowances.

Iranian organizations involved in recovering and identifying human remains linked to the Iran-Iraq war continued to draw on ICRC forensic expertise, practical training and funding to strengthen their capacities. The Kawsar Genetic Research Centre (under the responsibility of the armed forces' Search and Recovery Committee) used ICRC funding to purchase spare parts for its DNA equipment. The Legal Medicine Organization sent an expert to attend a genetics course at a UK university, co-organized by the ICRC. The organization also requested the ICRC's help to introduce ICRC ante/post-mortem database software for use in large-scale disaster response, while discussions regarding training in the use of such software for the management of conflict-related data were ongoing with other actors.

Relatives separated by armed conflict maintain contact

People in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including refugees, mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq, were able to restore or maintain links with family members detained/interned abroad (Afghanistan, Iraq or the US internment facility at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba) through tracing and RCM services operated jointly by the ICRC and the Iranian Red Crescent. Afghan nationals detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran were able to contact their families in Afghanistan by the same means.

The cases of five unaccompanied/separated Afghan children were brought to the attention of the ICRC, which reunited them with family in Denmark, taking account of the children's best interests; five Iranian nationals were voluntarily repatriated from Iraq in operations facilitated by the ICRC.

Mine-risk education developed in contaminated regions

Weapon contamination remained a serious threat to people living in or transiting the five provinces bordering Iraq, as well as

an obstacle to economic development. Various partners involved in mine action continued to receive ICRC material and technical support and funding to develop their activities.

The Iranian Mine Action Centre and the ICRC cooperated on events such as International Mine Awareness Day (4 April), during which the authorities were briefed on ICRC mine-action work, and co-organized a refresher training course for mine-risk educators.

The Maaf NGO held mine-risk education sessions in 60 villages in Kurdistan and taught safe behaviour and first aid in another 60, reaching over 7,000 people in all. Maaf systematically shared data with the Mine Action Centre.

The Janbazan Centre devised measures to improve the quality of life of mine/ERW victims and their families, particularly by addressing their medical needs, based on a study produced jointly by the centre and the ICRC. The centre, the Martyrs Foundation and the ICRC co-organized a second session giving minors with mine/ERW-related disabilities the chance to have their cases examined individually and to be referred for specialized treatment; 37 youngsters attended, bringing to over 80 the number of people benefiting from the initiative. Their families were shown how to deal with their special needs.

After co-hosting a regional seminar on weapon contamination in 2009, the Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC signed a cooperation agreement on mine-risk education. With ICRC support, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security conducted mine-risk education for farmers and shepherds in Kermanshah and students in Khuzestan, found to be particularly endangered.

Representatives of the Iranian Red Crescent, the Janbazan Centre, the Mine Action Centre and the Welfare Organization were sponsored by the ICRC to attend relevant events abroad, for example an IHL course in Bangalore, India (see *New Delhi*), and a physicians' convention on the prevention of nuclear war held in Basel, Switzerland.

Migrants' needs assessed

Following an assessment of the living conditions and needs of migrant communities in three provinces, the Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC developed a tripartite assistance project with the Interior Ministry, to be implemented by the National Society in 2011 with ICRC funding and technical support.

AUTHORITIES

Discussions continued between the ICRC and the Iranian authorities, including during a meeting between the foreign minister and the ICRC president, on the establishment of a headquarters agreement formalizing the ICRC's presence in the country. The Iranian president referred to IHL in a speech made at April's nuclear disarmament conference in Tehran, and the ICRC president's statement on nuclear weapons was circulated among Iranian officials. The authorities were also briefed on the organization's mandate and expertise on detention and weapon-contamination issues (see *Civilians*).

The national IHL committee contributed to the Islamic Republic of Iran's signing of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It stood ready to discuss with parliamentarians a study published by the parliamentary research centre on the country's accession to the Additional Protocols, recommending in particular the ratification of Additional Protocol I, albeit with some reservations. With the Payam Azadegan Cultural Institute and the ICRC, the national IHL committee organized a conference on the protection of POWs under the Third Geneva Convention, in which former POWs and military personnel participated. The national IHL committee finalized a study on Iranian law and IHL for publication and prepared the production/Farsi translation of IHL-related documents, including ICRC legal commentary.

