

AZERBAIJAN



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KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2016

- ▶ With National Society and ICRC support, conflict-affected people, including those displaced, met their urgent needs and recovered their livelihoods. Psychosocial-support activities helped them deal with conflict-related trauma.
- ▶ The remains of soldiers killed in the hostilities were transferred across the Line of Contact, with the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary.
- ▶ Through bilateral dialogue and workshops, the ICRC reminded the sides to the conflict of IHL provisions on the conduct of hostilities, particularly their obligation to protect civilians.
- ▶ In view of a potential re-escalation of the conflict, first-aid training for front-line communities intensified, with support from the National Society; medical professionals took courses in war surgery and emergency-room trauma care.
- ▶ Work to clarify the fate of missing persons moved forward with preparations for the exhumation process: the authorities received training in gravesite mapping, which included assessment visits to alleged burial sites.
- ▶ Initial meetings with the authorities paved the way for closer cooperation in strengthening the provision of health care for detainees.

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	1,903
Assistance	6,298
Prevention	732
Cooperation with National Societies	624
General	55
Total	9,612
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	<i>587</i>

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	88%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	19
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	89

The ICRC has been working in Azerbaijan since 1992 in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh armed conflict. It focuses on the issue of missing persons and on detainees held for conflict-related or security reasons, and works to protect and assist communities living along the Line of Contact and the international border with Armenia. It promotes implementation of IHL and its integration into armed and security forces' training and into academic curricula. The ICRC works in partnership with and aims to help the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan strengthen its capacities.

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	88
RCMs distributed	70
Phone calls facilitated between family members	249
Tracing cases closed positively (subject located or fate established)	7
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	21,197
Detainees visited and monitored individually	237
Number of visits carried out	89
Number of places of detention visited	35
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	100
RCMs distributed	89
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	30

ASSISTANCE	2016 Targets (up to)	Achieved
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)		
Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	1,632
Productive inputs	Beneficiaries	3,600
Cash	Beneficiaries	2,002
Services and training	Beneficiaries	1,300
Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	5,626
WOUNDED AND SICK		
Hospitals		
Hospitals supported	Structures	9

CONTEXT

Rising tensions between the sides in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict escalated in April as heavy fighting, involving shelling and artillery fire, erupted along the Line of Contact, causing military and civilian casualties. Thousands of civilians on both sides were temporarily evacuated or displaced. Two high-level meetings took place between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, under the auspices of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, but brought no major changes in the negotiation process; the risk of renewed hostilities remained high. In December, deadly clashes broke out on the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Civilians living near the front lines contended with the consequences of the conflict. Crossfire and the increased presence of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) threatened their safety, restricting movement, livelihoods and access to basic services. Thousands of families remained without news of relatives who went missing in connection with the conflict in the 1990s.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued working to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It monitored the situation of civilians living near the Line of Contact and the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia. When necessary, it reminded the sides of their obligations under IHL.

Being the only international humanitarian organization present on both sides of the Line of Contact enabled the ICRC to respond immediately to the upsurge in fighting in April. It provided assistance for the recovery and dignified management of human remains and, as a neutral intermediary, facilitated the handover of the remains of soldiers and their subsequent return to the families. To address the additional needs that arose, the ICRC expanded its activities, supported by a budget extension in July.

The ICRC, in some cases with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan, helped front-line communities protect or restore their livelihoods. Vulnerable households, including the families of missing persons and mine victims, launched income-generating activities with business grants and training. Displaced and returnee households, and those that had lost their breadwinners, property or harvests owing to the conflict, received cash for covering urgent expenses or enrolled in cash-for-work projects, which facilitated their recovery. Monthly allowances helped elderly pensioners in Nagorno-Karabakh meet their basic needs. Communities had better access to water and electricity following infrastructure upgrades, including repairs to facilities damaged in the fighting, undertaken with local water boards.

