



ICRC delegation

# egypt

The ICRC delegation in Cairo promotes the implementation of IHL through national legislation, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, throughout the Arab world. It provides training in IHL for the armed and security forces, civilian and military judges, parliamentarians and diplomats, and promotes its inclusion in university and school curricula. These efforts are backed up by technical and academic support to IHL implementation bodies, by the production and distribution of IHL teaching materials and by increasing local capacities to teach IHL, including that of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. Regional media communication is also carried out from Cairo, where the ICRC's regional documentation and promotion centre is based. The ICRC has been in Egypt, with interruptions, since the beginning of the Second World War.

## EXPENDITURE (IN CHF ,000)

Protection	170
Assistance	-
Prevention	1,074
Cooperation with National Societies	100
General	-

► **1,344**

of which: Overheads **82**

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>86.6%</b>
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## PERSONNEL

<b>5</b> expatriates
<b>35</b> national staff (daily workers not included)

## KEY POINTS

### In 2005, the ICRC:

- promoted and supported mechanisms to incorporate IHL into national law, university and school curricula and the teaching and training programmes of the national armed forces in the Arab world;
- organized regional conferences and workshops on IHL, in conjunction with the League of Arab States and national authorities, for a broad range of Arab government and military audiences to promote greater understanding and acceptance of IHL in the Arab world;
- worked closely with the League of Arab States and with Arab governments to accelerate the IHL implementation process, in accordance with a plan of action agreed upon at a regional meeting of Arab experts organized by the Arab League and the ICRC in Cairo in February 2005;
- enabled asylum seekers and refugees to trace and restore contact with family members in their home countries and helped re-establish links between people in Egypt and their family members detained/interned abroad;
- issued travel documents to recognized refugees to facilitate their resettlement in third countries;
- developed interaction with key elements of civil society, including human rights organizations and the media, to promote knowledge of and support for the ICRC's mandate and activities, as well as its position on major issues of humanitarian concern.

## CONTEXT

Egypt remained at the forefront of Arab initiatives to defuse tension in the region generated by the conflict in Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian crisis and the situation in Lebanon and Syria.

In February, Egypt hosted an Israeli-Palestinian summit, which led to a temporary suspension of hostilities between the two parties.

Egypt and Israel agreed to the deployment of Egyptian troops along Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip to secure the area and to prevent arms smuggling into the territory following Israel's pullout in August.

Under an international agreement implemented in December, European Union police observers were stationed at the Rafah checkpoint between Gaza and Egypt, where people were allowed to cross from one side to the other for the first time without Israeli authorization and direct controls. Several violent incidents occurred on the Gaza side of the crossing in late December, which led to episodes of lawlessness and a number of deaths.

Internal security was tightened and a number of arrests were made following bomb attacks in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh in July, in which 67 people were killed and many more injured. Another eight people were killed in attacks in Cairo in April. These incidents followed bomb attacks in the Sinai Peninsula in October 2004, in which 34 people died and 159 others were injured.

Meanwhile, the state of emergency declared in 1981 remained in force as a precaution against any resurgence of the violent Islamic militancy that disrupted the country in the 1990s.

In September, President Hosni Mubarak was re-elected to a fifth consecutive term of office in a vote which for the first time allowed multiple candidates to stand, in accordance with a constitutional amendment endorsed by referendum in May. The president won 88% of the vote, which registered a low turnout of 33%, widely attributed to the abstention of most key opposition parties. Legislative elections followed in November and December, in which candidates from the ruling National Democratic Party won 80% of parliamentary seats, while independent candidates close to the banned Muslim Brotherhood movement secured 20%, a fivefold increase in their legislative representation.

Large numbers of people fleeing war, internal violence and economic hardship continued to enter Egypt seeking asylum, refugee status or resettlement in third countries. Although primarily from Sudan, a significant portion also came from other countries in the same region.

Several thousand Sudanese nationals demanding resettlement in third countries took part in a prolonged sit-in near the UNHCR office in Cairo. More than 20 Sudanese were reported killed when police broke up the protest in late December.

## MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	153
RCMs distributed	214
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	29
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	44
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2005	100
DOCUMENTS ISSUED	
People to whom travel documents were issued	5,192

## ICRC ACTION

Egypt continued to be the focal point of ICRC activities to promote greater knowledge and acceptance of IHL in countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Working in close cooperation with the Cairo-based League of Arab States, the ICRC reinforced its advocacy role aimed at persuading Egyptian and other Arab governments to accede to IHL instruments or to implement those already ratified. As part of this process, the ICRC's legal advisory service conducted studies in a number of Arab countries to assess the compatibility of their national legislation with IHL, as a means of helping governments to modify their respective laws, where appropriate. Legal advice was also provided on request to government legislative bodies in drafting model laws incorporating the main provisions of IHL.

