

# ALGERIA



ICRC delegation    ICRC-supported prosthetic/orthotic centre    ICRC office/presence

## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	808
Assistance	-
Prevention	524
Cooperation with National Societies	182
General	-

▶ **1,513**

of which: Overheads 92

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	68%
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## PERSONNEL

Expatriates	6
National staff (daily workers not included)	8

## KEY POINTS

### In 2011, the ICRC:

- ▶ shared with the detaining authorities its findings and recommendations on detainees' treatment and living conditions following 43 visits to people held in prison or police/gendarmerie custody
- ▶ pursued efforts to engage all relevant authorities in a confidential dialogue on issues related to the welfare of people detained in military/police custody, drawing on ICRC reports intended to support such a dialogue
- ▶ provided, at the authorities' request, examples of when and how to apply restraining measures in prisons, based on the experience of other countries
- ▶ enabled foreigners detained in Algeria to inform their families, consular representatives or local UNHCR representation of their situation by making phone calls or sending notifications on their behalf
- ▶ with the National Society, helped Algerian families restore or maintain contact with their relatives detained/interned abroad via RCMs and/or telephone/video calls
- ▶ working with the Defence Ministry, the national police and/or the national IHL committee, trained some 600 military officers and cadets and 26 police officers in the basic principles of IHL and/or international human rights law

The ICRC has been working in Algeria, with some interruptions, since the 1954–62 Algerian war of independence. It visits people held in places of detention run by the Ministry of Justice and people remanded in custody in police stations and *gendarmeries*. The ICRC also works to promote IHL among Algerian civil society, the authorities and the armed forces. It supports the Algerian Red Crescent's reform process and tracing activities.

## CONTEXT

Life for many Algerians continued against a backdrop of social unrest linked to high unemployment, rising living costs and, in some cases, desire for political reform. Protests continued throughout the year, sometimes leading to confrontations with security forces and to arrests.

In the context of growing unrest in the wider region, the Algerian authorities took measures to prevent an escalation of public grievances, including the provision of food subsidies. February saw the lifting of the state of emergency in place since 1992 (retaining it only in Algiers), which relaxed, to some extent, restrictions on peaceful gatherings and paved the way for a review of anti-terrorist legislation. At year-end, parliament adopted a package of political and constitutional reforms that had been announced in April.

In the north, to the east of Algiers, localized clashes between national security forces and armed groups persisted despite a general decline in violence in the latter part of 2011. These reportedly caused numerous casualties and led to arrests. Security in the Sahel region also remained of concern to the authorities. In cooperation with regional peers, they pursued efforts to combat criminal activity and eradicate armed groups there. The armed conflict in neighbouring Libya similarly raised concerns of possible cross-border activity by weapon bearers.

The onset of the Libyan conflict drove several thousand Algerians and foreigners into Algeria. With State support, local authorities and organizations mobilized to accommodate them on arrival and – in the case of foreigners – facilitate their onward journey. Algeria also continued to serve as a point of departure or transit for migrants seeking entry into Europe. Unable to reach their destinations owing to tighter entry regulations, many faced arrest or deportation.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

ICRC activities in Algeria continued to focus mainly on visits to detainees to assess their treatment and living conditions. On the basis of their findings during such visits, delegates maintained their confidential dialogue with the Justice Ministry and detaining authorities at local level. Upon request, the ICRC provided the prison service with examples of when and how to restrain detainees in its care, based on the experience of other countries. The ICRC pursued efforts to establish dialogue with other ministries regarding detainees under their jurisdiction, including to gain access to people allegedly held by the intelligence and security services. In particular, it formally invited all relevant ministries to discuss, confidentially, issues raised in ICRC summary reports

