

KUWAIT (regional)

COVERING: Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates



 ICRC regional delegation

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	952
Assistance	-
Prevention	887
Cooperation with National Societies	424
General	273

▶ **2,536**

of which: Overheads 155

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	88%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	4
National staff (daily workers not included)	20

KEY POINTS

In 2010, the ICRC:

- ▶ welcomed the significant progress made by the Tripartite Commission in clarifying the fate of people missing as a result of the 1990–91 Gulf War, notably through joint exhumation operations by Iraqi and Kuwaiti forensic experts
- ▶ acting as a neutral intermediary, facilitated the exhumation and repatriation of the remains of 55 Iraqi soldiers found in Kuwait and the repatriation of the remains of other Iraqis exhumed in 2009
- ▶ visited Kuwaiti and foreign security detainees, Iraqis, Palestinians and stateless persons detained in Kuwait, and security detainees in Qatar, providing the detaining authorities with confidential feedback and recommendations
- ▶ in partnership with Red Crescent Societies of the region, enabled families in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to communicate with relatives detained/interned abroad through family-links services, including videoconferencing
- ▶ strengthened cooperation with National Societies in GCC countries, focusing mainly on training in restoring family links
- ▶ with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, held the third regional training course on IHL for over 60 diplomats from 17 Arab countries

The ICRC has been in Kuwait since the outbreak of the 1990–91 Gulf War. Its presence in the region is linked to humanitarian issues remaining from that war and those arising from the current armed conflict in Iraq, and to work relating to people deprived of their freedom in the Gulf Cooperation Council member States. In addition, the ICRC focuses on promoting IHL and its own role as a neutral and independent humanitarian organization working in areas of armed conflict and other situations of violence. Strengthening its partnership with the National Red Crescent Societies of the region is another priority.

CONTEXT

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries remained concerned about the ongoing violence in Iraq and its potential spillover into their territories along sectarian lines, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the persistent international tensions over the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear programme.

No further hostilities between Saudi armed forces and Yemeni weapon bearers along the border between the two countries were reported after armed confrontations ceased at the end of 2009.

Several countries in the region pursued a path of social and political reform, while seeking to eradicate the presence of militants

allegedly linked to al-Qaeda and held responsible for recurrent acts of violence against government and "Western" targets in recent years.

The effects of the global economic downturn led to the suspension or abandonment of major infrastructure development projects in some GCC countries and the subsequent expulsion of large numbers of migrant workers.

Iraq and Kuwait agreed to work together more closely to locate and excavate the gravesites of thousands of people presumed to have been killed in their respective countries during the 1990–91 Gulf War.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS			
PROTECTION			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)			
Red Cross messages	Total	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected	118		
RCMs distributed	383		
Phone calls facilitated between family members	80		
Reunifications, transfers and repatriations	Total		
Human remains transferred/repatriated	64		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons¹	Total	Women	Minors
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	24	1	1
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	18		
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	17		
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2010 (people)	29	5	2
Documents			
People to whom travel documents were issued	2		
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines	7		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)²			
ICRC visits	Total	Women	Minors
Detainees visited and monitored individually	75		
Detainees newly registered	24		
Number of visits carried out	6		
Number of places of detention visited	3		
Restoring family links	Total		
RCMs collected	1		
RCMs distributed	6		
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	19		
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support	6		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	1,541		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Not including people missing as a consequence of the 1990–91 Gulf War

2. Qatar and Kuwait

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

Resolving humanitarian issues outstanding from the 1990–91 Gulf War and others arising from the regional consequences of armed conflict in Iraq remained top priorities for the ICRC.

Efforts to clarify the fate of people missing in connection with the 1990–91 Gulf War made the most significant progress in years. In the framework of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-Committee set up under ICRC auspices to bring together

representatives of the States concerned to address the issue, Iraq and Kuwait carried out a first joint exhumation operation in Kuwait, resulting in the recovery of the remains of 55 Iraqi military personnel. During a second joint mission in Iraq, they investigated the whereabouts of the remains of missing Kuwaitis.