Regional and national seminars coordinated from Cairo across the region helped to promote the integration of IHL into university and school curricula and into the theoretical and operational training programmes of national armed and security forces in Arab League member States.

In support of these activities, the ICRC's regional documentation and promotion centre in Cairo continued to produce written and audiovisual materials on IHL, including Arabic translations of IHL treaties, for distribution to governments and national implementation bodies. The ICRC's Cairo-based Arabic website was also widely consulted as a key reference source on IHL-related issues.

Cooperation was reinforced with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society to strengthen its capacity to deliver humanitarian services in accordance with the Fundamental Principles.

As in past years, the ICRC's tracing and RCM services enabled Egyptians to restore and maintain contact with family members detained/interned abroad or living in countries affected by armed conflict. Refugees in Egypt were able to re-establish links with family members in their home countries by the same means. Furthermore, ICRC travel documents issued to thousands of asylum seekers and refugees – mainly nationals from countries in the Horn of Africa – facilitated their resettlement in third countries.

## CIVILIANS

Large numbers of people fleeing their home countries for political or economic reasons continued to arrive in Egypt. The majority came from Sudan, other countries in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and West Africa. Only a limited number were granted refugee status in Egypt or accepted for resettlement in third countries. Those who had no valid identification papers required travel documents issued by the ICRC. This process was coordinated together with the embassies of destination countries, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, governmental agencies and NGOs. Most recipients of ICRC travel documents were Sudanese nationals travelling to Australia, Canada and the United States.

Asylum seekers and refugees, particularly Sudanese nationals, also continued to require ICRC assistance to locate and restore contact with family members in their home countries through the ICRC tracing and RCM network. Information on their tracing needs was gathered during visits to refugee communities.

In addition, the ICRC helped families living in Egypt to trace and re-establish contact with relatives either detained/interned abroad or unaccounted for in countries

disrupted by conflict or other situations of violence where communications remained difficult.

- 153 RCMs collected and 214 distributed from and to families in Egypt and relatives either detained/interned abroad, mainly in Iraq or in the US detention facility in Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, or living elsewhere abroad
- 5,192 people received ICRC travel documents
- 29 new tracing requests received, 44 closed positively and 100 remained pending

## AUTHORITIES

### Regional

Close contact was maintained with the Arab League and with Arab governments to accelerate the IHL implementation process, in accordance with a plan of action agreed at regional meetings of Arab experts organized jointly by the Arab League and the ICRC.

Countries that had not already done so were encouraged to establish national committees for the implementation of IHL, as well as parliamentary commissions on IHL. By the end of December, nine countries of the region had created national committees and six others were in the process of doing so. In support of these goals, ICRC experts carried out missions from Cairo to Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan and Syria in 2005.

The ICRC legal advisory service continued to provide expertise and IHL-related documentation, as well as draft model laws, to governments and IHL implementation bodies in the region.

- ▶ In November, a draft law related to the ratification and implementation by Arab governments of provisions of the Rome Statute was adopted by the Council of Arab Justice Ministers;
- ▶ In 2005, the Cairo delegation organized several regional meetings on IHL, variously with the League of Arab States, the Arab Parliamentary Union and/or national authorities;
- ▶ February: representatives from 15 Arab States examined measures to reinforce implementation mechanisms for IHL at a meeting in Cairo;
- ▶ March: a first training course on IHL took place for civilian and military judges from 10 Arab countries, at the Kuwait Institute of Judicial and Legal Studies;
- ▶ June: the 2nd regional seminar on IHL was held in Beirut for government representatives from 15 Arab countries;
- ▶ November: 42 parliamentarians from 11 Arab countries met in Damascus and adopted a first plan of action regarding legislative aspects of national implementation of IHL at a meeting in Damascus.

In addition, IHL training courses and seminars were organized for various government, civil society and National Society audiences in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Syria and Tunisia.

The ICRC published its third annual report in June on progress on the implementation of IHL in the 22 Arab League member States.

In November, the ICRC signed an agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates to establish a regional IHL training centre for diplomats.

### Egypt

As part of a longstanding programme, the ICRC gave presentations on IHL to hundreds of civilian and military judges and public prosecutors at various academies and training centres under the authority of the Ministry of Justice.

In August, Egypt ratified the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention on Cultural Property.

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

### Regional

Cairo-based ICRC experts organized training courses on IHL for military instructors and/or promoted the integration of IHL

into military teaching and training programmes during missions in Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

In December, a seminar on IHL was conducted in Cairo for 38 operational and legal representatives of the armed forces of 17 Arab States. Discussions centered on ways to accelerate the systematic incorporation of IHL into military doctrine, teaching and training programmes.

Cooperation in this field was strengthened with the League of Arab States, which invited the ICRC to participate in discussions on IHL-related issues during periodic meetings of Arab military officials at its Cairo headquarters. The first such participation occurred in December at a meeting on military terminology attended by 50 high-ranking officers from 17 Arab States.

