

LONDON

COVERING: Ireland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland



Set up in 2003, the London mission focuses on pursuing humanitarian diplomacy and facilitating ICRC operations in the field. Through contact with the British government, armed forces, members of parliament, think-tanks, the media and international NGOs, it seeks to secure broad support for IHL and ICRC and Movement operations. It has similar contact with the Irish authorities and is developing its cooperation with the armed forces. The mission operates in partnership with the British Red Cross on a range of common areas, while cooperation with the Irish Red Cross is concentrated on IHL and issues related to Movement coordination.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2016

- ▶ The ICRC visited people held in relation to past or current violence in Northern Ireland and, for the first time, security detainees in England, to monitor their well-being; discussions on expanding visits to the latter were under way.
- ▶ With the ICRC's help, community-based organizations in Northern Ireland provided psychosocial and other support to people affected by violence; some obtained government accreditation for their mediation programmes.
- ▶ Following an exploratory visit by the ICRC to the Falkland/Malvinas islands¹, Argentina and the UK agreed to let the ICRC lead efforts to identify the remains of more than 120 Argentine soldiers buried there; this was set for 2017.
- ▶ Dialogue with the Irish and UK authorities continued, notably through bilateral, high-level discussions and technical advice from the ICRC on legal and policy issues; both countries sustained their support for the ICRC's activities.
- ▶ The British Red Cross and the ICRC continued to strengthen cooperation in addressing the needs of vulnerable people in the UK and elsewhere. Partnership with the Irish Red Cross focused on IHL research and protection activities.

1. The designations employed in this document do not imply official endorsement nor the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ICRC concerning the legal status of any territory, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Whenever a disputed territory is given different names by the parties concerned, the ICRC uses those names together, in alphabetical order.

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Protection | 2,091 |
| Assistance | - |
| Prevention | 1,334 |
| Cooperation with National Societies | 354 |
| General | 37 |
| Total | 3,815 |
| <i>Of which: Overheads</i> | <i>233</i> |

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Expenditure/yearly budget | 93% |
|---------------------------|-----|

PERSONNEL

| | |
|---|----|
| Mobile staff | 5 |
| Resident staff (daily workers not included) | 16 |

YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

PROTECTION

| | Total |
|---|-------|
| PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses) | |
| ICRC visits | |
| Detainees visited | 2,912 |
| Detainees visited and monitored individually | 60 |
| Number of visits carried out | 17 |
| Number of places of detention visited | 5 |
| Restoring family links | |
| RCMs collected | 1 |

CONTEXT

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (hereafter the UK) remained influential internationally, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and of NATO. The UK continued to participate in coalition operations overseas, including by training and equipping the armed forces of other countries. It carried out air strikes in Iraq and in the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria), and maintained a military presence – reduced from past years – in Afghanistan. The UK government regarded the threat of international “terrorism” in the UK as “severe”, and that of “terrorism” from Northern Ireland as “substantial”.

Paramilitary violence persisted in some communities in Northern Ireland. The authorities continued to implement the Fresh Start Agreement, a plan for political reconciliation that involved, among other things, welfare reform and enhanced law enforcement in dealing with paramilitary violence.

Ireland and the UK agreed to accept 2,600 and 20,000 refugees from Syria, respectively, over the next five years. Both countries contributed financially to humanitarian work overseas.

In a referendum in June, the UK voted to leave the European Union; the Cabinet was reshuffled afterwards. Northern Ireland held National Assembly elections in May.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued to strengthen its position as a key source of reference on IHL and humanitarian issues. Through interaction with the authorities, civil society and the wider public, it promoted the development of informed positions on humanitarian issues; encouraged policy- and decision-making that took humanitarian considerations into account; and enlisted support for the Movement. It pursued activities to address humanitarian needs created by armed conflicts and other situations of violence, including in Northern Ireland.

Through bilateral meetings, high-level visits and briefings, ICRC representatives kept government ministries, parliamentary committees and other influential bodies in Ireland and the UK updated on the humanitarian situation and ICRC activities worldwide. Both governments maintained their support for ICRC activities.

Dialogue with the UK armed forces continued to focus on operational and legal matters and policy. At training sessions facilitated by the ICRC, military personnel discussed IHL and the goals of the Health Care in Danger project, among other humanitarian issues.

In Northern Ireland, paramilitary groups were urged to respect humanitarian principles at all times and support the ICRC’s activities. The authorities became more aware of the needs of former detainees, former combatants and victims of violence, including sexual violence, through the joint efforts of pertinent NGOs and the ICRC. With ICRC support, community-based organizations enhanced their counselling and other services for victims of paramilitary violence; they also learnt more about the consequences of sexual violence and ways to help victims, at events organized or supported by the ICRC. The ICRC also provided technical and financial support to 11 of these organizations that were working to mitigate the effects of the violence.