Main figures and indicators	PROTECTION	Total		
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>			UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected		56		
RCMs distributed		241		
Phone calls facilitated between family members		17		
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>			Women	Minors
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		4		
	<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	4		
<b>Documents</b>				
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		2		
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>ICRC visits</b>			Women	Minors
Detainees visited		25,582		
Detainees visited and monitored individually		66	2	1
Detainees newly registered		22		1
Number of visits carried out		43		
Number of places of detention visited		43		
<b>Restoring family links</b>				
RCMs collected		3		
RCMs distributed		3		
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		88		

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

submitted in September 2010 and January 2011 relating to the welfare of detainees held in military/police custody. The aim was to ensure that all detainees benefited from conditions that complied with internationally recognized standards and the provisions of Algeria's Criminal Procedure Act. With the exception of the Justice Ministry, the authorities had yet to provide a substantive response at year-end.

Algerians continued to restore or maintain contact with family members, including those detained/interned abroad, through family-links services provided by the Algerian Red Crescent with ICRC support. These services provided valuable support to families seeking news of relatives in neighbouring countries experiencing armed conflict/unrest, such as Libya and Tunisia. They were also available to foreigners detained in Algeria, helping to prevent them from becoming isolated. Discussions with detaining authorities underscored the importance of family contact in ensuring detainees' psychological well-being and facilitating their eventual reintegration into family life.

To better understand the challenges facing migrants, ICRC delegates developed contacts with actors working with foreign communities or in the field of migration to examine how existing family-links services might be extended to migrants.

The ICRC continued to cooperate with civil and military authorities and representatives of civil society to promote IHL and build their understanding of the ICRC's work. In addition to conducting training and briefings for military personnel at the Cherchell Military Academy, it began working more closely with the national IHL committee to build IHL/international human rights law capacities among the police and academic circles. The ICRC encouraged IHL committee members, senior military personnel and academics to enhance their expertise, sponsoring them to participate in advanced courses abroad that better prepared them to pass on their knowledge.

Together with Movement partners, the ICRC remained committed to supporting the Algerian Red Crescent as it pursued major management and structural changes.

## CIVILIANS

Algerian families used telephone and RCM services, facilitated by the Algerian Red Crescent with ICRC support (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*), to exchange news with relatives detained/interned in the US facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba or in countries such as Iraq and receiving ICRC visits. Two families saw and spoke to their detained/interned relatives on several occasions through video/telephone calls facilitated by the ICRC. Others with family members detained in Tunisia, where widespread unrest had compromised prison security, received news from their relatives via the ICRC delegates who had visited them (see *Tunis*). Thanks to the tracing efforts of a National Society/ICRC team, one family learnt of the detention of a relative whom they had believed deceased for 16 years. They subsequently visited the person in prison.

Family-links services were also available to families with relatives residing in areas where armed conflict made communication difficult, as in Libya, and to former detainees/internees upon release (see *People deprived of their freedom*). An Algerian family whose relative had been killed in Libya had his personal belongings returned to them, as well as an official death certificate, which facilitated both the mourning process and administrative procedures relating to his death.

With the National Society preferring to maintain a tight focus on its family-links services, efforts to ensure a coordinated response to the needs of the region's vulnerable migrants focused on developing dialogue with representatives of foreign communities in Algeria and actors in the field of migration there (see *Civil society*). This enabled these groups to learn more about Movement family-links services at migrants' disposal. Such contacts drew the ICRC's attention to several sub-Saharan migrants who, lacking the documentation required to remain in Algeria or travel onwards, were stranded awaiting deportation. After being notified by ICRC delegates of their citizens' situation, the relevant diplomatic representations in Algeria were able to take measures to facilitate their repatriation.

Within the framework of the 2005 Charter of National Reconciliation, the Algerian authorities proceeded with the financial compensation

of the families of people unaccounted for from the internal strife of the 1990s. In this respect, they were reminded of the ICRC's readiness to share its experience to help them respond to the needs of such families. Their response had yet to be received.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detainees held in prisons under the authority of the Justice Ministry and in police/*gendarmerie* custody received visits from the ICRC, according to its standard procedures, to monitor their treatment and living conditions and respect for their judicial guarantees. Among those visited were security detainees transferred to Justice Ministry authority following the application of new regulations linked to the lifting of the state of emergency (see *Context*). Five weeks' notice was required by the authorities for all ICRC visits. Efforts continued to seek information about and gain access to people allegedly detained by Algeria's intelligence and security services.

