



egypt

The ICRC has been in Egypt, with some interruptions, since the beginning of the Second World War. It 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 also seeks to visit people deprived of their freedom in Egypt.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	239
Assistance	-
Prevention	827
Cooperation with National Societies	114
General	-

► **1,179**

of which: Overheads 72

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	88%
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PERSONNEL

4	expatriates
34	national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2009, the ICRC:

- supported the Egyptian Red Crescent Society in its handling of some 25,000 tonnes of drugs and relief material during the hostilities in the Gaza Strip at the beginning of 2009
- together with the International Federation and the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, developed a contingency plan to respond to any emergency at the Egypt-Gaza border
- together with the League of Arab States, actively promoted the integration of IHL into national legislation, university and school curricula, and the training of national armed forces throughout the Arab world
- signed an agreement with the Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera pan-Arab satellite broadcasters, at their request, to organize IHL training sessions twice a year for their senior correspondents and news editors
- restored and maintained contact between family members separated by conflict, detention or displacement through RCMs, phone calls and – for the first time ever in Egypt – videoconference calls
- pursued discussions with the Egyptian authorities on ICRC access to security detainees in Egypt

CONTEXT

Egypt continued to play an important role in efforts to defuse tensions in the region.

Egypt was a key transit route for relief aid to the Gaza Strip during and after the hostilities there at the beginning of 2009 and for the evacuation of the wounded from the territory for emergency medical treatment. In March, Egypt hosted an international conference attended by some 80 countries to discuss funding for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. Egypt started construction of a steel wall sunk deep into the ground between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, reportedly intended to stop smuggling through underground tunnels to Gaza. This resulted in heightened tension and violent demonstrations in the border area. Rival Fatah and Hamas Palestinian factions were invited to Cairo for talks on forming a unity government.

Egypt also organized a peace conference on Sudan aimed at ending the long-running conflict in Darfur, doubled the number of its peacekeeping troops deployed there to 1,600, and stated its willingness to host a conference on the reconstruction and development of Darfur during the first half of 2010.

US President Barack Obama's choice of Egypt to deliver a speech in June on relations between the Muslim world and the West was widely regarded as an acknowledgment of the central role that the country played in the Arab and Islamic world. The Egyptian president visited the United States of America later in the year for the first time since 2004.

Egypt continued to suffer from high levels of unemployment and poverty, compounded by exponential population growth and a decline in earnings from tourism, the Suez Canal and remittances from Egyptians working abroad.

A number of Islamist militants held responsible for sporadic acts of violence in the country were arrested.

Large numbers of people fleeing armed conflict, other situations of violence and economic hardship, mainly from the Horn of Africa, continued to enter Egypt seeking asylum, refugee status or resettlement in third countries. Since 2008, several hundred of them have reportedly sought irregular entry into Israel via Egyptian territory. Some of these were allegedly killed by Egyptian border guards in the process, while the majority were detained and deported.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

	Total
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	124
RCMs distributed	258
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	26
<i>of whom women</i>	12
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance</i>	8
Tracing cases closed positively (persons located)	3
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2009 (people)	40
<i>of whom women</i>	15
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance</i>	12
DOCUMENTS ISSUED	
People to whom travel documents were issued	1,578

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

Egypt continued to be the regional base of ICRC activities to promote greater knowledge and acceptance of IHL and neutral and independent humanitarian action, as well as to advance the national implementation of IHL in the 22 member countries of the League of Arab States.

Government officials, parliamentarians, judges, academics, military staff and diplomats of Arab League member States attended regional seminars on IHL to promote its integration into national legislation, university and school curricula, and the theoretical and operational training programmes of the armed forces. In support of these activities, governments and national implementation bodies received relevant information from the ICRC's regional documentation and promotion centre in Cairo, which continued to produce written and audiovisual materials on IHL. The ICRC's Cairo-based Arabic-language website remained a key reference on IHL-related issues.

Another priority for the delegation was to promote IHL and knowledge of the ICRC's specific mandate among key civil society audiences, such as the national and international media, human rights NGOs and faith-based Arab humanitarian organizations, in order to gain their active support.