The ICRC’s president visited Dublin to meet with senior government officials, including the Irish president, and to consolidate dialogue between Ireland and the ICRC, particularly on IHL-related treaties. The Irish Defence Forces hosted a course for ICRC delegates on responding to emergencies arising from the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons.

For the first time, the ICRC was able to visit security and other detainees at two prisons in England. These visits, conducted according to standard ICRC procedures, allowed it to talk to individual detainees and prison staff bilaterally and confidentially, and deepen its understanding of the situation of detainees. The ICRC also visited detainees held at three prisons in Northern Ireland. It relayed to the authorities its findings on the treatment and living conditions of the detainees, through confidential reports. Health authorities and the ICRC signed a plan of action to strengthen health-care provision in places of detention.

The British Red Cross and the ICRC focused their partnership on assisting people affected by conflict and other violence, including in Northern Ireland; they reviewed their partnership as part of discussions to establish a new three-year agreement. Cooperation with the Irish Red Cross Society continued, mainly in IHL research and the humanitarian response to migration.

CIVILIANS

Dialogue and other forms of interaction continued between the ICRC and the pertinent authorities, paramilitary groups, members of civil society, academics and others (see *Actors of influence*), to broaden awareness of the humanitarian needs arising from the violence in Northern Ireland and from past conflict; the needs of former detainees, former combatants, and victims of violence were emphasized.

Personnel from community-based organizations learnt more about the consequences of sexual violence and ways to help victims, through events organized or supported by the ICRC. These included a symposium – organized with the University of Ulster – that tackled the results of an ICRC-commissioned study on conflict-related sexual violence.

People facing threats of paramilitary violence receive assistance from community-based organizations

Eleven community-based organizations kept up their efforts, with ICRC support, to mitigate violence and its effects on vulnerable people in Northern Ireland. Focus group discussions with violence-affected community members helped ensure that activities were tailored to people’s humanitarian needs; the British Red Cross took part in some of these discussions to promote its programmes, with a view to reaching more people in need.

Thus, with financial and technical assistance from the ICRC, which also served as a neutral intermediary when necessary, these organizations provided various forms of support, including: diversionary programmes for young people likely to become involved in violence; psychological support and counselling for former detainees; and mediation services benefiting some 180 individuals, and their families, targeted by paramilitary groups. The mediation programmes of some of these organizations obtained government accreditation, partly with the ICRC’s support. Based on an independent evaluation and an assessment it conducted in 2016, the ICRC discussed, with local organizations, plans to expand its support in areas where needs were found to be insufficiently addressed.

Some families who received physical threats or were expelled from their communities covered their transport and short-term accommodation expenses with ICRC financial assistance. To help prevent similar incidents, the ICRC also engaged local groups and civic institutions in discussions on alternatives to prevailing methods of resolving community disputes, including the punitive measures in use.

Of the 17 people officially known as “the disappeared”, who had gone missing during past conflict, six were still unaccounted for. The ICRC continued discussions with the pertinent parties, including relatives of the missing people, to expedite the exchange of any information that could help to clarify their fate.

Following an assessment mission by the ICRC to the Falkland/Malvinas islands, Argentina and the UK agreed to let the ICRC lead efforts to identify the remains of more than 120 Argentine soldiers buried there (see *Brasilia*); this was scheduled for 2017.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

The concerns of people detained, including in relation to past conflict and current violence in Northern Ireland, and in relation to “terrorism”, remained central to the ICRC’s discussions with the relevant authorities in Belfast and London.

Detainees at two high-security prisons in England receive ICRC visits for the first time

As part of a pilot programme agreed upon by the authorities and the ICRC, detainees at two high-security prisons in England – with a combined population of about 1,400, including those detained in relation to “terrorism” – were visited in accordance with standard ICRC procedures; the ICRC met with 60 of them individually. The purpose of the visits was to identify what the ICRC could contribute to authorities’ efforts to comply with domestic and international laws and standards, and to ease detainees’ living conditions and treatment, if necessary. Bilaterally and confidentially, ICRC delegates spoke with detainees and prison staff, and relayed their findings to the detaining authorities. Discussions with the justice ministry were under way to expand the programme to other prisons in England and Wales.

In Northern Ireland, detainees at three prisons – Hydebank Wood and Maghaberry, and the women’s prison at Ash House – also received ICRC visits; among them were people belonging to different communities and groups, who were held in separate parts of Maghaberry prison. Based on these visits, the ICRC shared confidential reports on humanitarian issues to the authorities concerned, and discussed its recommendations with prison officials. Health authorities and the ICRC signed a plan of action on joint initiatives to strengthen health care for detainees, particularly through staff training and other forms of technical support.