The ICRC visited people deprived of their freedom in Kuwait and Qatar to assess their treatment and living conditions and shared their findings and recommendations confidentially with the authorities. Discussions continued with Bahrain's authorities on

a possible resumption of visits to detainees. The ICRC made no tangible progress in obtaining access to nationals of GCC member States imprisoned in their home countries after being transferred from the US internment facility at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba.

For the second consecutive year, the ICRC organized a visit for Iraqi families to relatives detained in Kuwait since the 1990–91 Gulf War. Red Crescent Societies of the region and the ICRC also enabled families in GCC countries to communicate with relatives detained/interned abroad through tracing and RCM services, introducing videoconferencing between detainees/internees in the Guantanamo Bay internment facility and their relatives in Saudi Arabia.

The ICRC continued to promote the incorporation of IHL into national legislation, university education and the training programmes of armed forces in GCC countries. It also networked with civil society groups to highlight similarities between Islamic law and IHL and held training workshops on IHL and the ICRC for journalists, enabling them to contribute to broader acceptance of neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.

Cooperation with National Societies focused on restoring family links. The ICRC coordinated its activities with Movement partners and other humanitarian players as appropriate, in order to maximize impact, identify unmet needs and avoid duplication.

CIVILIANS

Relatives separated by armed conflict restore contact

Families in GCC member States, including migrants, continued to require assistance in restoring or maintaining contact with relatives either detained/interned abroad, in particular in the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba and in Iraq, or living in countries disrupted by conflict, other situations of violence or natural disaster.

Family links were assured through the tracing and RCM services run by the ICRC and the National Societies of the region (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*), which played a pivotal role in ensuring the timely collection and delivery of RCMs. Whenever possible, these services were supplemented by telephone contact, including calls made by ICRC delegates to convey messages between detainees/internees visited and their relatives, or by videoconferencing between inmates and their families; starting in September, videoconferencing was extended to Saudi Arabia (see *Washington*).

In March, six Iraqi families travelled to Kuwait for the second time to visit their relatives detained in Kuwait's central prison (see *People deprived of their freedom*). The visit was organized by the ICRC in close cooperation with the Kuwaiti authorities. No reply had yet been received from the relevant authorities regarding possible family visits for Saudi nationals detained in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The same month, the remains of a Saudi national who had died in an Iraqi prison were repatriated under ICRC auspices and returned to his family in the presence of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society.

Iraqi and Kuwaiti forensic experts work together on the recovery of human remains

Hundreds of Kuwaiti and Iraqi nationals, both civilians and combatants, remained unaccounted for from the 1990–91 Gulf War, a source of deep anguish for their families.

Under the chairmanship of the ICRC, one meeting of the Tripartite Commission and five meetings of its Technical Sub-Committee dealing with cases of people missing from the conflict took place in 2010. A breakthrough occurred in March when Iraq and Kuwait agreed to let their forensic experts work together alongside counterparts from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the ICRC during exhumation and identification operations in their respective countries. In May, following the second international meeting of forensic experts organized by the ICRC, the first joint operation went ahead in northern Kuwait, resulting in the exhumation of the remains of 55 Iraqi military personnel and their subsequent repatriation to Iraq under ICRC auspices. Iraq had earlier handed over samples of human remains to Kuwait to check if they matched the national DNA database, while the remains of two Iraqis exhumed in Kuwait had been repatriated to Iraq. The families of people unaccounted for abroad had the opportunity to provide ante-mortem data to the ICRC for possible use in identifying missing relatives among the dead and to resort to its help to facilitate the repatriation of identified remains so that they could be given a proper burial.

