



azerbaijan

The ICRC has been working in Azerbaijan since 1992 in relation to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. It focuses on addressing the issue of missing persons and the problems of detainees held in connection with the conflict, detained for security reasons or otherwise vulnerable, and monitors the situation of communities along the Line of Contact. It supports the authorities in bringing the spread of tuberculosis in prisons under control and ensuring adequate limb-fitting services. The ICRC promotes the implementation of IHL and its integration into the training of the armed and security forces and into university and school curricula. It works to strengthen the capacities of the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	1,706
Assistance	2,550
Prevention	1,392
Cooperation with National Societies	261
General	-
	► 5,909
	<i>of which: Overheads 361</i>

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	97%
---------------------------	------------

PERSONNEL

11 expatriates
68 national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2006, the ICRC:

- ▶ through a visit by President Jakob Kellenberger, reaffirmed its intent to continue to provide relevant humanitarian services in the southern Caucasus and stressed the necessity of making progress on the issue of missing persons in the region;
- ▶ approached families of persons missing in relation to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict to open tracing requests, and prepared the ground for ante-mortem data collection;
- ▶ established a permanent office near the front line in Barda;
- ▶ visited detainees to monitor their treatment and living conditions and maintained support to the tuberculosis control programme in prisons; visited and facilitated the repatriation of 5 Armenian POWs or civilians interned in relation to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and 1 Azerbaijani POW detained in Nagorno Karabakh;
- ▶ pursued its dialogue with the relevant government ministries on issues related to health in detention and physical rehabilitation;
- ▶ contributed to enhancing knowledge and understanding of IHL among the national authorities and armed forces, and organized the 3rd national IHL moot court competition.

CONTEXT

Azerbaijan's geopolitical importance grew with the operation of the US/UK-backed Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the rise in international tensions over Iran's nuclear programme. In its foreign relations, the country continued to seek a balance between the interests of the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union (EU), Turkey, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel. President Ilham Aliyev, at a meeting with the US president in Washington in April, declared that Azerbaijan and the United States were "allies in the war on terror" but recalled that his country had signed a non-aggression treaty with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Visits to Baku were made by the Iranian president and defence minister, as well as by the Russian president, prime minister and defence minister.

The United States continued to invest in the Caspian Guard command centre in Baku to ensure the security of the region's energy sources. In parallel, the Russian Federation proposed the establishment of a five-country rapid-reaction naval force, consisting of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan, to combat illicit drugs and arms trafficking. President Aliyev visited Brussels, Belgium, to discuss cooperation with NATO within the Individual Partnership Action Plan, with the aim of strengthening Azerbaijan's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

The EU reviewed the mandate of its new Special Representative for the South

Caucasus. It confirmed its commitment to assist Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in implementing political and economic reforms and focused its mandate on conflict resolution, including through promoting the return of refugees and IDPs. In November, the EU and Azerbaijan signed a memorandum on energy cooperation and adopted a five-year plan of action within the European Neighbourhood Policy.

On the domestic front, the rerun of the parliamentary elections in 10 constituencies took place without incident in May, reinforcing the majority of President Aliyev's party.

Given that no elections were scheduled to take place in 2006 in either Azerbaijan or Armenia, the year was portrayed by many as "a unique window of opportunity" to make progress towards a settlement of the 18-year Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Despite three meetings between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, making a total of eight since 2003, and the intense shuttle diplomacy led by the co-chairmen of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, there was no significant breakthrough.

On the front line, tensions rose in spring and autumn. Numerous ceasefire violations were reported by both sides, and casualty figures increased mainly among the ranks of soldiers. The conflict was still an important factor influencing domestic politics in both Azerbaijan and Armenia, which continued to employ military rhetoric.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)		CIVILIANS AND PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM		
Detainees visited	8,589	<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	53	Food	Beneficiaries	372
Number of visits carried out	63	Essential household items	Beneficiaries	372
Number of places of detention visited	27	Habitat structures	Beneficiaries	2,199
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS		<i>Health</i>		
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>		Health centres supported	Structures	66
RCMs collected	99	WOUNDED AND SICK		
RCMs distributed	91	<i>Physical rehabilitation</i>		
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>		Patients receiving services	Patients	10,949
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	701	Prostheses delivered	Pieces	1,154
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	10	Orthoses delivered	Pieces	1,673
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2006	4,176			
DOCUMENTS ISSUED				
People to whom travel documents were issued	18			

ICRC ACTION

In April, ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger visited the southern Caucasus and met the highest authorities in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In Azerbaijan, the main focus of the talks was on the fate of persons missing as a result of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict.

The impact of ongoing tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the population living along the Line of Contact and the international border continued to elicit the ICRC's attention. Regular field missions enhanced the organization's already well-developed presence established through programmes conducted in partnership with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan. An ICRC office was reopened in Barda near the front line to ensure increased contacts with local communities, National Society branches and families of missing persons.