In all, over 2,900 detainees were visited in the UK.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

Bilateral meetings, and high-level visits from ICRC officials, including the president, kept authorities and parliamentarians in Ireland and the UK updated on humanitarian needs, operational challenges and ICRC activities worldwide, including in Northern Ireland (see *Civilians* and *People deprived of their freedom*). These efforts provided opportunities to relay key messages on humanitarian issues to government ministers, and fostered support for ICRC activities, from the UK’s Department for International Development and from Irish Aid.

The UK’s defence ministry draws on ICRC advice on policy issues, including compliance with IHL

During meetings and discussions with UK government and military officials, the ICRC emphasized the need for decision- and policy-making that took humanitarian principles into account, and that supported neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. It continued to develop its dialogue with the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – for example, on legal and policy issues in connection with the UK’s engagement overseas, including detention and the use of force, and compliance with IHL.

Dialogue continued with the UK military on operational matters. Military personnel discussed IHL, the goals of the Health Care in Danger project and other humanitarian issues, and the ICRC’s activities during sessions organized by the Defence Academy and other military training institutes, and by the office of the provost marshal; these sessions were facilitated by the ICRC.

In Northern Ireland, the ICRC sustained its dialogue with relevant stakeholders, to encourage them to help mitigate the impact of violence and address its consequences, and to foster support for the ICRC’s activities (see *Civilians*).

Efforts were pursued to strengthen cooperation with Ireland in areas of mutual concern; at the government’s invitation, the ICRC’s president visited Dublin in November to meet with senior officials, including the Irish president. Through this visit, the ICRC also sought to strengthen its dialogue with Ireland, particularly on implementing the Arms Trade Treaty and other IHL-related treaties, and on recruiting Irish nationals for the ICRC’s activities. The Irish Defence Forces hosted a course for ICRC delegates on responding to emergencies arising from the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons.

Academics, members of civil society and other actors discuss humanitarian issues at ICRC events

Policy-makers, academics, representatives of NGOs and think-tanks, and other influential actors exchanged views on various humanitarian issues at events organized or attended by the ICRC. These occasions also helped to strengthen the ICRC’s relations with these parties and to identify opportunities for cooperation.

The British Red Cross, the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of Exeter, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the ICRC hosted a conference in London on developing a comprehensive response to internal displacement and forced migration. Policy-makers, academics and humanitarian professionals were part of the conference’s audience, and the ICRC’s director of operations served as a panellist.

Briefings and other interaction with media professionals enabled the ICRC to broaden awareness of IHL and humanitarian principles. Various audiences learnt about the plight of people in countries affected by conflict or other violence, and about the ICRC’s activities, through articles, videos and updates posted on the ICRC’s website and social media platforms.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Partnership with the British Red Cross continued in the UK and abroad, within the framework of an agreement covering 2014–16. Cooperation in matters of operational and institutional priority covered various areas, such as: assistance for people affected by conflict and other violence, including in Northern Ireland;

promotion of IHL and the Movement; support for the Health Care in Danger project; the application of the Safer Access Framework; and information sharing and coordination. The British Red Cross and the ICRC reviewed their partnership, as part of discussions to establish a new three-year agreement.

Regular meetings between the two organizations, including an assessment of their activities in Northern Ireland, helped improve their operational cooperation and effectiveness. The ICRC seconded a fundraising adviser to the British Red Cross, to solicit private-sector support for the ICRC's work.

In February, the ICRC joined European National Societies at a conference in London – organized by the International Federation and hosted by the British Red Cross – that sought to consolidate the Movement's response to the influx of migrants into Europe, mainly through medical and psychosocial care, relief efforts and family-links services.

The ICRC's engagement with the Irish Red Cross continued, largely through regular meetings with its senior officers, including its chairperson. Cooperation between the two focused on IHL research, on addressing migrants' needs, including by restoring family links, and on strengthening joint public-communication activities.

| MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION | | Total | | | |
|---|--|-------|-------|--------|------|
| CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.) | | | | | |
| Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons | | | Women | Girls | Boys |
| | | 1 | | | 1 |
| PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses) | | | | | |
| ICRC visits | | | Women | Minors | |
| Detainees visited | | 2,912 | 54 | | |
| | | | Women | Girls | Boys |
| Detainees visited and monitored individually | | 60 | 2 | | |
| Detainees newly registered | | 18 | 1 | | |
| Number of visits carried out | | 17 | | | |
| Number of places of detention visited | | 5 | | | |
| RCMs and other means of family contact | | | | | |
| RCMs collected | | 1 | | | |

| MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE | | Total | Women | Children |
|---|--|------------|-------|----------|
| PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses) | | | | |
| Health | | | | |
| Visits carried out by health staff | | | 10 | |
| Places of detention visited by health staff | | Structures | 5 | |