In December, teams from Iraq, Kuwait, the United Kingdom and the United States conducted their first joint probing mission, facilitated by the ICRC, to locate mass graves in Naseriya, Iraq, possibly containing the remains of missing Kuwaitis. Although no remains were found, the operation showed the parties' willingness to work together.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

In Kuwait, security detainees, both Kuwaiti and foreign nationals, as well as Iraqi nationals, Palestinians and stateless persons held in the central prison for men or in the deportation centre, received visits from the ICRC, conducted according to its standard procedures, to check on their treatment and living conditions.

Detainees held in the Kuwait central prison were visited in March to assess their overall conditions of detention, particularly medical services and infrastructure, as a follow-up to an ICRC visit carried out in 2009 to study the Kuwaiti detention system as a whole. This led to the start of a dialogue with the detaining authorities regarding cooperation on prison health matters.

People held at the central prison in Doha, Qatar, since their conviction in connection with the failed coup attempt in 1996 received

a follow-up visit from ICRC delegates. In May, 21 of the detainees concerned were released by a decree from the Qatari emir and transferred to Saudi Arabia.

In both Kuwait and Qatar, the detaining authorities received confidential feedback and recommendations from ICRC delegates after visits. Special attention was paid to respect for detainees' judicial rights, including their access to legal counsel.

In Bahrain, dialogue was pursued with the authorities regarding the possible resumption of visits to detainees (discontinued in 2001), as well as seminars on detention-related issues.

Discussions regarding access to Saudi nationals held by Saudi authorities after their transfer or release from detention/internment in Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay or Iraq remained at a standstill. Dialogue started with NGOs representing released detainees and/or their families to assess their needs and find ways of helping them. In response to the ICRC's offer of humanitarian services in connection with Saudi Arabia's military operations along the border with northern Yemen, the Saudi authorities informed the ICRC that Yemeni prisoners were treated in compliance with the country's international obligations and rapidly released and deported.

Former detainees, in particular Iraqi POWs, previously held in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia who had been visited by the ICRC in the past, or their families, were issued with certificates of detention, on request. In many cases, this entitled them to State allowances.

AUTHORITIES

The national IHL committees in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) kept in regular contact with the ICRC to plan training events, share expertise in regional fora and discuss the adoption and implementation of humanitarian instruments, particularly weapon-related treaties. Oman and Qatar took additional measures to establish such committees, while Bahrain was still considering this step.

Over 60 diplomats from 17 Arab countries enhanced their knowledge of IHL and the ICRC at the annual regional IHL event in the UAE, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ICRC. In Bahrain and the UAE, judges and prosecutors took part in national

IHL training sessions, organized by the national Judicial and Legal Studies Institutes and, in the case of the UAE, the national IHL committee. Both the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions were systematically discussed in these fora.

Government officials, academic experts and civil servants from GCC States attended advanced IHL courses in Beirut (see *Lebanon*), while representatives from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE participated in the second regional meeting of Arab parliamentarians on IHL implementation (see *Egypt*).

Together with the political authorities, the Saudi-based secretariats of the GCC and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (and its subsidiary organ, the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent) remained important focal points for conveying humanitarian messages and gaining acceptance of both IHL and neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action in their member States. Although administrative delays continued to hamper the ICRC's efforts to step up regular meetings with these organizations, high-level meetings with the Saudi foreign minister and officials of the Organization of the Islamic Conference secretariat offered opportunities for dialogue.

The Saudi authorities continued to facilitate the transit through its territory of ICRC relief convoys bound for northern Yemen.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE had formally integrated IHL rules into their military instruction and training programmes or had shown interest in doing so. Bahrain, Oman and Qatar had established national military IHL committees.

