

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF



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, physical rehabilitation, international relief efforts and IHL promotion, for which the national IHL committee is also an important partner. It is engaged in dialogue on IHL and Islam. The ICRC supports mine-risk education and access to health care for Afghan migrants.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2016

- ▶ Iranian and Iraqi authorities, with ICRC support, sustained their joint efforts to clarify the fate of persons still missing in relation to the 1980–1988 Iran–Iraq war. As a result, the remains of hundreds of people were recovered.
- ▶ To enhance current recovery and identification practices, Iranian and Iraqi forensic scientists considered the recommendations of an ICRC-sponsored third-party expert and formulated proposals on standardizing working procedures.
- ▶ Islamic scholars discussed the values shared between Islamic jurisprudence and IHL, notably during an international academic conference, via the efforts of the ICRC-backed Centre for Comparative Studies on Islam and IHL in Qom.
- ▶ Vulnerable Afghan migrants accessed health services, including physical rehabilitation, via a joint project of a local NGO and the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, supported with ICRC advice and funding.
- ▶ The National Society and the ICRC continued to strengthen their partnership in the field of physical rehabilitation: based on a new agreement, they expanded relevant joint activities for people in need, such as Afghan migrants.

YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

MEDIUM

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	1,029
Assistance	1,058
Prevention	1,561
Cooperation with National Societies	705
General	68
Total	4,421
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	270

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	80%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	7
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	42

PROTECTION

	Total
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)	
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	155
RCMs distributed	143
Phone calls facilitated between family members	8
Tracing cases closed positively (subject located or fate established)	20
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
Restoring family links	
RCMs distributed	1

CONTEXT

Thousands of families in the Islamic Republic of Iran remained without information on relatives missing in connection with the 1980–1988 Iran–Iraq war. Owing to their irregular status, around 2 million migrants, mainly from Afghanistan, faced difficulties in accessing basic services. An increasing number of these migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, used the Islamic Republic of Iran as a transit point for their journey. People in areas bordering Iraq and those returning to Afghanistan were exposed to the risks of mines/explosive remnants of war (ERW).

The Islamic Republic of Iran began to have relief from certain sanctions, in relation to the long-term international agreement on its nuclear programme that it signed in 2015. It maintained its diplomatic engagement with regard to security-related developments and humanitarian emergencies in the region, particularly in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria) – where it had sent military advisers – and in Yemen. It also sustained efforts to enhance its international profile.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued to: help address the issue of persons missing in connection with the 1980–1988 Iran–Iraq war; reinforce its partnership with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran; support local initiatives to mitigate risks related to people's limited health-care access or their exposure to mines/ERW; and foster acceptance for IHL and the ICRC.

As a neutral intermediary, the ICRC backed the efforts of the Iranian and Iraqi governments to clarify the fate of persons still missing in relation to the past conflict, chairing both the tripartite committee on missing persons and the committee's joint working group. Despite some logistical and security challenges, the working group – to which the ICRC donated key equipment – facilitated the recovery of the remains of hundreds of people. The ICRC chaired three meetings of the working group. It also facilitated a meeting of Iranian and Iraqi forensic scientists, who discussed ways to enhance current practices: they considered the recommendations of an ICRC-sponsored third-party expert, and formulated proposals on standardizing working procedures for the tripartite committee.

Pursuant to their 2012 partnership agreement, the National Society and the ICRC sustained their work to: reconnect dispersed members of dispersed families; raise mine-risk awareness; promote IHL and the Movement; and draw attention to humanitarian issues. The two organizations strengthened their cooperation in physical rehabilitation based on a new agreement, leading to the expansion of some joint activities in the country. Cooperation in other areas was maintained – for instance, towards enabling health and humanitarian professionals to better respond to large-scale emergencies, they organized a Health Emergencies in Large Populations (HELP) course.

The ICRC's dialogue and networking with State and civil society representatives, and the events it organized with them, helped build understanding of IHL and the Movement, and foster awareness of humanitarian concerns. Notably, the national IHL committee, based on an agreement between the defence and foreign affairs ministries and the ICRC, drew on ICRC input to pilot courses tailored for such audiences as peacekeepers and Islamic clerics. These groups were thus enabled to further their grasp of IHL and of neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.

Discussions on formalizing the ICRC's legal status in the country continued.

