

WESTERN BALKANS (regional)

COVERING: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo*, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia

* UN Security Council Resolution 1244



The boundaries, names and designations used in this report do not imply official endorsement, nor express a political opinion on the part of the ICRC, and are without prejudice to claims of sovereignty over the territories mentioned.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2016

- ▶ Progress in ascertaining the fate of people missing in relation to past conflicts remained slow, owing to the lack of new information and the difficulty of identifying human remains already recovered.
- ▶ Missing persons' families obtained psychosocial, legal and/or administrative support from family associations and the pertinent National Societies and Red Cross units, all of which continued to receive ICRC assistance.
- ▶ Some 90 people held for security-related reasons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia received ICRC visits to monitor their treatment and living conditions.
- ▶ The countries of the Western Balkans continued working to advance IHL implementation. With the ICRC's encouragement, Montenegro ratified Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.
- ▶ The region's National Societies and Red Cross units continued to develop their capacity to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly family-links services for migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees.

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	2,989
Assistance	246
Prevention	416
Cooperation with National Societies	610
General	72
Total	4,333
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	<i>264</i>

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	88%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	9
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	43

The ICRC has been working in the Western Balkans since the early 1990s. The organization strives to respond to the needs remaining from past armed conflicts in the region. In particular, it seeks to help clarify the fate of missing persons and to address the needs of their families. Throughout the region, the ICRC visits detainees and works with the authorities and civil society to promote IHL and other humanitarian norms. It supports the development of the National Societies, particularly in strengthening their capacities to respond to emergencies, address the specific humanitarian needs of migrants, and help dispersed families reconnect.

YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

MEDIUM

PROTECTION

	Total
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)	
Restoring family links	
Tracing cases closed positively (subject located or fate established)	166
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	7,798
Detainees visited and monitored individually	96
Number of visits carried out	33
Number of places of detention visited	23

CONTEXT

The Western Balkan countries continued to deal with problems inherited from past conflicts, particularly the thousands of unresolved cases of missing persons. War-crimes proceedings were in progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia-Herzegovina), Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.

The number of migrants passing through the region, including asylum seekers and refugees from conflict-affected countries, dropped significantly after March, when several Western Balkan countries adopted more restrictive border policies. It eventually rose again somewhat, as more people attempted illegal border crossings.

National authorities in the region took legislative and security-related measures in response to a reported increase in recruitment by groups involved in armed conflicts outside the region.

The countries in the Western Balkans were at different stages in their pursuit of membership in the European Union (EU).

Mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) remained a threat in parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued to support the efforts of the authorities in the region to ascertain the fate of persons missing in connection with past conflicts and, with the pertinent National Societies and Red Cross units, to ensure their families' access to psychosocial and other assistance. Progress remained slow owing to a lack of new information on gravesites, and the difficulty of processing the information available and identifying human remains already recovered.

During the year, 145 cases of persons missing in relation to past conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 54 in Croatia and 14 in Kosovo were resolved. At the end of 2016, a total of 10,121 cases in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo were being dealt with.

The ICRC maintained its support, throughout the region, for mechanisms of missing persons. Acting as a neutral intermediary, it continued to chair the Kosovo-Serbia Working Group on Missing Persons. The group held three meetings, including a public session in Belgrade, Serbia, in March; the Sub-Working Group on Forensic Issues also met several times. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the ICRC took part in the work of a coordination group, set up in early 2016 and made up of national and international actors working on the issue of missing persons. No meetings of the Croatia-Serbia Working Group on Missing Persons, in which the ICRC had served as an observer, took place.

The ICRC continued to analyse information on possible gravesite locations obtained from national and international archives related to the Kosovo conflict, and to submit reports on this information to the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) for further processing. It also began to search for information in relation to the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict in international archives. An agreement was signed with the Missing Persons Institute (MPI) in Bosnia-Herzegovina to share information from international sources, in accordance with international principles of data protection.

Missing persons' families in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia obtained psychosocial, legal and/or administrative support

from their associations and the pertinent National Societies or Red Cross units, all of which continued to receive financial and technical assistance from the ICRC. These local partners also provided the families with psychosocial support and, when necessary, first aid during psychologically distressing events.

The National Societies along the Western Balkan migration route helped thousands of migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, get in touch with relatives, rejoin their families and/or avoid family separation. The ICRC provided financial, material and technical assistance to the National Societies, which coordinated their activities through the Movement's family-links network and the ICRC-supported regional information centre for restoring family links.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the ICRC continued to provide financial support for the National Society's risk-education activities in areas contaminated with mines/ERW.