During and after the hostilities in the Gaza Strip, the International Federation and the ICRC assisted the Egyptian Red Crescent Society in the handling of relief aid transiting Egypt en route for the Gaza Strip. The International Federation and the ICRC also helped the National Society develop a contingency plan to respond to any emergency at the Egypt-Gaza border. The ICRC president participated in the conference on Gaza's reconstruction organized by Egypt in Sharm el-Sheikh, during which he addressed the 80 donor countries present and held bilateral meetings on humanitarian issues related to the Gaza Strip.

People in Egypt, including refugees, and their relatives detained/interned abroad or living in countries affected by armed conflict exchanged family news through ICRC family-links services. Receipt of ICRC certificates confirming the detention of a relative enabled families to obtain social welfare allowances and to enrol their children in school. A number of refugees, mainly nationals from countries in the Horn of Africa, including

unaccompanied children, were issued with ICRC travel documents in order to facilitate their family reunification or resettlement in third countries once they had been granted refugee status. This process was coordinated with the embassies of destination countries, UNHCR and other relevant organizations.

The ICRC pursued discussions with high-level officials regarding authorization to visit people held on charges of endangering State security or in connection with the fight against "terrorism", as yet to no avail.

CIVILIANS

Dispersed family members stay in touch

Asylum seekers and refugees, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, continued to rely on ICRC family-links services to exchange news with relatives in their home countries. Families living in Egypt used the same services to trace and re-establish contact with relatives either detained/interned abroad or present in countries where communications had been disrupted by armed conflict or other situations of violence. Videoconference calls facilitated by the ICRC were used for the first time in Egypt to establish contact between families there and their relatives held in the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba.

Families of Egyptian nationals still detained/interned abroad were visited by ICRC staff to deliver RCMs from and collect RCMs for their relatives and to organize telephone calls between them. Certificates confirming the detention of their relatives enabled families to obtain social welfare allowances and to enrol their children in school. The situation of former detainees/internees released and transferred back to Egypt was assessed with a view to helping the most indigent among them. Thus, two Egyptian nationals formerly interned at Guantanamo Bay received one-off assistance to help them start a small income-generating project.

A number of unaccompanied minors were issued with ICRC travel documents to enable them to join family members in other countries and, while awaiting reunification, received psychological and vocational counselling provided by an NGO, with ICRC support. The ICRC and other organizations dealing with unaccompanied minors in Egypt coordinated their activities to ensure that such family reunifications were in the best interests of the children concerned.

Family-links activities were carried out in close coordination with international organizations, NGOs and the Egyptian Red Crescent, as well as with community-based associations of refugees and migrants from Africa and Iraq. Information sessions held within these circles and a workshop on disaster preparedness for 30 government officials raised awareness of the Movement family-links network, thereby encouraging its use when required.

The National Society, together with the International Federation and the ICRC, developed a contingency plan to respond to any cross-border emergency arising from hostilities in the Gaza Strip. The plan included measures to respond to a sudden influx of Gaza residents into Egypt, particularly in terms of their potential family-links needs.

- ▶ 124 RCMs collected from and 258 RCMs distributed to civilians; 26 phone calls facilitated between family members; 21 phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a relative detained/interned abroad
- ▶ new tracing requests registered for 26 people (12 women; 8 minors at the time of disappearance); 4 people located, including 1 for whom a tracing request had been registered by another delegation; 40 people (15 women; 12 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- ▶ 1 person reunited with family

Refugees are assisted in resettling in third countries

Large numbers of people fleeing their home countries for political or economic reasons continued to arrive in Egypt. The majority came from Sudan but some from other countries in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and West Africa and from Iraq. Only a limited number were granted refugee status and accepted for resettlement in third countries. Those who were accepted but had no valid identification papers were provided with travel documents by the ICRC in coordination with the embassies of destination countries, government agencies, the IOM, NGOs and UNHCR.

- ▶ 1,578 people issued with an ICRC travel document to facilitate their resettlement in third countries

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Based on its right of initiative conferred by the Movement's statutes, the ICRC continued to engage in discussions with high-level government officials regarding authorization to visit people held on charges of endangering State security or in connection with the fight against "terrorism". The ICRC endeavoured to explain how, when visiting detainees according to its standard working procedures, it could contribute to helping the detaining authorities comply with internationally recognized standards applicable to detention. No agreement had been reached by year-end.

Egyptian families whose male heads of household were detained/interned abroad were issued with certificates of detention required to obtain social welfare allowances and to enrol their children in school.