Iranian officials visited ICRC headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and were sponsored to attend IHL-related events abroad (see *Nepal* and *New Delhi*). The Islamic Human Rights Commission sent representatives to the Review Conference of the Rome Statute (see *Uganda*) and invited the ICRC to give a speech at its conference on biological weapons.

Cooperation continued with religious institutions, including the Qom Institute of Islamic Studies. With ICRC technical support and funding, the Qom Secretariat produced research and other publications on Islamic law and IHL, sent a representative to participate in a regional IHL event in Beirut (see *Lebanon*) and contributed to IHL debates in religious circles.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The ICRC still had no direct contact with the Iranian armed forces, but the national IHL committee and the ICRC discussed the committee's plans to produce IHL teaching materials for the military.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Local media gave increased coverage to the ICRC's activities, drawing on its website in Farsi and other ICRC information sources. Contacts with media representatives, interviews with national news agencies and a first-ever national television interview enabled the ICRC to relay key humanitarian messages and information about its mandate and work to the general public.

Human suffering generated by war was brought home to a wide audience through the ICRC's "Humanity in War" photo exhibition hosted by the National Society and through a similar display staged on World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day (8 May) portraying the plight of civilians injured during the Iran-Iraq war. A documentary showing ICRC visits to Iranian POWs in Iraq was co-produced with the Payam Azadegan Cultural Institute and the Martyrs Foundation. Former POWs organized a national event, with ICRC participation, commemorating the 1990 mass repatriation of Iranian and Iraqi POWs.

At film festivals held by the Ministry of Education, a broad spectrum of viewers saw the Farsi versions of a “Save the health workers” TV spot and other productions provided by the ICRC, which gave out awards for the best films on humanitarian themes.

Work continued with the education authorities on the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme, which needed to be further adapted to the cultural context before its integration into school curricula.

Contacts with universities were pursued. Iranian student teams were sponsored by the ICRC to take part in an international and a national moot court competition; the winners of the latter event went on to the next round held in Bangladesh. Tehran University co-organized conferences with the ICRC on a study on Islamic law and IHL and on the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and an IHL course for diplomats; law experts prepared a book on the challenges facing IHL and materials on customary IHL. Other universities requested the ICRC’s expertise.

Some 30 NGO representatives participated in a workshop on IHL and the Movement, co-organized with the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC continued to develop their operational partnership, particularly in the fields of restoring family links (for the first time RCMs were collected by the National Society from Afghans detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran), physical rehabilitation and mine-risk education. The secondment of National Society staff to ICRC rapid deployment missions and activities for migrants (see *Civilians*) was in preparation. The Iranian Red Crescent started its own project, initially planned as a joint undertaking with the ICRC, to provide war-affected women with psychological/social support. The year 2010 was marked by changes in the National Society leadership; the new president and the ICRC president undertook to increase bilateral cooperation and National Society coordination with Movement partners. National Society staff participated in meetings on the restoration of family links and IHL, as well as training courses at ICRC headquarters.

The leadership changes resulted in the postponement of some planned youth and physical rehabilitation activities; however, the first part of an ICRC training course on the management of international physical rehabilitation projects took place in November. The Iranian Red Crescent organized intensive training for two technicians working in an ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centre in Tajikistan.

The ICRC and the International Federation coordinated on issues of common interest, such as the standardization of Iranian Red Crescent textile products. Some 200,000 blankets purchased from National Society textile factories were used in ICRC flood relief operations in Pakistan.

The quality of the National Society’s programme on IHL and the Fundamental Principles was highlighted in an external evaluation. Some 450 branch staff in 12 provinces attended workshops on IHL and the Movement, alongside participants from civil society, government and military circles.