Support to the Centre for Comparative Studies on Islam and IHL in Qom (hereafter Qom Centre), from the national IHL committee, the National Society and the ICRC, facilitated the enrichment of the dialogue on the values shared by Islamic jurisprudence and IHL, by Islamic scholars and researchers. Notably, the centre held an international academic conference on Islam and IHL, where Islamic scholars, representatives of other faiths, and IHL experts, alongside Movement partners, tackled various humanitarian issues.

The ICRC sustained its cooperation with the National Society and other local partners in assisting vulnerable people. Thousands of Afghan migrants accessed health care – including physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support – and learnt more about good hygiene and health practices, through an ICRC-backed project run by a local NGO and the National Society. Activities with the National Society helped raise people's awareness of mine/ERW-related risks. With ICRC input, the Iranian Mine Action Centre (IRMAC) continued to develop its capacities as central coordinator of mine/ERW-related activities: for instance, the IRMAC augmented its ability to conduct humanitarian demining, in line with a formalized memorandum of understanding between the organizations.

Migrants – including asylum seekers and refugees – from neighbouring countries, particularly Afghanistan, used Movement family-links services to contact their relatives abroad, as did Iranians, and detainees from Afghanistan and Iraq.

CIVILIANS

Joint Iranian–Iraqi efforts lead to recovery and handover of human remains

The Iranian and Iraqi governments sustained their joint efforts to clarify the fate of people missing in connection with the 1980–1988 Iran–Iraq war. In line with its existing agreements with these governments, the ICRC continued to chair both the tripartite committee on missing persons and the committee's joint working group, and provide these with support as a neutral intermediary.

Despite some logistical challenges linked to the situation in Iraq (see *Iraq*), the working group facilitated excavations in the Iraqi provinces of Basra and Missan, and in the Iraqi Kurdistan region (IKR); the ICRC donated key equipment in this regard. In May, owing to security constraints, IKR operations were temporarily suspended, and later resumed. The excavations led to the recovery of the remains of 371 people. Under ICRC auspices, the remains of 394 people were handed over to the Iranian authorities; the remains of 68, exhumed from Iranian sites, were transferred to the Iraqi authorities.

During three ICRC-chaired meetings held by the working group, Iranian and Iraqi authorities discussed technical and logistical issues pertinent to recovery operations.

In the lead-up to the annual meeting of the tripartite committee, Iranian and Iraqi forensic scientists convened in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with ICRC support. They considered the recommendations of a third-party forensic geneticist, who had conducted an assessment during past ICRC-organized visits, and formulated proposals for the committee, particularly on standardizing working procedures.

Local actors involved in forensic work continued to receive ICRC input, helping improve their services. The Legal Medicine Organization (LMO) and the ICRC engaged in dialogue on best practices for human remains management, especially in relation to migration, as did the National Society (see below). Staff of the LMO and first-responder organizations, including the Iranian Red Crescent, learnt more about proper human remains management during emergencies, at workshops organized by the LMO and the ICRC. Representatives from the LMO and the National Society strengthened their grasp of the subject during an international course (see *Pakistan*). Iranian, Iraqi and Syrian specialists honed their knowledge of forensic anthropology through a regional course held in the Islamic Republic of Iran by the LMO and the ICRC. During a study tour in Cyprus, five scientists from one Iranian laboratory trained in forensic human identification, with experts from the Committee on Missing Persons.

Members of dispersed families reconnect

Migrants – including asylum seekers and refugees – from neighbouring countries, particularly Afghanistan, who were staying in or passing through the Islamic Republic of Iran contacted relatives using Movement family-links services, as did detainees from Afghanistan and Iraq. Representatives of the Iranian Red Crescent and other Movement partners identified ways to strengthen such services, and deepened their understanding of human remains management, during a conference in the Islamic Republic of Iran on reconnecting families – particularly those dispersed by migration – organized by the National Society and the ICRC. Iranian Red Crescent personnel contributed to a Movement conference abroad on the same subject (see *Western Balkans*). Staff members of Iranian NGOs and of international organizations based in the Islamic Republic of Iran discussed ways to help families separated by migration restore contact, during a National Society/ICRC workshop. The Iranian Red Crescent, backed by the ICRC, explored the use of innovative tools to enable dispersed relatives to reconnect. Relatives of migrants reported missing in connection with their journey to Greece stood to benefit from a pilot project aimed at facilitating efforts to ascertain these migrants' fate (see *Paris*).