During ICRC visits, foreign nationals received special attention given the particular risk of their becoming isolated. Those who wished to do so, informed their families, consular representatives, or local UNHCR representation of their situation through phone calls or notifications made or sent on their behalf by ICRC delegates.

Following visits, findings and recommendations were shared confidentially with authorities. Based on such feedback, the Justice Ministry and, at local level, prison personnel, magistrates and police and *gendarmerie* officers maintained dialogue with delegates on ways of improving detainees' conditions.

The ICRC pursued efforts to engage all relevant authorities in a sustained, confidential dialogue regarding the treatment and living conditions of people in military/police custody. A specific aim was to examine ways of ensuring systematic adherence to the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Act, with a view to reinforcing existing regulations on preservation of inmates' legal rights. To support such a dialogue, the authorities received a summary report in January 2011 to complement an earlier report submitted in September 2010, both covering key issues identified from 2008 to 2010. Despite preliminary discussions with the Foreign Affairs Ministry and continued dialogue with the Justice Ministry, no response had been received from other relevant ministries by year-end.

Despite the lack of substantive dialogue with some of the authorities at central level, the Justice Ministry expressed interest in an ICRC proposal to provide refresher training to magistrates, judicial police officers and health professionals in existing mechanisms designed to ensure the proper treatment of people remanded in custody or under interrogation.

Owing to operational priorities in neighbouring Libya/Tunisia which placed unforeseen demand on ICRC health resources, planned initiatives for health practitioners working with detainees were postponed until 2012.

### Authorities take steps to improve conditions in prisons

Detainees in prisons, numbering some 57,000 across more than 130 facilities, continued to suffer the repercussions of severe overcrowding. In efforts to address the problem, the authorities made significant progress in their plans to construct 81 new prisons, already opening some, and sought to encourage the use of alternatives to imprisonment, such as community service, for minor

offences. Given the expressed intention of other international stakeholders to help the Algerian authorities develop alternative sentencing practices, the ICRC decided to wait until the scope of such projects was known before deciding whether to broaden its own support in this area. It maintained contact with relevant stakeholders to that end.

In the interim, individual prison directors benefited from ICRC advice on implementing short-term measures to improve conditions in existing facilities, such as enhanced aeration, better access to natural light and improved hygiene. At its request, the prison service received examples of when and how to apply restraining measures with detainees, based on the experience of other countries. Over the year, during their visits to some facilities, ICRC delegates noted certain improvements, including in relation to guard-detainee interaction, hygiene conditions and conditions of solitary confinement.

The ICRC also initiated discussion on the importance of facilitating interaction between detainees and their relatives outside prison, particularly for inmates held far from their homes. This highlighted the role family contact could play in ensuring both the detainees' psychological well-being while in prison and their successful reintegration into family life upon release.

### Former detainees/internees receive support to ease their resettlement

Algerians released and repatriated following a period of detention/internment abroad benefited from ICRC follow-up to ensure their welfare. After talking to delegates about their situation, two former internees received cash assistance to facilitate legal proceedings and/or medical follow-up. Others were helped to obtain travel documents to return to their families.

## AUTHORITIES

Efforts focused on deepening understanding of and support for the ICRC's mandate and activities among political decision-makers. In particular, diplomats and officials exchanged views with ICRC delegates on the humanitarian consequences of irregular migration and on regional security concerns, including the potential implications of the Libyan conflict. Dialogue, mainly with the Justice Ministry, continued with a view to improving detainees' conditions (see *People deprived of their freedom*).