To boost emergency preparedness, given the potential for a re-escalation of hostilities, the ICRC reinforced houses, constructed protective walls and donated anti-blast film to schools and health facilities, thus reducing civilians' exposure to bullets and shrapnel. Community members learnt life-saving first-aid skills, while military and civilian medical personnel attended war-surgery and emergency-room trauma training. Hospitals in Nagorno-Karabakh received supplies for treating weapon-wounded patients. Psychosocial-support activities for front-line communities, particularly children, strengthened their ability to cope with the precarious security conditions.

Work to clarify the fate of missing persons progressed with the Azerbaijani State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons (CEPOD) and the *de facto* commission in Nagorno-Karabakh. The authorities prepared for eventual exhumations through training in gravesite mapping, which involved assessment visits to alleged burial sites. The Azerbaijani CEPOD contributed information to verify the consolidated list of missing persons submitted by the ICRC in 2015, and engaged with the ICRC on amending existing legislation to protect the rights of missing persons' families. DNA-sample collection proceeded as planned. Relatives of missing persons continued receiving comprehensive support, including through counselling, commemorative events and referrals to appropriate service providers. Peer counsellors previously trained by the ICRC formed their own family-support network and began replicating these activities in some districts.

Detainees, including those held in relation to the conflict, received ICRC visits; delegates monitored their treatment and living conditions and helped them restore family contact. Initial meetings with the authorities laid the groundwork for closer cooperation in improving health care for detainees.

Humanitarian issues arising from the conflict remained central to dialogue with the authorities, weapons bearers, the media and other stakeholders. ICRC presentations and seminars for military personnel emphasized IHL considerations in military operations; Azerbaijani police and internal troops learnt more about international policing standards. Local and international events fostered expertise in IHL among academics.

With ICRC support, the Azerbaijani Red Crescent strengthened its core capacities and assisted conflict-affected households. It intensified training for its first-aid instructors, who in turn trained front-line communities. Movement partners coordinated their activities and mobilized joint efforts in emergency preparedness and response.

CIVILIANS

Dialogue with all sides emphasizes IHL compliance in conduct of hostilities

Through its field presence and contact with community leaders and local authorities, the ICRC monitored the situation along the Line of Contact and the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and respect for IHL by the sides to the conflict. It documented military incidents that affected civilians and their property, including instances where civilians were wounded. Through written and oral representations, it raised these concerns confidentially with the sides concerned and reminded them of IHL provisions on the conduct of hostilities, particularly their obligation to protect civilians. It also reminded them to take precautions to ensure civilians' safety ahead of cultural events or seasonal activities such as harvesting.

Following the April events, the forensic bureau in Nagorno-Karabakh received an autopsy kit, a refrigeration unit and other equipment for managing human remains, and support for expanding its morgue. With the agreement of all stakeholders, the ICRC, in its capacity as a neutral intermediary, facilitated the retrieval, identification and handover, across the Line of Contact, of the remains of soldiers killed in the hostilities, and their subsequent return to the families; all persons reported missing in relation to these events were accounted for.

People separated by the conflict maintained contact through ICRC family-links services. Ethnic Armenians received support for clarifying their legal status in Azerbaijan and applying for identification documents. A civilian who had crossed the international border to Armenia was repatriated under the auspices of the ICRC.

Front-line communities withstand threats to their safety and psychological health

The ICRC continued to help front-line communities cope with the chronic insecurity and its effects on their physical and psychological well-being. It worked with them to identify the risks they faced and implemented projects on the basis of their requests.

In Tovuz district, 81 people reduced their exposure to bullets and shrapnel after the ICRC built protective walls and provided materials for reinforcing parts of their homes that faced military positions. Construction of a collective shelter inside a school, and a safe play area, were ongoing. In Nagorno-Karabakh, the ICRC distributed anti-blast film to six schools and three health facilities to prevent injuries from shattered windows in the event of shelling or shooting. The military hospital in Stepanakert/Khankendi and the *de facto* health ministry received kits for treating weapon-wounded patients.