Some 90 people detained in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia, on charges related to "terrorism," received visits conducted in accordance with standard ICRC procedures. Following these visits, findings and, where necessary, recommendations to improve conditions of detention were communicated confidentially to the authorities.

National Societies and the ICRC continued to engage the national authorities in discussions on the domestic implementation of IHL-related instruments, and to build support for humanitarian principles and action. With the ICRC's encouragement, Montenegro ratified Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro took steps towards establishing national IHL committees; the ICRC offered technical assistance. Government officials and representatives of National Societies gathered at an ICRC-organized conference in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, to discuss the current situation regarding the use of the emblems protected under IHL.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the ICRC contributed to a preparatory course on UN peacekeeping operations, organized by the Peace Support Operations Training Centre, for experienced military officers.

The region's National Societies and Red Cross units continued, with various forms of ICRC assistance, to develop their capacity to deliver humanitarian services.

CIVILIANS

Efforts to clarify the fate of persons missing in relation to past conflicts continued. Progress remained slow owing to the lack of new information on gravesites, and the difficulty of processing information currently available and identifying human remains already recovered. The national authorities were urged to provide more information, support the institutions involved in the exhumation and identification processes, and enact legislation protecting the rights of the missing and their families. The ICRC also urged the EU and other key international actors to remind the national authorities of the importance of fulfilling their obligation to provide answers to the families concerned.

An updated list of persons still being sought in the region was available on the ICRC's family-links website (familylinks.icrc.org).

Local actors continue working to resolve missing-persons cases *Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict 1992-1995*

Over the course of the year, 145 cases of persons missing in connection with the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict were resolved; two people were found alive. At the end of December, 6,796 cases were still being dealt with.

ICRC financial support enabled five people to travel to identify their relatives' remains.

The ICRC participated in the activities of a coordination group, established in early 2016 and made up of national and international actors – the MPI, the State Prosecutor's Office, the Mechanism for International Tribunals and the International Commission on Missing Persons, with support from the embassy of the United States of America – working on the issue of missing persons. The group held meetings to share information on cases and discuss means of supplementing the information already available to the authorities.

Having handed over all cases to the MPI by mid-2016, the ICRC signed an agreement with it to share information from international sources, in accordance with international principles of data protection. The ICRC analysed documents from international archives to obtain information that might help resolve missing-persons cases, and sent reports on such information to the MPI.

The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to assume more responsibility for following up on cases and maintaining contact with missing persons' families. By the end of December, it had taken over follow-up for some 4,700 cases from the ICRC; around 2,100 cases were yet to be handed over.

Kosovo conflict 1999

In 2016, 14 cases of persons missing in relation to the Kosovo conflict were resolved; two persons were found alive, and six new cases were opened. At the end of December, 1,660 cases in connection with the conflict were being dealt with.

Working within the framework of the ICRC-chaired Working Group on Missing Persons, the authorities assessed two sites in Kosovo and one in Serbia; no remains were found. To help resolve more cases, the ICRC continued to analyse documents obtained from national and international archives and to send reports to the Department of Forensic Medicine of EULEX Kosovo for further processing.

The working group held three meetings in 2016, including a public session in Belgrade in March. Representatives of the international community, associations of missing persons' families, the

Red Cross of Serbia and the Red Cross units in Kosovo attended the public session as observers. Technical matters were discussed during three meetings of the Sub-Working Group on Forensic Issues.

The ICRC urged the Kosovar authorities to resume working on a central register of missing persons; such work had been suspended in late 2014, owing to a lack of funds.

Under a law on forensic medicine, adopted in March, an Institute of Forensic Medicine was established and given the task of managing human remains in connection with missing-persons cases. At the end of the year, the justice ministry created a working group – with representatives from various government agencies and international actors working on the issue of missing persons – to draft a strategy for the institute.

In both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, ICRC-funded training helped forensic specialists expand their capacities in the recovering and analysing human remains.

Croatia conflicts 1991-1995

The Croatian Red Cross reported that, in 2016, 54 cases of persons missing in connection with the conflict in Croatia were resolved and 18 new cases opened. At the end of December, 1,665 cases were being dealt with. No meetings of the Croatia-Serbia Working Group on Missing Persons took place.

With the ICRC's financial assistance, 31 people travelled from Serbia to Croatia to identify their relatives' remains.

Missing persons' relatives lend each other support

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia, some 2,400 relatives of missing persons were given psychosocial, legal and/or administrative support by family associations and the pertinent National Societies or Red Cross units, all of which continued to receive financial and technical assistance from the ICRC. These local partners provided psychosocial support and, when necessary, first aid at psychologically distressing events – for instance, during the identification of remains or at reburial ceremonies.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia, families claimed social benefits and addressed other legal or administrative concerns using documents attesting to the disappearance of their relatives; these documents were issued by the ICRC and distributed by the pertinent National Societies or Red Cross units.