The ICRC continued to monitor the conditions of detention and treatment of people deprived of their liberty. It maintained its support to the Ministry of Justice in strengthening its services in the tuberculosis (TB) control programme in prisons. Acting as technical adviser, the organization facilitated the establishment of a national directly observed treatment, short course-plus (DOTS-plus) working group, including civilian TB specialists, to prepare for the implementation of a pilot DOTS-plus project in 2007 and helped mobilize all partners involved in TB control in the country to work within the framework of the newly approved grant from the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

In addition, the ICRC maintained its support to certain health services, notably in the

sphere of physical rehabilitation. In Nagorny Karabakh, in the absence of other international actors, the ICRC continued to provide basic food and non-food assistance to vulnerable individuals and distributed essential drugs to rural health facilities.

Efforts were pursued to familiarize the relevant authorities with IHL issues and to obtain their support for IHL implementation. As part of this process, the ICRC facilitated dialogue between Azerbaijani experts and government officials and foreign and international experts. It continued to support the work of IHL instructors in military educational institutions by providing technical expertise and training. It cooperated with the education authorities and closely followed education reforms with the aim of providing the support needed for the integration of IHL basics into the secondary school curriculum. The ICRC also worked to enhance IHL knowledge among university students and to reinforce relations with the media and other key elements of civil society.

Cooperation with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan was strengthened through operational partnerships in the Safe Play Areas programme and the preparation of ante-mortem data collection from the families of persons missing in connection with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict.

CIVILIANS

The ICRC reopened an office in Barda and carried out regular field missions close to the front line in order to better understand the situation faced by conflict-affected populations. In general, communities

welcomed the ICRC's return, especially in respect of its efforts on behalf of the families of missing persons and the tangible support provided through the Safe Play Areas programme.

Efforts to re-engage in mine action with branches of the National Society along the front line through the construction of mine-free play areas led to requests for the programme's implementation in 34 mine-affected communities. Significantly, the communities themselves approached their local Red Crescent branches to ask for a safe play area to be built in their area. Joint field trips to these 34 communities enabled both the ICRC and the National Society to improve their knowledge of the situation on the ground.

A water and habitat assessment was carried out in August in three villages with water shortage or access problems.

In Nagorny Karabakh, distributions of food and hygiene articles were made to 350 beneficiaries. Of these, 240 were lone pensioners or elderly invalids without any economic support, 50 were disabled breadwinners and 60 were vulnerable members of families of persons unaccounted for in connection with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict.

All of the 66 rural health centres in Nagorny Karabakh were able to provide services thanks to ICRC support in the form of drugs and medical disposables. The Nagorny Karabakh Sanitary Epidemiological Services conducted a campaign against intestinal parasites among schoolchildren in Stepanakert/Khankendi with drugs donated by the ICRC. It was also able to

stop a limited outbreak of hepatitis A following receipt of antiseptics from the ICRC.

Missing persons

The consolidation of the ICRC's list of persons missing in relation to the Nagorny Karabakh conflict with that of the authorities continued through direct contacts with families. By the end of the year, the ICRC's list of missing persons from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh totalled 4,176 names.

- new tracing requests registered for 701 people (141 females, 16 minors at the time of disappearance); 10 persons located; 4,176 people (299 females, 95 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought

The Azerbaijani and Armenian State Commissions on Missing Persons pursued dialogue with the ICRC on the implementation of proposals outlined by the ICRC in its January 2005 memorandum. Both State commissions took part in the European Workshop on National Mechanisms and Legal Measures to Prevent Disappearances, Clarify the Fate of Missing Persons and Support their Families held in September in Brussels, Belgium. Prior to this, an informal meeting between the two State commissions, in the presence of the ICRC, enabled a discussion to take place on ways to re-establish more regular information exchange and periodic working meetings.

Ongoing dialogue with the Azerbaijani authorities and other stakeholders paved the way for dissemination of the ante-mortem data collection process among members of the State commission, the National Society, the international community and local agencies such as the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action in an effort to make the issue of missing persons a prominent feature of their agendas. The start of ante-mortem data collection, planned for June 2006, was postponed owing to difficulties in locating many families of the missing and because preparations for the training of data collectors needed more time. Training of forensic specialists was also postponed because of the difficulty of finding scientists receptive to modern working methods. The ICRC endeavoured to identify senior medical students so that they might be trained as pathologists. The lack of psychological support facilities within Azerbaijani society remained an obstacle. Plans were thus made to expand the training of data collectors to enable them to provide such support initially to families of the missing.