Iranians connected with family members detained in nearby countries, like Afghanistan, or held at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba (see *Washington*), through RCMs, phone or video calls, or oral messages relayed by ICRC delegates.

In all, 194 Iraqi former POWs received attestations of detention; these facilitated their application for State benefits and other proceedings.

Two former members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran voluntarily returned from Iraq; they were repatriated with the Iranian authorities' approval and under ICRC auspices.

A government foundation and the ICRC engaged in dialogue, facilitated by the foreign affairs ministry, on the potential psychosocial needs of the families of missing persons; discussions on possible steps to respond jointly to such needs were ongoing.

Vulnerable Afghan migrants address their health needs

In Mashhad city suburbs, thousands of vulnerable Afghan migrants, and some Iranians, continued to meet some of their health and other needs through an ongoing project run by a local NGO and the National Society; the ICRC backed the project with advice, notably in the field of mental health, and funding.

During home visits by the NGO's staff to over 3,700 households, about 3,170 people obtained preventive care; as necessary, those visited were encouraged to avail themselves of the project's other services. Some 2,500 people were treated by a general practitioner. Around 1,850 consulted health-care workers at the NGO's clinic, for their nutritional or psychological needs. More than 4,350 people were referred for specialized diagnosis and care, including National Society-provided physical rehabilitation services. Others benefited from the National Society's health caravans.

During information sessions, about 15,200 adults and children honed their knowledge of good hygiene and health practices, and their psychosocial skills, including communication and cooperation. Community members, through the National Society, learnt more about reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention, and disaster preparedness.

Hundreds of people benefited from psychosocial support or services to mitigate the consequences of drug use; the women among them had access to a shelter established to help address their specific vulnerabilities. People in need of social assistance were referred to the pertinent NGOs.

Health and humanitarian workers enhance their emergency preparedness

Towards enabling health and humanitarian professionals to better respond to large-scale emergencies, the National Society and the ICRC ran a HELP course with a local medical university. The participants, from various countries, also increased their familiarity with the Health Care in Danger project and the Movement. Local representatives of the International Committee of Military Medicine observed part of the course, and engaged in dialogue with the ICRC on topics of mutual interest.

People reduce their exposure to mine-related risks

Over 220,000 people – Iranians living in western provinces and Afghan returnees passing through eastern provinces – learnt safer behaviour around mines/ERW during dissemination sessions conducted by National Society personnel, with ICRC financial and technical support. To help ensure suitable aid for people affected by other types of weapon, selected National Society representatives furthered their pertinent skills during an ICRC workshop.

The IRMAC continued to develop its capacities as central coordinator of mine/ERW-related activities, with input from the ICRC. The two organizations, with the support of the defence and foreign affairs ministries, formalized a three-year memorandum of understanding. In line with this, IRMAC managers augmented their knowledge of humanitarian demining, at an ICRC-conducted seminar. The IRMAC also received some 50 sets of personal protective equipment, for its mine-clearance staff.

During an IRMAC event, the centre's representatives, defence ministry officials and other parties concerned were encouraged by the ICRC to ensure coordination on addressing the needs of people in mine/ERW-affected areas. The national IHL committee, with ICRC backing, promoted broader familiarity with the issue of mines/ERW during an academic conference. Dialogue between the State Welfare Organization and the ICRC, regarding prospective joint work on mine-risk education, led to a draft agreement that awaited official approval.

Owing to operational constraints in Kurdistan province, the National Society/ICRC project to provide civilian mine victims with physical rehabilitation services was concluded and no longer pursued in 2016.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

The ICRC's dialogue and networking with State and civil society representatives – during the ICRC president's visit, for instance – and the events it organized with them, helped build understanding of IHL and the Movement, and foster awareness of humanitarian concerns, domestic (see *Civilians*) and international. The national IHL committee, the foreign affairs ministry, the Qom Centre and the National Society remained crucial in facilitating contact with key actors.

Discussions on formalizing the ICRC's legal status in the country continued.

