

BRUSSELS

COVERING: Institutions of the European Union (EU), NATO, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and specific armed forces in Western Europe, Belgium

The ICRC has been working in Brussels since 1999, building strong institutional and operational relations with European Union institutions, NATO and its Parliamentary Assembly, specific armed forces based in Western Europe, and Belgium. It aims to make the ICRC's mandate better known, to mobilize political, diplomatic and financial support for its activities and to ensure that relevant military decision-makers in Western Europe view the ICRC as the main reference point for neutral and independent humanitarian action, as well as for IHL.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2015

- ▶ Institutions of the European Union continued to engage the ICRC in high-level dialogue, which helped ensure that they gave due consideration to humanitarian perspectives and IHL in their policies/programmes.
- ▶ NATO continued to consider ICRC input for its doctrine, training and operations. For instance, NATO's new section on the protection of civilians drew on ICRC input as it worked on pertinent policies.
- ▶ At a major NATO training exercise, military commanders/personnel were engaged on IHL by the ICRC, in line with a 2012 memorandum of understanding between NATO's strategic commands and the ICRC.

YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	43
Assistance	-
Prevention	2,561
Cooperation with National Societies	197
General	12
Total	2,813
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	172

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	90%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	2
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	14

PROTECTION

	Total
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	1
Detainees visited and monitored individually	1
Number of visits carried out	1
Number of places of detention visited	1

CONTEXT

The European Union (EU) maintained its involvement in crisis management and conflict resolution worldwide, through political mediation and other means, and remained a major humanitarian donor. It expressed concern about conflicts in such countries as Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria) and Ukraine, and about regionalized conflicts in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region. Seventeen missions, under the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, were ongoing at year-end.

EU Member States and institutions continued efforts to develop the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, particularly by refining the positioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Political and Security Committee of the EEAS remained a key body in this regard.

The rotating biannual presidency, held in 2015 by Latvia and by Luxembourg, chaired certain working groups of the EU Council. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) remained the primary EU body handling humanitarian affairs.

EU Member States faced interrelated economic, political, social and security challenges, including those pertinent to large migrant influxes into Europe and to "terrorism".

NATO continued building its crisis-response capacities and strengthening cooperation with various international partners. It sustained its support for Afghan security forces/institutions through its Resolute Support Mission, launched at the beginning of 2015.

Belgium remained committed to supporting humanitarian action and the development and promotion of IHL.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC Brussels delegation continued to cultivate relations with EU institutions and NATO, and contributed to ICRC headquarters' dialogue with the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), helping ensure that humanitarian perspectives and IHL were given due consideration in the policies and programmes of these bodies. It highlighted specific issues towards complementing European initiatives that have implications for people affected by armed conflict and other humanitarian emergencies.

Dialogue with such EU institutions as the EU presidency; the EU Council; the European Commission, including ECHO; and the EEAS – for instance, during the ICRC president's meetings with their representatives – encompassed the humanitarian situation in conflict-affected countries (see *Context*) and the ICRC's work in these areas, and other humanitarian/IHL-related matters. Among these were sexual violence in armed conflict; the goals of the Health Care in Danger project; migration, particularly the issue of missing persons; and the potential implications of EU data-protection reforms on humanitarian activities.

The ICRC sustained its dialogue with NATO headquarters, and with NATO's two strategic commands: Allied Command Operations (ACO) in Mons, Belgium, and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk, Virginia, United States of

America (hereafter United States). They discussed the situation in certain conflict-stricken countries, notably Afghanistan, regarding which NATO's lessons-learned process continued; and the implementation of the 2012 agreement between the strategic commands and the ICRC. NATO's new section on the protection of civilians drew on ICRC input as it worked on defining its policies.

The ICRC engaged the commanders and personnel of a NATO command at strategic, tactical and operational levels on IHL during Trident Juncture 15, a major ACT-sponsored training exercise. Other units undergoing the NATO Response Force certification process interacted with the ICRC through various training events. Officers and troops of NATO, and of armed forces in Europe were briefed on IHL and ICRC activities.

In parallel, networking with other humanitarian actors fostered exchanges on shared concerns and helped strengthen coordination. The ICRC's interaction with academics, journalists and other key actors, through public events and other means, heightened awareness of humanitarian issues.

The ICRC continued regular dialogue with the Belgian authorities on IHL-related matters. Officials of the justice ministry and the penitentiary administration met with the ICRC to discuss best practices for managing detainees sent to Belgium to serve their sentences, following conviction by international courts.

Periodic contact with the Red Cross EU Office ensured the coherence of Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy, particularly in underscoring the strictly humanitarian objectives of the Movement's family-links activities for migrants. The ICRC maintained cooperation with the Belgian Red Cross on promoting humanitarian principles/IHL.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

During a visit conducted in accordance with its standard procedures, the ICRC checked on the well-being of one detainee, convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and serving his sentence in Belgium. The authorities received confidential feedback afterwards.

Officials of the justice ministry and the penitentiary administration met with the ICRC to discuss best practices for managing detainees sent to the country to serve their sentences, following conviction by international courts.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

To promote humanitarian perspectives and IHL, and to reinforce support for the ICRC, especially with respect to its specifically neutral and independent status, and its position as a main reference on IHL-related matters, the organization continued its engagement with EU institutions, NATO, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Belgian authorities and Europe-based armed forces. In parallel, networking with other humanitarian actors fostered exchanges on shared concerns and helped strengthen coordination. The ICRC's interaction with academics, journalists and other key actors heightened awareness of humanitarian issues.

EU institutions are engaged on policies and programmes linked to humanitarian affairs

The ICRC maintained dialogue with the EU Council, the European Commission, including ECHO, the EU presidency and the EEAS through: the ICRC president's bilateral meetings with the

presidents of the European Council and the European Parliament, the commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis management, the commissioner for budget and human resources, and the commissioner for international cooperation; and periodic interaction with, for instance, the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid.

Such discussions covered, *inter alia*: the humanitarian situation and ICRC operations in conflict-stricken countries (see *Context*); the ICRC's mandate/working procedures; sexual violence in armed conflict; the goals of the Health Care in Danger project; migration, particularly concerning the issue of missing persons; and the potential implications of EU data-protection reforms on humanitarian activities. The Working Party on Public International Law was briefed on the status of the Strengthening IHL process, ahead of the 32nd International Conference.

During its biannual sessions, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly drew on contributions from the ICRC, in its role as an observer.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE were engaged by the ICRC Brussels delegation in support of dialogue led by ICRC headquarters.

NATO considers ICRC input for military training

The ICRC and different NATO bodies sustained their exchanges on IHL-related strategic and operational issues, such as: the situation in certain conflict-affected countries, notably Afghanistan (see *Context*), regarding which NATO's lessons-learned process continued; and the implementation of the 2012 memorandum of understanding between NATO's strategic commands and the ICRC (see below). The tenth annual NATO-ICRC staff talks involved headquarters-level discussions on: sexual violence in armed conflict; the conduct of hostilities in populated areas; and the protection of civilians, for which NATO had opened a new section. Said section drew on ICRC input, including during a workshop on the protection of children in armed conflict, as it worked on defining its policies. NATO, via its standardization office, continued exploring the incorporation of the recommendations from a past workshop on the Health Care in Danger Project, about military practices for ensuring safe health-care access, into its doctrine.

NATO's strategic commands and the ICRC met regularly and further developed their relationship (see also below). During Trident Juncture 15, a major ACT-sponsored training exercise, some 36,000 military commanders and personnel of a NATO command were engaged by the ICRC at strategic, tactical and operational levels. Other units undergoing the NATO Response Force certification process interacted with the ICRC through various training events. One senior officer each from ACO and ACT shared their IHL-related expertise at a workshop in Algeria (see *International law and policy*). ACT integrated ICRC-produced tools into its training resources. ACO and the ICRC discussed ways to ensure recognition of the ICRC's status (see above) in NATO training. ACO, ACT and the ICRC completed the annual plan defining the ICRC's involvement in the strategic commands' 2016 training/education programmes.

While taking courses at the NATO School or other institutions, NATO officers/troops continued to be briefed on IHL and ICRC activities. NATO officers departing for Afghanistan participated in mission-specific predeployment training. Contact was maintained with NATO Special Operations Headquarters and Europe-based forces of the United States.

Military officers from African and European countries attending an IHL course at a Belgian academy received a briefing on humanitarian concerns, IHL and the Movement by the Belgian Red Cross/ICRC.

Key actors help promote IHL and humanitarian issues

In their regular dialogue, the Belgian authorities and the ICRC covered such topics as: the Strengthening IHL process; ways to address sexual violence and health-care insecurity in armed conflict; and ongoing ICRC operations. The development cooperation ministry organized a public discussion on humanitarian challenges in Syria; the ICRC president was a panellist. Belgium's national IHL committee and a partner body held an experts' meeting on IHL, in which the ICRC took part.

Experts from the EU, other countries' governments, NATO, armed forces, international organizations and universities shared insight into urban warfare, during an annual IHL colloquium held by the College of Europe and the ICRC; the proceedings were slated for publication in an academic journal. Post-graduate students advanced their IHL knowledge during seminars co-organized with the above-named institute, with Swiss government backing.

Law students honed their IHL competence at a moot court competition organized by the National Societies of Belgium and the Netherlands, with ICRC support.

Pursuant to its 2014 agreement with ECHO, the ICRC Brussels delegation launched such public-communication initiatives as: a debate, coupled with an exhibition, on the Fundamental Principles in the European Parliament; and, with support from the ICRC Paris delegation, a short online documentary highlighting the need to help conflict/disaster-affected people build their resilience.

The ACO hosted an exhibition on the Health Care in Danger project at its headquarters.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Coordination with the Red Cross EU Office ensured the coherence of Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy with European institutions, particularly in underscoring the strictly humanitarian nature of the Movement's family-links services for migrants (see *Paris*). The Office helped to monitor the progress in pledges made by EU Member States/National Societies at the 31st International Conference, and to prepare new ones for the 32nd International Conference.

The Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants and the European Legal Support Group drew on the ICRC's IHL expertise.

The Belgian Red Cross and the ICRC sustained cooperation on promoting humanitarian principles/IHL (see *Actors of influence*).

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)					
ICRC visits					
		Women	Minors		
Detainees visited	1				
		Women	Girls	Boys	
Detainees visited and monitored individually	1				
Number of visits carried out	1				
Number of places of detention visited	1				