In Nagorny Karabakh, the ICRC encouraged implementation of the proposals outlined in its 2005 memorandum and was informed that a working group of the Commission on Missing Persons would be established in 2007. The capacities of psychologists and existing psychological support facilities were assessed for the possible referral of families of the missing.

Family links

The number of refugees/asylum seekers in Azerbaijan requesting travel documents to resettle in third countries decreased sharply in 2006, with only 18 people requiring this service. Indeed, many Afghan refugees, who had made up around half of the beneficiaries in 2004 and 2005, had already left Azerbaijan. Additionally, stricter rules were applied in countries of resettlement, especially regarding Chechen asylum seekers.

RCMs remained the only means for a number of family members separated by conflict to communicate with each other.

- 57 RCMs collected from and 57 distributed to civilians in Nagorny Karabakh

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Two Armenian conscripts and three civilians interned in relation to the Nagorny Karabakh conflict received ICRC visits in Baku, re-established contact with their families through RCMs and were later repatriated.

In Nagorny Karabakh, one Azerbaijani POW received an ICRC visit and was later transferred to the Azerbaijani authorities.

Upon completion of a tour of all Azerbaijani prison colonies, the ICRC concluded that there was no specific need for close individual follow-up of detainees once they had reached a colony, and redirected its detention activities to concentrate on the four existing pre-trial facilities, three under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and one under the Ministry of National Security. The detainees in Gobustan high-security prison continued to benefit from visits, including some 30 detainees involved in a brief hunger strike in June. The Ministry of Justice received a working paper in relation to this event and discussed the recommendations with the ICRC. The Nakhichevan authorities also received a working paper following the assessment of detention places there.

In Nagorny Karabakh, seven detainees received the visit of their families thanks to ICRC financial support. Furthermore, 22 particularly vulnerable detainees received food and hygiene items. The medical facilities at the prison and pre-trial detention facility in Stepanakert/Khankendi received a small assistance package following ICRC visits there.

- in Azerbaijan, 8,413 detainees visited, 45 of whom monitored individually, including 3 newly registered, during 37 visits to 18 places of detention; 16 RCMs collected from and 18 distributed to detainees
- in Nagorny Karabakh, 176 detainees visited, 8 of whom monitored individually, including 7 newly registered, during 26 visits to 9 places of detention; 26 RCMs collected from and 16 distributed to detainees

TB control programme

TB remained a serious problem in Azerbaijani prisons, with a notification rate 55 times higher than in the civilian sector and substantial rates of multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) among detainees. The ICRC maintained its firm commitment to the DOTS strategy for addressing TB and provided mainly technical support to the Ministry of Justice. Azerbaijan's grant agreement was signed with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for implementation of a five-year TB programme, including a pilot project in prisons to treat 100 MDR-TB cases.

Six nurses from the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan received training to ensure that, upon release, prisoners were registered at civilian TB facilities in order to complete their treatment.

The bacteriological laboratory at the prison TB hospital (STIDT) performed 13,007 sputum smear examinations, 856 cultures and 450 drug sensitivity tests. The microscopy laboratory at the central penitentiary hospital performed 2,065 sputum smear examinations. Some rehabilitation work was conducted in the civilian laboratories in Ganja (408 detainees) and Salyan (851 detainees) districts to support the decentralization of TB diagnosis.

In the STIDT (940 detainees), the main shower room and the refectory roof were rehabilitated, old gas pipes were replaced and the mechanical ventilation system in the MDR-TB ward was improved, which eventually contributed to enhanced infection control measures and better living conditions. A medical library and a training centre were established where seminars for medical staff of the penitentiary system were organized to improve skills and expertise.

- ▶ 674 detainees began DOTS treatment
- ▶ 668 detainees completed TB treatment
- ▶ 18,342 detainees screened for TB at least once in 3 pre-trial isolators and 8 prison colonies, with 460 pulmonary TB cases detected
- ▶ 13,934 detainees received leaflets and brochures regarding TB treatment and prevention

- ▶ 2,199 detainees benefited from habitat projects
- ▶ 13 Ministry of Justice health staff participated in 6 international training courses, conferences and study tours

WOUNDED AND SICK

The ICRC endeavoured to ensure that amputees and other disabled people had access to quality rehabilitation services. Discussions continued with the new head of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on the functioning of the physical rehabilitation system on the basis of the findings of a joint evaluation. The ICRC's decision to phase out support to physical rehabilitation services in the country by the end of 2007 was communicated to the Azerbaijani authorities.

The physiotherapy services of the Ahmedly Orthopaedic Centre in Baku were assessed, while the centre and its two branches in Ganja and Nakhichevan received support, with the last delivery of raw materials in September 2006. Additionally, 22 detainees received rehabilitation services. The Chechen refugee organization Salam received a wheelchair, as well as crutches for all patients in need.