Together with the ICRC, the authorities focused on building the capacities of relevant officials/institutions to incorporate IHL into national legislation. At a meeting on the Mine Ban Convention, organized by the national IHL committee for its members, participants learnt about the legislative aspects of implementing the instrument from an ICRC legal expert. Committee members also attended regional courses, including an ICRC meeting of experts in Beirut (see *Lebanon*). The committee's leadership and ICRC delegates explored ways to enhance cooperation, which resulted in a seminar for police officers (see *Armed forces and other bearers of weapons*). Encouraged to organize further such events, the committee undertook to train new parliamentarians, while delegates offered to put ICRC-developed model teaching materials at its disposal.

Twenty-one IHL instructors received training co-organized by the Algerian Magistrates School and the ICRC aimed at developing the school's ability to teach IHL independently. Four were selected to attend advanced training abroad in 2012.

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

IHL had been formally integrated into the curriculum of military training facilities countrywide. The Defence Ministry and the ICRC continued working together to support such institutions, particularly the Cherchell Military Academy, in enhancing IHL knowledge and teaching quality throughout the armed forces. To strengthen teaching resources countrywide, the ministry's training unit was supplied with IHL documentation.

Nearly 200 officers increased their understanding of IHL during an ICRC seminar, boosting their capacities to pass on their know-how to colleagues. One high-ranking officer further advanced his skills at an expert course abroad. Among the junior ranks, some 400 cadets gained insight into basic IHL principles at an introductory briefing. Similarly, 26 police officers examined IHL principles and the appropriate use of force when maintaining order during a study day organized by the national IHL committee, the national police authority and the ICRC. Participants at these events became more aware of the ICRC's work in Algeria, particularly its efforts to support the authorities in reinforcing internationally recognized standards of detention.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Media, NGO, academic and religious circles continued to cooperate with the ICRC, helping to build mutual understanding and broaden support for the Movement's work.

Seventeen reporters debated IHL-related issues and the protection of journalists in armed conflict during a seminar hosted by Algeria News. Participants learnt about the ICRC's activities in the region and received related publications, enabling them to produce articles with greater accuracy. To further broaden awareness of IHL, a leading journalist agreed to contribute to the ICRC's widely circulated Arabic-language quarterly, *Al-Insani*, while members of a prominent religious organization compared IHL and Islamic law at an ICRC seminar.

In efforts to build IHL teaching capacities in universities, the national IHL committee's education sub-group invited the ICRC to explain its work to strengthen respect for IHL to 20 law-faculty deans at an event organized by the committee and the Justice Ministry. An ICRC-sponsored professor joined committee members at an IHL event abroad. A planned presentation to trainee magistrates was deferred to 2012.

Discussions with NGOs working with migrants provided greater understanding of the challenges facing migrants and the ways they might benefit from Movement family-links services (see *Civilians*). Among them was a women's association providing psychological support to the families of people missing at sea.

## RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The ICRC remained committed to supporting the Algerian Red Crescent in regularizing its governance and operational structures according to the Fundamental Principles and the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures. At an extraordinary general assembly in April, attended by ICRC, International Federation and Spanish Red Cross representatives, the National Society adopted key documents redefining its legal basis and internal structure. It submitted revised statutes to the International Federation/ICRC Joint Statutes Commission, which issued recommendations in August. In November, the National Society joined Movement partners at the 31st International Conference.

Meanwhile, the National Society continued to benefit from ICRC encouragement, advice and materials to enhance/broaden its family-links services in line with the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the Movement. While the hierarchy preferred not to develop activities for migrants for the time being, tracing personnel in individual branches worked with delegates on field missions to improve existing services, review unresolved cases and refine information-sharing procedures for greater efficiency. Such measures helped families receive timely news of relatives in countries experiencing unrest/conflict (see *Civilians*).

With the arrival of people fleeing the Libyan conflict, the National Society launched its own emergency operations with government backing, providing food and medical support.