### Egypt

The ICRC reviewed the current status of IHL teaching in the Egyptian armed forces with senior military officials and discussed with them measures to introduce IHL systematically into theoretical and practical military training programmes. In November, a course on IHL was conducted for 21 senior officers, most of whom were military instructors.

Meetings were held with senior officers of the Egyptian police academy to discuss ways of incorporating humanitarian principles and relevant human rights standards into training programmes for the security forces. Further dissemination sessions were conducted for hundreds of police and prison officers at various academies and training centres under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

### Regional

The ICRC's regional communication and documentation centre provided media circles in the Arab world with Arabic-language publications, including the quarterly *Al Insani* (*The Humanitarian*) magazine, background material and documentary video coverage of ICRC activities and IHL-related issues.

Missions were carried out to Algeria, Jordan, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen to help organize national workshops on IHL and the ICRC for the media and NGOs.

High-level media representatives from 12 Arab countries participated in a

2nd regional meeting on IHL for journalists organized by the ICRC in Dubai, on how the media can contribute to the protection of civilians and the prevention of IHL violations.

The ICRC reinforced its networking with Islamic religious leaders and organizations throughout the region to promote an accurate perception of the ICRC as an organization carrying out humanitarian tasks on a strictly independent, neutral and impartial basis.

### Egypt

The ICRC broadened contacts with civil society groups, including NGOs active in the fields of human rights, mine action, international mechanisms of justice and the protection of children in armed conflict, and with representatives of Islamic circles.

The ICRC was invited to address several international conferences hosted by Egypt on humanitarian issues. These included a meeting organized by the Egyptian government in February to mark the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide; a UN-organized regional consultation on violence against children in June; and an international conference on landmines organized in December by the Egyptian National Council on Human Rights.

A national workshop for journalists took place in June for 18 media representatives to foster better understanding of the ICRC and to promote media coverage of issues related to IHL and human rights in armed conflict.

### Exploring Humanitarian Law

The ICRC's Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) education programme was introduced in the region in 2002, and its incorporation into school curricula was at varying stages in the different member countries of the Arab League. By December 2005, ten countries of the region had initiated the programme and eight had already reached or completed the training and experimentation phase and were due to start integrating the modules into school curricula.

Teacher training in the EHL programme was carried out from Cairo throughout the region, together with missions to assess and support its integration into secondary-school education. In Egypt, follow-up training courses in EHL were held for teachers of the subject in five governorates (Assyut, Cairo, Guizeh, Ismaeliya and Qena).

A new form of collaboration was initiated with a Gulf-based Pan-Arab TV network

and its specialized channel for children to promote humanitarian issues among young people through educational programmes and TV spots.

New information and teaching tools on EHL were developed, including brochures and a CD-ROM version of the programme in Arabic, and information on the programme was updated on the ICRC's Arabic website.

### **IHL teaching in universities**

A thorough survey to assess the current scope of IHL teaching in law faculties in the Arab world was conducted together with the education authorities concerned. It showed an uneven state of such teaching across the region and the need for increased training in IHL in order to speed up its integration into university curricula. In response, the ICRC has produced a number of reference texts and books on the subject, curricula models, teaching methodology tools and sample cases of IHL issues.

In August, in collaboration with the Arab League, the ICRC organized the 3rd regional seminar on IHL for 45 professors from 17 Arab States, who exchanged experiences on their respective IHL teaching programmes, mainly in law faculties, and were provided with updated information and teaching tools.

A first meeting of Arab officials responsible for university curricula and higher education was organized in Beirut in September for 25 experts from 11 Arab States, including the heads of the Union of Arab Universities and of the Scientific Committee of Arab Law Faculties. The meeting adopted new guidelines on the integration of IHL into university curricula.

At the end of 2005, the ICRC completed a comprehensive manual on IHL for academic circles, to be released at the beginning of 2006.

## **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Following a field assessment in June, the ICRC rehabilitated an Egyptian Red Crescent health post in Rafah on Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip and stocked it with emergency relief supplies. In recent years, the health post had provided medical and other emergency assistance to Gaza residents blocked on the Egyptian side of the border by recurrent Israeli security closures.

Egyptian Red Crescent staff received training to strengthen their capacities to deal with tracing requests from refugees and families in Egypt seeking to re-establish contact with relatives in their home countries or with family members detained/interned abroad.

As a contribution to the National Society's emergency-preparedness and first-aid programmes, the ICRC provided new first-aid dummies to Red Crescent branches and sponsored the training of volunteers by the Egyptian civil defence service in fire-fighting and rescue operations.

In July and September, the ICRC helped the Egyptian Red Crescent to organize training seminars on IHL and the Movement in Cairo for 60 staff and volunteers from branch offices in 20 governorates.

The National Society maintained its support for ICRC emergency relief operations in various parts of the world.