AUTHORITIES

Members of the Egyptian government and the Cairo-based League of Arab States regularly discussed issues of common interest with the ICRC, enabling it to enlist support for its operations. Many meetings focused on the provision of emergency assistance in the Gaza Strip. The ICRC president was given the opportunity to address the 80 donor countries represented at the conference hosted by Egypt in Sharm el-Sheikh on the Gaza Strip's reconstruction and, during the conference, to hold bilateral meetings with participants on humanitarian issues related to the Gaza Strip.

The 22 member States of the Arab League were encouraged to accede to IHL instruments to which they were not yet party and to incorporate the relevant legal provisions into their national legislation. Together, the Arab League and the ICRC organized regional seminars for government officials, in particular members of national implementation bodies, to refine mechanisms for the incorporation of IHL into national legislation and into the curricula of training institutes for future judges and diplomats.

- ▶ representatives of 17 Arab States, including Egypt, participated in the eighth meeting of government experts on IHL in Amman, Jordan
- ▶ 37 civil servants from 15 Arab States acquired the necessary skills to teach the subject to their peers at 2 two-week courses on IHL, co-organized with the Centre for Legal and Judiciary Studies in Beirut, Lebanon

Governments and the 13 existing national IHL committees were provided with legal expertise, IHL-related documentation and draft model laws. Various organizations invited the ICRC to share its expertise and views on IHL at conferences and seminars.

In Egypt, the national IHL committee, the National Centre for Judicial Studies and the ICRC worked on ways to accelerate progress on IHL implementation, including through the conduct of a study on the compatibility of national legislation with IHL. The national IHL committee worked on draft legislation to incorporate the provisions of the Hague Convention on Cultural Property and the repression of war crimes into national law. Scores of Egyptian civilian and military judges and public prosecutors attended regular IHL training courses.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The Arab League's Military Affairs Department invited the ICRC to participate in discussions on IHL-related issues during a meeting of military officials at its Cairo headquarters. At a joint regional seminar held there, 31 high-ranking officers from 12 Arab States discussed ways to promote the integration of IHL into their military teaching and training programmes. The ICRC followed this up with support missions throughout the region.

In Egypt, military forces about to be deployed in Darfur, Sudan, were briefed on IHL, as were personnel at various military academies.

A high-ranking Egyptian officer was invited to participate in the Senior Workshop on International Rules governing Military Operations held in Paris, France.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Pan-Arab media gave extensive coverage to ICRC operations, relaying key humanitarian messages to their audiences. In this, they were aided by background materials in Arabic on IHL and the ICRC, including the ICRC's Cairo-based Arabic-language website and quarterly *Al-Insani* magazine. At their request, the Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera pan-Arab satellite broadcasters and the ICRC signed an agreement to organize IHL training sessions twice a year for their senior correspondents and news editors, reflecting heightened interest in IHL in the region.

In Egypt, contacts with the media, human rights associations and religious circles helped promote IHL and raise awareness of the ICRC's mandate. Eighty media representatives attended three training courses and NGO staff in Cairo five lectures on IHL and ICRC activities in the region.

Teachers were trained in the use of a practical guide produced by the Ministry of Education on teaching the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme. The Ministry of Education and the ICRC signed an agreement to turn the programme over to the ministry by the end of 2010.

In addition to courses organized with the Arab League's Centre for Legal and Judiciary Studies (see *Authorities*), PhD students from different Arab States studying in Egyptian universities received literature on IHL. Students in Cairo attended presentations on IHL given in collaboration with UNHCR.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

At the end of December 2008, the president of the Egyptian Red Crescent convened Movement meetings to coordinate the Gaza relief operation. The National Society mobilized more than 300 volunteers and successfully managed the handling and transport from Egypt to the Gaza Strip of tonnes of donations from all over the world.

Together with the International Federation and the ICRC, the National Society developed a contingency plan to respond to any emergency resulting from the situation in the Gaza Strip, such as a sudden influx of Gaza residents into Egypt, and to meet potential needs for restoring family links.

The National Society received training materials to support the ongoing rehabilitation and modernization of first-aid training centres in its 27 branches. It provided training in the promotion and dissemination of IHL to its volunteers and youths from other organizations, with ICRC support.

Plans to help construct a National Society warehouse on the Egyptian side of the border with Gaza were abandoned owing to difficulties in finding an appropriate location for the project.