A regional group of 18 family associations from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia received ICRC funding as it prepared to assist missing persons' families.

	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Kosovo
Red Cross messages (RCMs)			
Names published on the ICRC family-links website	7,051		1,668
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons¹			
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered			12
<i>of whom women</i>			4
Tracing cases closed positively (subject located or fate established)	145		21
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)	6,796	17	1,679
<i>of whom women</i>	982	3	247
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance - girls</i>	83		22
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance - boys</i>	269		85

1. Not including cases of persons missing in relation to the Croatia conflicts 1991–1995, dealt with by the Croatian Red Cross and the Red Cross of Serbia

Migrants reconnect or reunite with relatives

National Societies along the Western Balkan migration route helped thousands of migrants – including asylum seekers and refugees – restore or maintain contact with their relatives, rejoin their families and/or avoid family separation.

The ICRC-supported regional information centre for family-links services helped the National Societies coordinate their work. To help ensure a concerted response by all Movement partners, the ICRC organized training for National Societies along the migration route, and gave them financial, technical and material assistance. Data sharing, questions about the use of tools, and other technical matters were discussed through the Movement's family-links network.

The Bulgarian Red Cross and the ICRC visited three migrant centres in Bulgaria to assess the migrants' humanitarian needs and offer them family-links services. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the National Society and the ICRC made a similar visit to one migrant centre. The ICRC provided these National Societies with technical assistance and training.

In Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro – countries less affected by the influx of migrants – the National Societies or Red Cross units and the ICRC worked to incorporate the provision of family-links services in national contingency plans. The ICRC also began discussions with the region's National Societies on incorporating responses to migrants' protection-related concerns in their activities. In Kosovo, with a view to strengthening family-links services for migrants, the Red Cross units and the ICRC discussed their plight with national and international agencies.

An annual conference of European National Societies on restoring family links was held in Sarajevo in April; it was organized by the National Society of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the ICRC. Concerns related to family-links services for migrants, including the issue of people missing at sea, were discussed at the conference. The National Societies of Bulgaria, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia attended a workshop on humanitarian issues related to migration, organized by the Norwegian Red Cross, the Swedish Red Cross and the ICRC.

Former internees are assisted by the ICRC

The ICRC checked on the situation of five people formerly held at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, and resettled in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and

Serbia. ICRC assistance enabled one person to rejoin his family and another to receive a family visit. One person was provided with ad hoc financial aid.

People learn more about mine risks

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, through educational activities organized by the National Society with ICRC funding, some 25,000 school-children and 1,000 adults living in weapon-contaminated areas learnt more about protecting themselves from mines/ERW.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

People held for security-related reasons receive ICRC visits

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia, a total of 96 people detained on charges related to "terrorism" were visited in accordance with standard ICRC procedures and their treatment and living conditions monitored. Following its visits, the ICRC communicated its findings and, where necessary, recommendations for improving conditions of detention confidentially to the authorities.

ICRC-issued attestations of detention helped people previously detained in connection with past conflicts to deal with legal or administrative matters.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

Dialogue with national authorities focuses on the plight of migrants

With the pertinent National Societies and Red Cross units, the ICRC maintained its dialogue on humanitarian concerns with the region's national authorities, emphasizing the humanitarian needs of migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees (see *Civilians*). An ICRC-produced bulletin – featuring the National Societies' work to prevent family separation among migrants, and the means and methods used by the Movement family-links network – facilitated the National Societies' dialogue with the authorities.

The plight of migrants was one of the main themes of an IHL round-table in Serbia for government officials and university professors and students, organized by the Serbian Red Cross with ICRC assistance. In Albania, during a NATO training session for the armed forces, which focused on means of supporting the civilian authorities in the event of an influx of migrants, ICRC representatives emphasized humanitarian concerns related to migration. ICRC support enabled a professor from the University of Belgrade to attend a course on migration law in San Remo.

	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Kosovo	Serbia
ICRC visits				
Detainees visited	1,876	3,000	596	2,326
<i>of whom women</i>	51	92	42	
<i>of whom minors</i>	10	1	57	
Detainees visited and monitored individually	17	31	42	6
<i>of whom women</i>			1	
<i>of whom boys</i>		1	1	
Detainees newly registered	7	11	32	1
<i>of whom women</i>			1	
<i>of whom boys</i>		1	1	
Number of visits carried out	14	6	11	2
Number of places of detention visited	9	6	6	2
Restoring family links				
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	129		25	1

Western Balkan countries maintain efforts to implement IHL

The region's National Societies and the ICRC continued to engage the national authorities in discussions on the domestic implementation of IHL-related instruments, and to build support for humanitarian principles and action among key actors.

In October, representatives of the region's national authorities and National Societies gathered at an ICRC-organized conference in Sarajevo, where they discussed the current situation regarding the use of the emblems protected under IHL. Participants shared good practices and discussed further steps in this regard. Subsequently, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the national authorities and the National Society drafted amendments to the law on the use and protection of the emblem; in Serbia, the University of Belgrade and the National Society began to review existing national standards for the use of the emblem, with a view to making recommendations to the authorities. The ICRC provided technical assistance in both cases.

The region's national IHL committees continued to receive technical guidance from the ICRC and, with its support, participated in the fourth universal meeting of such committees (see *International law and policy*). Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro took steps to establish national IHL committees; the ICRC offered technical advice. With the ICRC's encouragement, Montenegro ratified Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Slovenia's IHL coordination group worked to complete a military manual and a plan of action to implement its pledges at the 32nd International Conference. Romania expressed interest in ensuring its compliance with IHL by instituting, with technical advice from the ICRC, means for voluntary reporting on national compliance.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, under an agreement with the defence ministry, the ICRC contributed to a course on UN peacekeeping operations, organized by the Peace Support Operations Training Centre, for experienced military officers. The ICRC also provided technical assistance to an inter-ministerial working group drafting an initial report on the country's implementation of the Convention on Enforced Disappearance.

The parliaments of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia ratified an agreement, signed by their governments in 2015, to cooperate in resolving missing-persons cases.

The ICRC continued to encourage officials concerned with war-crimes proceedings to help address the issue of missing persons.

People are kept informed of developments in connection with missing persons

The public session of the Working Group on Missing Persons (see *Civilians*) in relation to the Kosovo conflict enabled the public to learn more about the reasons for the relative lack of progress in resolving missing-persons cases related to the past conflict. Various ICRC-supported activities in the region – for instance, a weekly blog and a month-long social-media campaign in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a video broadcast on national television in Kosovo, and the regionwide release, via television and social media, of an animated video marking the International Day of the Disappeared – helped broaden public awareness of the plight of missing persons' families.

Key parties were kept informed, through newsletters and factsheets, of the ICRC's humanitarian activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia, particularly in connection with the issue of missing persons.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The region's National Societies and Red Cross units continued, with various forms of ICRC support, to strengthen their ability to deliver humanitarian services (see *Civilians*) and promote IHL (see *Actors of influence*).

The Red Cross units in Kosovo received equipment for providing family-links services during emergencies. Using the Safer Access Framework, and with ICRC funding and technical guidance, the National Societies of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, and one Red Cross unit in Kosovo, assessed their ability to work in uncertain security conditions, and drafted plans for strengthening acceptance for their activities in such circumstances. With the ICRC's technical assistance, the National Society of Bosnia-Herzegovina developed its capacities in fundraising and strengthening its legal base. It kept up its efforts to broaden awareness of the threat of mines and ERW in the communities affected (see *Civilians*), and publicized these efforts.

The Bulgarian Red Cross drew up plans to strengthen IHL promotion and, with ICRC support, trained volunteers in IHL dissemination. The Serbian Red Cross held an IHL workshop, funded by the ICRC, for students from nine universities. The two Red Cross units in Kosovo gave presentations on IHL and the Movement's work to more than 5,000 national and local officials and young people. With financial and technical assistance from the ICRC, one of the Red Cross units produced audiovisual materials for these presentations.

With ICRC support, the National Societies – particularly in Croatia and Serbia – carried out activities to increase migrants' awareness of safety-related issues. With assistance from the ICRC, including its delegations in Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, the National Societies produced communication materials in Dari, Farsi, Pashto and Urdu for their work with migrants.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
RCMs and other means of family contact					
Names published on the ICRC family-links website		8,719			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons					
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		12	Women 4	Girls	Boys
Tracing cases closed positively (subject located or fate established)		166			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		8,492	1,232	105	354
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)					
ICRC visits					
Detainees visited		7,798	Women 185	Minors 68	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		96	1		2
Detainees newly registered		51	1		2
Number of visits carried out		33			
Number of places of detention visited		23			
RCMs and other means of family contact					
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		155			

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
Health				
Visits carried out by health staff		3		
Places of detention visited by health staff	Structures	3		