- ▶ 10,949 patients (1,624 women and 3,115 children) received services at the ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centre
- ▶ 190 new patients (21 women and 12 children) fitted with prostheses and 453 (37 women and 382 children) with orthoses
- ▶ 1,154 prostheses (121 for women and 37 for children; 112 for mine victims), 1,673 orthoses (127 for women and 1,344 for children; 13 for mine victims), 2,517 crutches and 839 wheelchairs delivered
- ▶ 4 technical monitoring missions carried out in Ganja and 2 in Nakhichevan
- ▶ 20 staff (technicians, physiotherapists and doctors) attended 3 technical seminars
- ▶ 4 surgeons from the Ministries of Defence and Health participated in a war-surgery seminar organized by the ICRC in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation

AUTHORITIES

The authorities of Azerbaijan pursued their dialogue with the ICRC concerning the incorporation of IHL provisions into national legislation.

Contacts were established with the parliament's Standing Commission on Human Rights, as well as with the Department for Science and Culture of the Cabinet of Ministers. Further discussions were held with the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Office of the General Prosecutor. The Ministry of Justice invited the ICRC to participate in a seminar and training session for future judges and to deliver a lecture on the repression of violations of IHL and judicial guarantees. Twenty-five judges and officials of the highest judicial instances participated in a round-table on IHL held in cooperation with the Constitutional Court.

No progress was made in advancing government plans for the establishment of a national committee for the implementation of IHL. In order to get acquainted with the experiences of national IHL bodies in other countries, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the 3rd European meeting of national IHL committees held in January in Athens, Greece.

A Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative and a Supreme Court judge participated in the Regional Conference on Customary IHL, Content and Purpose held in November in Moscow, Russian Federation. Ministry staff attended a presentation on the ICRC's study on customary international humanitarian law.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

In January, the minister of defence confirmed that he had issued a ministerial order on the implementation and teaching of IHL within the Azerbaijani armed forces. Military officials and the ICRC pursued their dialogue and officers continued to receive training.

Discussions were held on integrating IHL into the training of the troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. As a result, the troop commander issued an order in October establishing a working group on IHL teaching.

- ▶ 44 officers of the Azerbaijani armed forces and 30 officers of the interior troops participated in 5 five-day IHL courses

- ▶ 2 representatives of the Law Department of the Ministry of Defence and the assistant to the commander of the interior troops participated in a Russian-language IHL course in San Remo
- ▶ a cadet team and a coaching officer from the Higher Military School participated in the 7th General Skobelev IHL competition in the Russian Federation
- ▶ 1 officer from the Training and Education Centre of the Ministry of Defence and 1 teacher from the Higher Military School participated in a Senezh IHL course in the Russian Federation
- ▶ 200 instructors, officers and cadets from the Higher Military School and the Higher Navy School attended presentations on IHL and the ICRC
- ▶ 15 officers of the Nagorny Karabakh armed forces participated in a five-day IHL course in Stepanakert/Khankendi

CIVIL SOCIETY

To raise public awareness of and support for IHL, several initiatives targeting the media and academia were taken.

Media

- ▶ 9 journalists participated in a mine-action workshop
- ▶ 15 national media representatives participated in a workshop on IHL and the protection of journalists in armed conflict
- ▶ 2 newsletters produced, one on ICRC activities in Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh and one on the "Women and War" exhibition mounted in Baku

Schools

- ▶ basic elements of IHL incorporated into the training curriculum of the Teachers' Institute
- ▶ 423 teachers from 261 secondary schools trained in humanitarian principles and basic IHL
- ▶ 226 teachers from Stepanakert/Khankendi and Nagorny Karabakh attended 17 seminars conducted by 7 IHL teacher-trainers
- ▶ 4 secondary schools in Stepanakert/Khankendi took part in an IHL competition based on ICRC literature

Universities

- ▶ 10 teams of 30 law students participated in the 3rd national IHL moot court competition
- ▶ a team from Baku State University sponsored to participate in the Jean Pictet moot court competition in Serbia and Montenegro
- ▶ 1 university professor participated in the 6th Martens Readings Conference in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation
- ▶ 20 law students attended ICRC-organized IHL summer schools
- ▶ IHL integrated into the training curriculum of the Nursing College in Nagorny Karabakh
- ▶ 30 law students attended an IHL seminar in Stepanakert/Khankendi

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan continued to receive ICRC support for its tracing and dissemination activities, and efforts were made to establish a more comprehensive long-term partnership.

Cooperation in capacity building for mine action was strengthened. In parallel with the operational partnership to implement the Safe Play Areas programme, training took place to develop targeted messages of advice through analysing mine accident data.

Preparations were made for the training of National Society volunteers in ante-mortem data collection from the families of persons missing as a result of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict.