

iraq



In view of the precarious security situation in many parts of Iraq, the ICRC had to limit its operations to protection activities, notably visits to persons deprived of their freedom, and to activities to address emergency humanitarian needs arising from the current armed conflict in Iraq. The ICRC has been present in Iraq since the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980.

EXPENDITURE IN CHF

Protection

9,645,723

Assistance

31,359,793

Preventive action

2,447,484

Cooperation with National Societies

1,277,250

General

-

► **44,730,249**

of which: Overheads **2,711,725**

PERSONNEL

17 expatriates

308 national staff

KEY POINTS IN 2004

- Visits were made to thousands of persons deprived of their freedom in Iraq to monitor their treatment and living conditions, and to enable them to restore contact with their families.
- Medicines, medical equipment and water were supplied to hospitals caring for the wounded.
- Food, water and household essentials were provided to families displaced by hostilities.
- ICRC engineers carried out emergency repair and maintenance at water- and sewage-treatment plants serving millions of people across the country.
- Structural rehabilitation projects were carried out in hospitals, health-care centres and water and sanitation facilities.
- Regular water deliveries were made to city communities with limited or no alternative sources of supply.

CONTEXT

The conflict in Iraq continued unabated throughout 2004, with most hostilities occurring in densely populated urban areas, causing considerable loss of life, the displacement of families fleeing the fighting and severe damage to vital infrastructure.

Towards the end of the year government and multinational forces in Iraq stepped up military operations in response to increasing attacks by armed groups ahead of general elections set for 30 January 2005. These operations targeted cities regarded by the government and multinational forces as insurgent strongholds.

The precarious security situation was exacerbated by frequent kidnappings for ransom and the abduction of foreign workers, including relief agency personnel, some of whom were killed by their captors. Security concerns severely hindered national reconstruction work and prompted many international humanitarian organizations to scale back sharply their operations in Iraq or to withdraw from the country altogether.

Public health, water and sanitation services remained far from adequate to meet the needs of the population, while unemployment and poverty levels continued to rise. A majority of Iraqis were still dependent on a national food-distribution system (formerly the UN oil-for-food programme) to meet daily needs.

In May *The Wall Street Journal* published, without the ICRC's consent, a confidential ICRC detention report covering the period from April to December 2003. This triggered considerable interest worldwide in the treatment of prisoners by US troops in Iraq and the ICRC's role, mandate and activities on behalf of people deprived of their freedom.

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC maintained an effective operational platform in Iraq throughout the year and was able to carry out a broad range of protection and assistance activities. Security concerns nevertheless compelled the organization to adopt an exceptional *modus operandi* that aimed to strike a balance between the pursuit of its humanitarian role in Iraq and the safety of its staff.

ICRC activities were conducted by a team of more than 400 national staff backed up by expatriate colleagues operating from permanent bases in northern Iraq and through regular missions inside the country from Amman in neighbouring Jordan.

A primary activity was to monitor the treatment and living conditions of thousands of people in the custody of the Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I) and the Iraqi authorities, and to enable them to maintain contact with their families.

As it has done since the start of the current conflict, the ICRC provided major urban hospitals treating the wounded with medical aid. In addition, regular water deliveries were made to hospitals and urban communities with limited or no alternative sources of supply, and essential aid was provided to families displaced by the hostilities.

Another priority was the rehabilitation and emergency repair of vital health, water and sanitation infrastructure serving millions of people across the country.

The ICRC continued to chair meetings of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-Committee set up to address the issue of persons still unaccounted for in relation to the 1990–91 Gulf War.

CIVILIANS

Protecting civilians caught up in conflict

Regular contacts were maintained with the Iraqi authorities and the multinational forces, as well as with religious and community leaders in Iraq, with a view to promoting respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) by all parties.

The ICRC reminded all those involved in the armed confrontation in Iraq that IHL prohibits targeted attacks against civilians who are not taking a direct part in hostilities. The parties concerned were called upon to take every feasible precaution to spare

civilian lives and civilian property and to respect the principles of distinction and proportionality in all military operations. The ICRC also urged the belligerents to ensure unhindered access of people in need of medical care to health facilities and access of medical services to the sick and wounded.

Infrastructure rehabilitation and repair

Many vital health, water and sanitation facilities serving millions of people in central, southern and northern parts of Iraq were kept in operation by ICRC rehabilitation and emergency repair and maintenance work.

Several major rehabilitation projects in hospitals and water and sanitation plants initiated in 2003 were completed in 2004, and a number of new projects were started during the year. Alongside structural rehabilitation work, ICRC engineers carried out hundreds of “quick-fix” interventions in hospitals, primary-health-care centres and water and sanitation plants in Baghdad, Al-Qadissiyah, Najaf, Kerbala, Babil, Wasit, Diyala, Salah-el-Deen, Nainawa, Basra, Missan and Thi Qar governorates. This work was conducted in close coordination with local public-utility authorities and contributed to the prevention of an outbreak of epidemics in many parts of the country.

- ▶ a monthly average of 50 “quick-fix” repair and maintenance interventions carried out at water and sewage plants
- ▶ 30 structural rehabilitation projects initiated in hospitals, primary-health-care centres and water and sanitation facilities serving more than 7 million people
- ▶ 15 major rehabilitation projects completed at water and sanitation plants serving 4.5 million people

Responding to water shortages

From the outbreak of the conflict in Iraq in spring 2003, the ICRC delivered water to hospitals and communities in many cities inadequately served by the central water-distribution system. It focused particular attention on hospitals in major cities treating patients wounded in the ongoing violence.

Water-production and -treatment facilities remained far from adequate to meet the needs of the population as a result of years of neglect, shortages of manpower and spare parts, frequent power cuts, damage caused by the hostilities and looting, and more than 13 years of international sanctions.

In addition to making regular water deliveries, the ICRC responded on several occasions to emergency situations such as the rehabilitation of water-production infrastructure serving displaced families in camps outside Fallujah. In addition, the city’s water authorities were provided with tools and equipment to repair local water and sanitation infrastructure damaged during the hostilities. Ad hoc assistance was also provided to the water authorities in many parts of the country.

- ▶ 560,000 litres of water per day distributed to hospitals and poorly served communities in Nainawa governorate between January and August
- ▶ more than 500,000 litres of water per day delivered to hospitals and communities in Baghdad with limited or no alternative sources of supply
- ▶ 10,000 litres of water per day distributed to the two main hospitals in Basra

Emergency aid for IDPs

Large numbers of Iraqi civilians, including women, children and elderly persons, fled the fighting in several cities and took refuge in the surrounding areas. Many of them were in urgent need of assistance in the form of food, water, shelter and medical care.

In response, the ICRC provided food parcels, cooking stoves, blankets, hygiene kits, clothing and jerrycans to thousands of displaced people living in makeshift camps outside the cities of Baghdad, Basra, Baquba, Erbil, Fallujah, Muqdadia, Najaf, Nassariyah, Samarra and Talafar. Together with the Iraqi Red Crescent, the ICRC established a camp in the Al-Khadraa neighbourhood of Baghdad to provide shelter for families who had fled the fighting in Fallujah. Sanitary facilities were installed in the camp and more than 40,000 litres of water were delivered daily for several weeks.

Household essentials were provided to associations for destitute women and social institutions in southern Iraq and to Iraqis who found themselves homeless upon their return from exile in neighbouring countries such as Iran and Syria.

- ▶ thousands of families displaced by the hostilities received essential aid
- ▶ makeshift camp established with the Iraqi Red Crescent for families who fled the fighting in Fallujah

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Visits to persons deprived of their freedom

From the beginning of the conflict in the spring of 2003 the ICRC carried out regular visits to thousands of people held captive by the US and British forces in Iraq and to detainees held by the Kurdish regional authorities in northern Iraq. Visits were also made to people in the custody of the Iraqi interim government. The majority of detainees/internees visited were held by US forces.

The purpose of the visits was to assess the treatment and living conditions of internees/detainees, in accordance with the ICRC's mandate under the Geneva Conventions, and to enable them to re-establish contact with their families through the Red Cross message (RCM) service. In addition, the ICRC provided assistance to thousands of detainees in the form of winter clothes and hygiene kits.

Representations were made to the detaining authorities following each visit based on the observations of ICRC delegates, including recommendations for corrective action when necessary, in compliance with the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions and other international standards.

Several released foreign internees were repatriated under ICRC auspices after they were interviewed to ensure that they were returning to their countries of origin of their own free will. Particularly vulnerable internees such as women, minors and third-country nationals were monitored after their release to ensure that they had returned home safely.

Certificates of detention for former Iraqi prisoners of war released by the Kuwaiti authorities following the 1990–91 Gulf War were prepared for distribution in Iraq in cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent.

- ▶ 34 visits made to 6 places of internment under the authority of MNF-1 and 7,012 internees/detainees monitored individually
- ▶ 87 visits made to 28 places of detention under the control of the Kurdish regional authorities in northern Iraq and 1,210 people deprived of their freedom monitored individually
- ▶ 157 released foreigners repatriated under ICRC auspices
- ▶ 10,000 sets of winter clothes and hygiene kits distributed to internees/detainees

Restoring family links

People held captive by the various detaining authorities were able to restore and maintain contact with family members in Iraq and abroad through the RCM network. Thousands of RCMs were collected and distributed throughout the country with the assistance of the Iraqi Red Crescent, which also helped to distribute notifications of capture issued by the MNF-I.

- ▶ 31,841 RCMs relayed between people deprived of their freedom and family members in Iraq or abroad

Tracing the missing

The ICRC continued to chair meetings of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-Committee which addressed cases of missing persons from the 1990–91 Gulf War. Following the appointment of the Iraqi interim government on 28 June, the minister of human rights represented Iraq at these meetings.

Within the framework of the Tripartite Commission, Kuwaiti forensic teams exhumed and identified human remains at various gravesites in Iraq.

Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC encouraged bilateral contacts between States concerned by cases of persons unaccounted for in relation to conflicts in the region.

- ▶ 188 Tripartite Commission cases resolved

WOUNDED AND SICK

Supplying hospitals with medical aid

The ICRC provided medical materials to hospitals and other health centres treating the wounded in central, northern and southern parts of the country. It made regular visits to major urban hospitals to assess the needs. Relief efforts were closely coordinated with regional health directorates, which sometimes took delivery of supplies directly from ICRC warehouses. At times, the Iraqi Red Crescent also helped deliver ICRC medical supplies to health facilities.

Substantial quantities of medical, surgical and other essential supplies, including medicines, surgical instruments, oxygen, anaesthetics, dressing materials, wheelchairs, stretchers and bedding, were airlifted from ICRC warehouses in Jordan for distribution to hospitals and other health centres in the cities worst affected by the hostilities.

Close contacts were established with the directors of hospitals and primary-health-

care centres, enabling ICRC staff to respond swiftly to mass-casualty emergencies.

Assistance was provided to seven centres caring for the physically disabled in Baghdad, Erbil, Najaf and Mosul and producing artificial limbs and other orthopaedic appliances using ICRC technology and materials. Refresher training was also given to technicians at the centres, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health.

- ▶ medical aid supplied to more than 20 major urban hospitals and 4 primary-health-care centres treating the wounded
- ▶ 1,757 prostheses and 3,997 orthoses produced at 7 ICRC-supported centres for the physically disabled

AUTHORITIES

All parties to the conflict were repeatedly reminded of their obligation to take every feasible precaution to spare civilians and civilian property and to respect the principles of distinction and proportionality during hostilities.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Iraqi security forces in training in Jordan were provided with information on the ICRC and the principles of IHL (see *Jordan*). Regular contacts were also maintained with the MNF-I and Iraqi authorities to remind them of the provisions of IHL relevant to the current conflict in the country.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Four Iraqi university lecturers and students of law from universities in Mosul, Baghdad, Babil and Erbil attended an ICRC workshop on IHL held in Amman (see *Jordan*).

As part of efforts to familiarize Iraqi academic circles with the ICRC's Exploring Humanitarian Law programme, the Ministry of Education was invited to send three of its staff to participate in the third regional conference on the subject in Cairo (see *Egypt*). The Iraqi representatives explained that a Human Rights and Exploring Humanitarian Law Unit had been set up as a separate administrative structure within the General Directorate for School Programmes, with the aim of integrating the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme into most subjects in secondary-school curricula.

NATIONAL SOCIETY

During emergencies, the ICRC provided the Iraqi Red Crescent with food and non-food items to assist victims of the hostilities in and around Najaf, Sadr City, Samarra, Telafar and Fallujah. These included 17,310 blankets, 56,284 jerrycans, 690 tents, 1,106 buckets, 606 kitchen sets, 17,310 bars of soap, 590 hygiene kits, 2,774 stoves, 1,635 heaters, 10,000 metres of cloth and 4,060 food parcels. The Red Crescent also assisted in the distribution of relief supplies provided by National Societies and charitable organizations.

Working together with the Iraqi Red Crescent, the ICRC helped establish a makeshift camp in the Al-Khadraa district of Baghdad to provide shelter for families who fled the fighting in Fallujah. The National Society and a number of local institutions distributed ICRC blankets, food parcels, hygiene kits and cooking stoves to nearly 2,000 displaced people from Fallujah who took refuge in the Al-Khadraa and eight other makeshift camps.

The ICRC maintained close cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent in the field of tracing and provided technical and financial support to its tracing officers at headquarters and in the branches. National Society tracing officers helped to distribute capture cards issued by the MNF-I and to relay RCMs between people detained/interned and family members.

Training in IHL was given to Iraqi Red Crescent communication officers and staff involved in mine-risk education programmes. The ICRC also funded the printing of 3,760 posters and 33,000 leaflets for distribution to branch offices in regions worst affected by the threat of mines and other unexploded remnants of war.