Authorities lead IHL training

The national IHL committee drew on ICRC input to pilot courses tailored for peacekeepers, Islamic clerics, university students and National Society personnel. These audiences were thus enabled to further their grasp of IHL and neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. Committee members and other officials advanced their knowledge of IHL at events abroad, with ICRC support (see, for example, *Nepal*).

Dialogue with the general secretariat of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) Member States (PUIC), based in the country, covered humanitarian issues, including health-care insecurity. This facilitated the ICRC's participation in a PUIC conference (see *Iraq*).

Scholars discuss values shared by Islamic jurisprudence and IHL
Islamic researchers enriched the dialogue on Islam and IHL through the initiatives of the Qom Centre, backed by the national IHL committee, the National Society and the ICRC.

Notably, the centre held an international academic conference on the subject. Some 500 Islamic scholars, representatives of other faiths, and IHL experts from over 20 countries, alongside Movement partners, discussed: humanitarian values common to world religions; the protection due to civilians, including patients and medical workers; the plight of missing persons and their families; proper human remains management; and environmental conservation and management.

Several activities preparatory to the conference were implemented with ICRC support. During a workshop series on armed conflict, Afghan, Iranian, Iraqi and other specialists in IHL covered some of the conference topics. Two Iranian clerics exchanged views with peers at an IHL course abroad (see *Tunis*). Scholars compiled recent papers on Islam and IHL for distribution, and updated and republished relevant Qom Centre materials.

The Qom Centre continued to: translate references on Islam and IHL from Farsi into Arabic and English; promote its publications; conduct studies on humanitarian concerns with prominent institutions; and, through its library, support the work of researchers.

During one session of an international seminar on the role of culture and religion in promoting environmental sustainability, hosted by Iranian officials with partner organizations, participants gained more familiarity with the ICRC's efforts to foster dialogue on Islam and IHL.

Academics advance their understanding of IHL

Iranian academics, with ICRC backing, deepened their IHL expertise during a seminar abroad (see *New Delhi*). University students learnt more about IHL during locally held courses (see above), international conferences or moot court competitions, with ICRC support (see, for example, *Beijing*). Officials of one university, the pertinent authorities and the ICRC continued discussions on developing an IHL master's programme.

During National Society/ICRC information sessions, people involved in media increased their understanding of IHL and the Movement: reporters; journalism professors; and, based on an agreement between the country's official news agency and the ICRC, students at a journalism university run by the agency.

Various audiences better understood humanitarian concerns and the ICRC through news reports, public events, including an ICRC-supported film festival, and ICRC multimedia materials.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Pursuant to their 2012 partnership agreement, the Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC worked to: reconnect dispersed family members; raise mine-risk awareness; promote IHL and the Movement; and raise awareness of humanitarian concerns (see above).

National Society and the ICRC bolster partnership

The two organizations strengthened their cooperation in physical rehabilitation. Based on a new agreement, they expanded some joint activities (see *Civilians*); other activities were maintained – for instance, they conducted orthotics workshops in the country and in Tajikistan, and held a consultative meeting with pertinent local parties, on promoting social inclusion for disabled people.

The Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC sustained cooperation in other fields, notably emergency preparedness (see *Civilians*). Given logistical constraints, a planned war-surgery seminar for local doctors was postponed.

The National Society, with ICRC training, boosted its security management and logistics capacities. It helped establish an ICRC warehouse at one of its centres to support regional humanitarian operations.

National Society personnel deepened their understanding of humanitarian issues and the Fundamental Principles through, for instance, locally organized IHL courses (see *Actors of influence*) – which encompassed ICRC-led discussions of the Safer Access Framework – and a workshop abroad held by the International Federation and the ICRC for some 20 National Societies, on sustaining Movement-wide advocacy efforts to end nuclear weapon use.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
RCMs and other means of family contact			UAMs/SC		
RCMs collected		155			
RCMs distributed		143			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		8			
Reunifications, transfers and repatriations					
Human remains transferred or repatriated		68			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		248	54	65	56
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		2			
Tracing cases closed positively (subject located or fate established)		20			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		272	59	61	59
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		7			
Unaccompanied minors (UAMs)/separated children (SC), including demobilized child soldiers			Girls		Demobilized children
UAMs/SC newly registered by the ICRC/National Society		1	1		
UAM/SC cases still being handled by the ICRC/National Society at the end of the reporting period		1	1		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)					
RCMs and other means of family contact					
RCMs distributed		1			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		194			