To prepare for a potential re-escalation of hostilities, community members learnt life-saving skills at first-aid courses conducted by trained volunteers and health-care workers. Medical personnel from hospitals near the front line underwent training in emergency-room trauma care and war surgery.

To help residents, particularly women and children, cope with the psychological toll of constant exposure to conflict, teachers, medical staff and National Society volunteers took train-the-trainer courses in stress management and conducted counselling sessions in various communities. Specially designed summer camps helped children process conflict-related trauma. In Nagorno-Karabakh, such support was provided by ICRC-trained psychologists, with a focus on displaced children and returnees.

Conflict-affected people recover their livelihoods

The ICRC continued to help conflict-affected people establish stable livelihoods and improve their living conditions; some projects were implemented with the National Society. Around 310 households (1,252 people), including families of missing persons and mine/ERW victims, launched income-generating activities with cash grants and business training. Over 1,600 people benefited from productive inputs; notably, ICRC-provided fertilizer, fuel and training restored over 80 hectares of cultivable land for 325 households (1,300 people).

Following the escalation of hostilities, 400 households (1,600 people) received tarpaulins, which allowed them to remain in their damaged homes until they were repaired. Vulnerable households, including those who were displaced or who had lost their breadwinners, houses or livestock to the conflict, received unconditional cash assistance for meeting their immediate needs and resuming normal living conditions after returning to their communities. Over 3,100 households (12,377 people, including returnees) started over with the help of grants for recovering from lost harvests or replacing damaged assets, or provisional income from cash-for-work projects.

Monthly allowances helped alleviate the living conditions of 296 elderly people living alone in Nagorno-Karabakh; planned

home repairs were however postponed, owing to the prevailing situation.

Approximately 7,700 people restored or improved their access to water for drinking and irrigation after the ICRC upgraded water-supply infrastructure and donated equipment and materials for repairing facilities damaged in April. This was complemented by maintenance training for 28 water board operators and promotion of sustainable use of water systems to around 1,000 community members, with National Society support. Rehabilitation of electrical networks improved access to electricity for 720 people in one village. In Nagorno-Karabakh, the ICRC provided the water boards with materials to enable faster repairs in case of damaged pipelines.

Civilians learn to avoid mines and ERW

The ICRC provided support to communities and other local stakeholders to enhance the safety of civilians exposed to weapon-contaminated areas. Communities in 18 front-line villages learnt about the dangers of mines and ERW, and how to protect themselves, through billboards and posters produced by the National Society, the Azerbaijan National Mine Agency and the ICRC.

The National Society and/or the ICRC continued to collect data on mine incidents and the needs of victims' families. Some families received financial assistance (see above).

Work to resolve missing persons' cases moves towards exhumation and identification

More than 4,500 people remained unaccounted for in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; over 3,770 of them were registered as missing by the ICRC delegation in Baku, and some 370 by the mission in Stepanakert/Khankendi.

Having submitted an updated list of missing persons to the sides in 2015, the ICRC encouraged them to use it as a common reference for following up cases. The Azerbaijani CEPOD came forward with additional information verifying a number of cases. The ICRC examined the list against public archives and generated analytical reports on incidents of disappearance, with a view to forwarding them to the authorities concerned and facilitating the location of burial sites; three such reports were submitted to the *de facto* CEPOD.

Authorities underwent training in the proper collection and management of gravesite data, which involved assessment visits to alleged burial grounds of missing soldiers and civilians. The ICRC began dialogue with the authorities on establishing procedures for the exhumation, identification and return of human remains. A study tour to Cyprus, for CEPOD members to observe best practices in this regard, was postponed to January 2017.

To facilitate future identification of exhumed remains, the relevant authorities and the ICRC continued collecting buccal swabs from relatives of missing persons, in line with standard operating procedures, which included obtaining the families' informed consent and ensuring confidentiality. Families had access to psychological support throughout the process. Random samples were sent abroad for testing, to ensure quality control for long-term preservation. An ICRC geneticist assessed local capacities for DNA profiling.

The ICRC continued to review and hand over ante-mortem data to the CEPODs; this included questionnaires filled out by the families

concerned, together with relevant documents and photographs. The information was entered into centralized ante/post-mortem databases for use in the identification process.

Families of missing persons form their own support network

Families coped with the uncertainty surrounding the fate of their missing relatives, and its socio-economic repercussions, with the help of a comprehensive support programme run by the ICRC with the National Society and/or other partners.

Around 1,200 relatives of missing persons drew psychological support from commemoration events, peer-group sessions or individual home visits. Over 200 people were referred to the appropriate channels for psychosocial, medical and/or legal assistance. Some received material support according to their specific needs. Peer counsellors previously trained by the ICRC organized themselves into a support network and began replicating these activities in 30 districts, reaching over 300 people. Thirty families in Nagorno-Karabakh paid tribute to their missing relatives through a memory book produced with ICRC support.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Over 21,000 detainees, including those held in relation to the conflict, were visited by the ICRC in accordance with its standard procedures. Delegates checked on their treatment and living conditions and shared the findings confidentially with the authorities concerned.

Detainees exchanged news with their families through RCMs; foreign detainees phoned their families or notified their embassies or UNHCR of their circumstances with ICRC support. In Nagorno-Karabakh, detainees received ICRC-organized family visits. Material assistance – clothing, hygiene parcels and books – helped ease conditions for vulnerable detainees.

The ICRC followed up four newly released inmates and one former POW undergoing psychiatric treatment in Stepanakert/ Khankendi, to assess their situation and provide appropriate support.

Authorities and the ICRC initiate cooperation in strengthening health care in prisons

Dialogue with the authorities, particularly the justice ministry's medical department, laid the groundwork for closer cooperation in improving health care for detainees. A first meeting with the health ministry discussed the need to strengthen interministerial

cooperation in this regard, particularly between the health and justice ministries. A workshop for prison managers, organized by the justice ministry and the ICRC, included a session on psychological care for detainees. Azerbaijani authorities continued to share their expertise in controlling TB in prisons through an annual workshop for penitentiary health officials from high-burden countries; participants also learnt about medical ethics in places of detention.

The clinic of the main prison in Nagorno-Karabakh purchased medical items for detainees with ICRC financial support.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

Stakeholders increase their understanding of and acceptance for IHL and ICRC

The humanitarian consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the ICRC's response were at the core of discussions with the authorities, military personnel, diplomats and international organizations. Regular contact kept stakeholders informed of the ICRC's activities and contributed to securing acceptance for its mandate and access to conflict-affected people. The ICRC gave briefings on these topics to members of the diplomatic community and military attachés. Round-table meetings provided opportunities for discussions with representatives of 15 front-line districts, who relayed their communities' concerns and expressed their needs in terms of ICRC support.

Local media used ICRC news releases, factsheets, press lines and interviews to cover its work, notably its response to the events in April; this broadened public awareness and understanding of humanitarian issues linked to the conflict. Bilateral meetings gave journalists a fuller understanding of the ICRC's role as a guardian of IHL; two journalists from Nagorno-Karabakh attended a media workshop in Armenia.

