



egypt

The ICRC has been in Egypt, with some interruptions, since the beginning of the Second World War. The delegation works primarily as a regional centre to promote the national implementation of IHL and its incorporation into military training and academic curricula in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world. The Cairo-based regional legal advisory, communication and documentation centre, working in close cooperation with the League of Arab States, plays an important role in this process. The ICRC supports the work of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. It has also expressed its interest in visiting people deprived of their freedom in Egypt.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	206
Assistance	-
Prevention	722
Cooperation with National Societies	97
General	-

► **1,026**

of which: *Overheads* **63**

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	86%
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PERSONNEL

4 expatriates
38 national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2006, the ICRC:

- promoted and supported mechanisms to incorporate IHL into national legislation, into university and school curricula and into the teaching and training programmes of 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, military and academic audiences to promote greater understanding and acceptance of IHL in the Arab world;
- 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 whenever necessary in order to facilitate their resettlement in third countries;
- cooperated with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society on a range of humanitarian issues, including the provision of emergency relief to thousands of Palestinian civilians stranded at the Rafah crossing point between Egypt and the Gaza Strip owing to Israeli border closures;
- 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 IHL-related issues.

CONTEXT

Egypt continued to play a key intermediary role in efforts to defuse tensions in the region, particularly in the contexts of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis and the conflicts in Lebanon and Iraq, as well as in Sudan. It initiated bilateral dialogue with the new Israeli and Palestinian governments aimed, *inter alia*, at encouraging the formation of a Palestinian coalition government to end Palestinian factional infighting, facilitating negotiations for the release of Israeli and Palestinian detainees and reviving the stalled Middle East peace process.

Political tensions in Egypt persisted following the September 2005 election in which President Hosni Mubarak won a fifth six-year term of office, and the subsequent legislative elections in which independent candidates close to the banned Muslim Brotherhood movement secured 20% of the vote, a fivefold increase in their legislative representation. Despite a presidential pledge to pursue political and economic reforms, parliament approved a proposal by the president to postpone municipal elections for two years, and the authorities denied official recognition to 12 new political parties.

The government took a firmer stance on public demonstrations and political opponents, including dissident journalists and members of the judiciary, and its security forces made an increasing number of arrests. It also extended the state of emergency, in force since 1981, by another two years, pending the enactment of new anti-terrorist legislation.

New bomb attacks occurred in the Red Sea tourist resort of Dahab in April, killing over 20 people and injuring another 60. Almost simultaneous suicide attacks targeted international peacekeeping forces and local police in the northern Sinai, causing further casualties. A number of people alleged to have been behind the attacks were killed in clashes with security forces deployed in the region.

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.

In September, Egypt announced that it planned to relaunch its civil nuclear energy programme in order to diversify its sources of energy.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	138
RCMs distributed	258
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	27
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	9
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2006	100
DOCUMENTS ISSUED	
People to whom travel documents were issued	4,040

ICRC ACTION

Egypt continued to be the focal point for ICRC activities to promote greater knowledge and acceptance of IHL and neutral and independent humanitarian action 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 that 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 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 for government officials, parliamentarians, judges, academics and diplomats throughout 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 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.

Another priority was to promote IHL and knowledge of the ICRC's specific mandate among key civil society audiences, such as

the media, human rights NGOs and faith-based Arab humanitarian organizations.

Cooperation with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society helped to strengthen the National Society's capacity to deliver humanitarian services in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, particularly in the fields of tracing and restoring family links. Operational cooperation was further developed in assisting thousands of Palestinians stranded for weeks at the Rafah crossing point between Egypt and the Gaza Strip following border closures by the Israeli authorities.

ICRC 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 refugees – mainly nationals from countries in the Horn of Africa – facilitated the resettlement of thousands of people in third countries.

CIVILIANS

Resettlement of refugees

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

► 4,040 people issued with ICRC travel documents to facilitate resettlement in third countries

Restoring family links

Asylum seekers and refugees, particularly Sudanese nationals, continued to rely on ICRC tracing and RCM services to locate and restore contact with family members in their home countries. Families living in Egypt were able 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.

National Society personnel were given training in the field of restoring family links (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*).

A number of unaccompanied minors also received ICRC travel documents to join family members in other countries.

- 138 RCMs collected from and 258 distributed to families in Egypt
- 5 unaccompanied minors issued with ICRC travel documents to join their families in the United Kingdom
- new tracing requests registered for 27 people (10 females; 5 minors at the time of disappearance); 9 people located; 100 people (35 females; 28 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- 1 Egyptian national who died in Iraq repatriated under ICRC auspices

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

ICRC delegates were authorized to visit detainees held in Egypt after their release and repatriation from the US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba. One detainee was visited in 2006.

