

LONDON

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



 ICRC mission

Set up in 2003, the London mission focuses on pursuing humanitarian diplomacy and facilitating ICRC operations in the field. Its target audiences include the British authorities and armed forces, members of parliament, think-tanks, the media and major international NGOs. Through such contacts, the ICRC seeks to improve understanding of and secure broad support for IHL and ICRC and Movement operations. The London mission works in close cooperation with the British Red Cross on a wide range of areas of common interest.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	104
Assistance	-
Prevention	704
Cooperation with National Societies	385
General	-

▶ **1,193**

of which: Overheads 73

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	117%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	1
National staff (daily workers not included)	0

KEY POINTS

In 2010, the ICRC:

- ▶ developed contacts and dialogue with the new UK government and key decision-makers in the UK parliament and civil service on a range of humanitarian issues
- ▶ strengthened dialogue with senior government officials and high-ranking members of the UK armed forces on issues related to the conduct of hostilities and to people deprived of their freedom during armed conflict and other situations of violence
- ▶ contributed to discussions on a future code of conduct for private military and security companies
- ▶ welcomed the UK government's ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
- ▶ developed contacts and dialogue in Northern Ireland relating to the humanitarian effects of recent tensions there
- ▶ worked with the British Red Cross to raise the public profile of IHL, humanitarian action and the Movement

CONTEXT

After 13 years of Labour rule, a general election in May brought a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition to power. The new government announced major public spending cuts aimed at reducing the country's largest peacetime deficit on record, and was faced with tackling weak economic growth.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (hereafter United Kingdom) continued to play an important role on the international scene and to be politically active in many contexts of interest to the ICRC. UK armed forces remained engaged in the non-international armed conflict in Afghanistan. The situation in that country, as well as in the Middle East, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, featured regularly in the media and was of public concern.

In Northern Ireland, the risk of violence increased owing to lack of political development, economic recession, and sectarian tensions resurfacing ahead of local elections set for spring 2011.

In part owing to the diverse community of hundreds of ethnicities, languages and cultures that co-exist there and in other UK urban centres, London remained home to influential think-tanks and civil society and academic institutions with an international focus. It hosted conferences, seminars and workshops dealing with international relations, security, humanitarian issues, conflict analysis and military intervention. As one of the world's foremost media centres, the city was a focal point for international debate on current global issues. A large number of news organizations with worldwide reach were based in London.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

To enhance its network for humanitarian diplomacy, the ICRC continued to build close relations with the UK political authorities and other key stakeholders. It organized events with the British Red Cross and fostered ties with academic institutions and think-tanks to increase public awareness of IHL, humanitarian action and ICRC activities. The ICRC reinforced its links with UK-based media, encouraging journalists to give prominence to humanitarian issues when reporting on conflicts around the world. Resources were allocated to developing contacts in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland relating to the humanitarian effects of the resurfacing tensions.

In addition to briefings on ICRC operations and current major humanitarian challenges, meetings with the authorities, in particular with Ministry of Defence officials, focused on IHL implementation, especially regarding the conduct of hostilities and issues surrounding people detained in relation to armed conflict and other situations of violence, on the ICRC's mandate and on neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. The ICRC further developed its IHL training activities with the UK armed forces. These included support for officer training at the Joint Services Command and Staff College and participation in training events for troops heading to Afghanistan. The organization also contributed to discussions on a future code of conduct for private military and security companies.

The British Red Cross and the ICRC continued to implement their cooperation agreement, consolidating their partnership and further strengthening working relations.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

People resident in the United Kingdom after their release from the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba were approached by ICRC delegates with a dual objective: to gain an insight into their perceptions of the ICRC during their captivity; and to identify any difficulties they may have faced since their release and look at ways in which they could be assisted.

AUTHORITIES

Key decision-makers in the UK parliament and civil service and ICRC representatives met regularly to discuss shared concerns, thus improving mutual understanding. These included issues surrounding people detained in relation to armed conflict and other situations of violence, the ICRC's mandate and neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action, and the possibility of formalizing the ICRC's presence in the United Kingdom. Senior politicians from all parties were briefed on the ICRC's mandate and activities.

Representatives of the UK and Irish governments also met ICRC delegates in Belfast, Dublin and London to discuss the effects in humanitarian terms of the current situation in Northern Ireland. Moreover, an exchange on people deprived of their freedom took place with the authorities concerned. The ICRC also had a discussion on the role of the existing mechanisms to address the issue of persons missing in connection with past unrest.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) hosted a series of workshops to draft a paper for ministers on a code of conduct for private military and security companies, benefiting from ICRC advice. The FCO and the Department for International Development (DFID) received expert ICRC input during meetings on such issues as health in armed conflict, priority operational contexts, and women and war. At its request, DFID was provided with the information required for the conduct of a series of reviews into the effectiveness of its overseas development aid.

In May, the United Kingdom ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, following ICRC support in 2009 to introduce the relevant bill in the House of Commons.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Senior Defence Ministry staff, Permanent Joint Headquarters officers, civil servants and ICRC personnel engaged in dialogue on areas of operational interest, particularly Afghanistan, as well as on people detained in relation to armed conflict, the conduct of hostilities, the protection due to people not or no longer participating in hostilities, and neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.

Military officers, as well as troops to be deployed in contexts such as Afghanistan, enhanced their knowledge of the ICRC's mandate and activities and worked on IHL implementation during training and regular briefings. Senior officers at the Joint Services Command and Staff College and the Permanent Joint Headquarters took part in IHL training sessions, at which the ICRC gave presentations. Participants in training courses run by the UK Joint Civil-Military Cooperation Group and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst also learnt about ICRC activities and their relevance to UK military operations.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Representatives of UK-based media, NGOs and think-tanks met regularly with senior ICRC personnel to discuss the organization's mandate and activities in conflict zones and the importance of neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.

Events hosted by think-tanks, NGOs and academic institutions provided opportunities to increase knowledge of IHL and ICRC activities, as well as awareness of current topics of ICRC concern, among influential members of civil society. This included a photo exhibition to launch the "Missing Lives" publication.

The UK media gave extensive coverage to humanitarian issues and stories based on ICRC statements and press releases, helping to increase public awareness of IHL and ICRC activities worldwide, including in Afghanistan, Haiti and Pakistan. The British Red Cross and the ICRC also worked together to boost the public profile of IHL, humanitarian action and the Movement. Audiences inside and outside the United Kingdom gained insight into the neutral, impartial and independent nature of ICRC activities thanks to media broadcasts of interviews with ICRC staff.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The British Red Cross and the ICRC continued to implement the partnership framework agreement established in 2009, strengthening cooperation through regular working meetings and high-level strategic discussions, which took place in London and Geneva, Switzerland.

As part of the agreement, the two organizations worked together on communication activities and events. For example, they jointly carried out presentations at the London School of Economics. A round-table on Somalia chaired by the British Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières provided the ICRC with an opportunity to present its activities in the country and illustrate the importance of neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.

In Northern Ireland, the British Red Cross and the ICRC discussed the integration of the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme into secondary school curricula.