Armed forces familiarize themselves with IHL considerations in military operations

Military cadets learnt about the ICRC's work during briefings at their institutes. At a five-day IHL course, 30 defence ministry officials deepened their knowledge of IHL and its implementation during military operations; two high-ranking officers participated in advanced courses in San Remo, Italy, and Lucerne, Switzerland (see *International Law and Policy*), with ICRC support. The defence ministry's legal department and the ICRC made progress in integrating IHL into unit-level training; a jointly drafted IHL manual for troops was submitted to the educational department for review.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	Related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict	Not related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
ICRC visits		
Detainees visited	4	21,193
<i>of whom women</i>		1,338
<i>of whom minors</i>		85
Detainees visited and monitored individually	4	233
<i>of whom women</i>		1
Detainees newly registered	1	88
Number of visits carried out	20	69
Number of places of detention visited	3	32
Restoring family links		
RCMs collected	72	28
RCMs distributed	73	16
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	9	21
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		12
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	1	

Through workshops, nearly 60 police officers and internal troops and 14 police-station investigators learnt more about international policing standards, IHL and the ICRC's work for detainees.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, 800 military personnel and 150 cadets enhanced their understanding of basic IHL principles and the ICRC's mandate during dissemination sessions supported by ICRC-produced handbooks on codes of conduct for combatants. Posters displaying key IHL messages, including protected emblems, were provided for the military's training rooms. Because of the April escalation, two workshops for commanders, on incorporating IHL in military planning and decision-making, were cancelled, as potential participants were not available.

Academics gain practical knowledge at IHL events

Students broadened their knowledge of IHL by attending ICRC guest lectures at universities and participating in an IHL summer camp in Belarus (see *Moscow*) and an IHL competition abroad. Students from Nagorno-Karabakh attended IHL events in Armenia. Donations of IHL reference materials, including electronic versions for the Justice Academy's library, gave students, lecturers and researchers opportunities to pursue related studies or enrich their knowledge.

The adoption of national measures protecting the rights of missing persons' families remained under discussion; the authorities and the ICRC continued jointly exploring the possibility of introducing changes to existing legislation, based on ICRC recommendations submitted last year. Five government representatives participated in regional IHL events (see *Moscow* and *Tashkent*). Eighteen judges discussed the enforcement of IHL and the suppression of war crimes at a training seminar organized with the Justice Academy.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan continued to receive support for strengthening its tracing, communication, emergency preparedness and response, fundraising and mine-victim assistance activities (see *Civilians*). It worked with ICRC teams, surveying the needs of conflict-affected households and monitoring the results of ICRC support. With rising tensions in the region, it expanded its first-aid capacities, intensifying training for its trainers and for community members in front-line villages. It worked with the ICRC to develop policy guidelines and update a manual on first aid.

National Society staff underwent training on the Movement, the Fundamental Principles and basic IHL, enabling them to raise awareness of these topics. Training with the British Red Cross and material support helped boost the National Society's fundraising capacity.

Movement components maintained coordination to increase the relevance and scope of humanitarian activities for vulnerable groups. Coordination meetings were held to mobilize joint efforts in emergency preparedness and response, and to strengthen the National Society through partnerships with other actors.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
RCMs and other means of family contact			UAMs/SC		
RCMs collected		88			
RCMs distributed		70			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		249			
Reunifications, transfers and repatriations					
Human remains transferred or repatriated		32			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		54	6	1	1
Tracing cases closed positively (subject located or fate established)		7			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		4,151	320	22	71
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		2			
Documents					
People to whom travel documents were issued		2			
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		21,197	1,338	85	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		237	1		
Detainees newly registered		89			
Number of visits carried out		89			
Number of places of detention visited		35			
RCMs and other means of family contact					
RCMs collected		100			
RCMs distributed		89			
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		30			
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		12			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		1			

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	1,632	651	320
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	10	3	
Productive inputs	Beneficiaries	1,636	655	587
Cash	Beneficiaries	14,105	4,689	2,726
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	1,375	573	556
Services and training	Beneficiaries	1,300	520	520
Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)				
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	9,608	3,747	3,075
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection programme)				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	49		
Cash	Beneficiaries	1		
Health				
Visits carried out by health staff		10		
Places of detention visited by health staff	Structures	12		
WOUNDED AND SICK				
Hospitals				
Hospitals supported	Structures	9		