Discussions continued with the Egyptian authorities regarding ICRC access to all places of detention in the country.

AUTHORITIES

At the regional level, the ICRC focused on encouraging the 22 Arab League member States to accede to treaties and conventions to which they were not yet party, and to incorporate the relevant legal provisions into their national legislation. Countries that had not done so were encouraged to establish national committees for the implementation of IHL, as well as parliamentary commissions on IHL. Twelve countries in the region had created national IHL committees and two were in the process of doing so.

The ICRC legal advisory service provided expertise and IHL-related documentation, as well as draft laws on IHL treaties and conventions, to governments and IHL implementation bodies in the region.

- ▶ 18 Arab League member States represented at a regional meeting of government experts on IHL in Cairo in February, organized in conjunction with the Arab League and the Egyptian Ministry of Justice
- ▶ Arab Ministry of Justice representatives adopted recommendations concerning ratification and implementation of IHL treaties at their annual meeting in Algiers (see *Algeria*)
- ▶ a progress report on the status of IHL implementation in Arab League member States prepared jointly with the Arab League for publication in 2007
- ▶ judges and parliamentarians in Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia participated in IHL courses conducted by the ICRC
- ▶ hundreds of Egyptian civil and military judges and public prosecutors attended IHL courses
- ▶ 54 representatives of 19 countries attended the 3rd regional IHL seminar for Arab governmental experts held in Beirut in June (see *Lebanon*)
- ▶ representatives from 20 Arab League member States attended an IHL seminar organized jointly with the regional training centre for Arab diplomats based in the United Arab Emirates (see *Kuwait*)
- ▶ a presentation on the pertinence of IHL in relation to acts of “terrorism” and anti-“terrorist” operations given at an international conference organized in Cairo by the Egyptian parliament

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Cooperation was strengthened with the Arab League’s Military Affairs Department, which invited the ICRC to participate in discussions on IHL-related issues during periodic meetings of Arab military officials at its Cairo headquarters. ICRC assistance was provided in compiling a manual on military terminology, taking into account the provisions of IHL related to armed conflict, and plans were drawn up to expand the programme of IHL instruction for military officers in the region.

- ▶ military instructors throughout the region attended IHL training courses in Cairo
- ▶ the integration of IHL into military teaching and training programmes promoted in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen
- ▶ dissemination sessions held throughout the region aimed at incorporating humanitarian principles and human rights standards into training programmes of national security forces

CIVIL SOCIETY

Media circles in the Arab world were provided 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. The ICRC’s Arabic language website was also further developed, as were new institutional and promotional tools adapted to spreading knowledge of IHL in the Arab world.

- ▶ media representatives from 15 Arab countries attended a regional meeting in Casablanca, Morocco, on raising IHL issues in their reporting on armed conflicts (see *Tunis*)
- ▶ 20 Egyptian journalists attended a 2nd ICRC seminar on IHL for media representatives
- ▶ 25 human rights and Islamic NGOs from 12 Arab countries attended a workshop on humanitarian action and IHL principles in Cairo
- ▶ contacts reinforced with parliamentarians, Islamic religious leaders, NGOs and organizations throughout the region to explain the ICRC’s mandate and activities and to gain acceptance of its independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian action

- ▶ 12 countries of the region had introduced the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme by the end of 2006; teacher-training courses in the programme conducted throughout the region
- ▶ representatives of the Ministries of Education of 17 Arab States and several National Societies participated in the 4th regional meeting on Exploring Humanitarian Law held in Tunisia (see *Tunis*)
- ▶ an ICRC guide for academic circles on IHL containing model IHL courses and teaching plans, International Criminal Court case studies and IHL provisions related to armed conflict published in Arabic
- ▶ several Arab national IHL committees adopted plans to include the study of IHL in university law curricula

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Egyptian Red Crescent staff received further support to strengthen their capacities in the fields of communication, dissemination, emergency preparedness, first aid, tracing and restoring family links.

Thousands of Palestinians were stranded for extended periods on the Egyptian side of the border with the Gaza Strip after Israeli closures. Those stranded received food, water, household essentials and medical assistance supplied by the Sinai branch of the National Society with ICRC support. In addition, hundreds of refugees living in difficult conditions in Cairo were provided with blankets to help them survive the winter.

- ▶ 60 National Society youth volunteers attended ICRC workshops on IHL
- ▶ tracing officers from 19 National Society branches attended training sessions on restoring family links