The armed forces of Kuwait and Oman and the ICRC maintained regular working relations. About 200 officers of all nationalities attending Kuwait's and Oman's Command and Staff Colleges learnt about the basic rules of IHL and the ICRC's mandate and work through presentations. In Bahrain, 45 officers from various army units prepared for their future role as IHL instructors by attending an IHL train-the-trainer course. The course was conducted mainly by Ministry of Defence staff who had been trained with ICRC support. In Qatar, 25 officers of the Interior Ministry participated in an IHL workshop co-organized by the ministry, the National Society and the ICRC.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	KUWAIT	QATAR
ICRC visits		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	47	28
Detainees newly registered	24	
Number of visits carried out	5	1
Number of places of detention visited	2	1
Restoring family links		
RCMs collected	1	
RCMs distributed	6	
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	19	
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support	6	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	1,541	

In the UAE, on the sidelines of the regional seminar for diplomats (see *Authorities*), 30 officers attended an IHL presentation organized by the national IHL committee. This provided representatives of the UAE armed forces and the ICRC with the opportunity to discuss further cooperation.

The GCC Department for Military Affairs and the ICRC continued to explore the possibility of jointly reinforcing the IHL teaching process within the region's armed forces. However, a planned regional seminar on IHL, which the UAE had offered to host, had to be cancelled because of insufficient interest.

Dialogue with the Saudi authorities on developing IHL training activities for the military made no progress.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Pan-Arab and local media regularly reported on ICRC action and humanitarian issues inspired by briefings and information provided by the ICRC, including on its Arabic-language website, thus contributing to greater public awareness of humanitarian issues and ensuring an accurate perception of the ICRC's neutral, impartial and independent action and humanitarian role in GCC countries.

Reporting on humanitarian themes was also aided by the training of journalists. Over 100 staff members of the Al Jazeera satellite broadcaster in Qatar, various media outlets in the UAE, and the Alhurra TV channel took part in workshops on IHL and the ICRC. Following the first such event in the UAE, the UAE journalists' association requested further training for its members; to this end, a draft agreement was being drawn up by the ICRC.

Journalists, human rights activists, lawyers and academics from GCC countries discussed freedom of the media, and, drawing on a contribution made by the ICRC, the protection of journalists, at a seminar held in Kuwait by a local NGO and UNESCO.

In Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE, university students familiarized themselves with IHL while participating in nine seminars given by the ICRC at the main law, political science and international relations faculties; in the UAE, Al-Ain University's College of Humanities gave the go-ahead for IHL sessions, which were attended by over 120 students, including journalism students. Postgraduate students and lecturers used ICRC documentation for IHL-related research, and lecturers from four GCC countries were sponsored by the ICRC to attend a regional IHL course held in Beirut (see *Lebanon*).

Other sectors of civil society in GCC countries, such as Islamic circles and charities, expressed interest in learning more about the common ground between Islamic law and IHL: 35 representatives from major Kuwaiti and Saudi charities attended a seminar co-organized by two Islamic charities and the ICRC in Kuwait, which generated demand for more such events; and over 150 representatives of Saudi organizations learnt about IHL and the Movement through an ICRC presentation at a seminar on voluntary work held in Jeddah.

Regional fora, including those organized by UN agencies, in Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE were opportunities for the ICRC to nurture relations with religious leaders, international organizations and NGOs.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

National Societies and the ICRC jointly operated the family-links network (see *Civilians*). Staff and volunteers from the Red Crescent Societies of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia attended two ICRC family-links training workshops to enhance their capacities to meet local needs in this field, especially those of the numerous migrants living in GCC countries.

National Societies and the ICRC also explored ways of working together more closely to improve cooperation at the international level, in accordance with the Movement's Fundamental Principles. National Societies were encouraged to increase their support to ICRC operations and to develop joint rapid deployment capacities.

Regular consultations continued between the leadership of most GCC Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC. Discussions with the Saudi Red Crescent leadership on future ICRC activities in Saudi Arabia were ongoing throughout 2010. The Red Crescent Society of the UAE signed a cooperation agreement with the ICRC on strengthening the National Society's disaster-management, family-links and communication capacities and participated in organizing activities for journalists (see *Civil society*).

The National Societies of the region carried out dissemination activities and produced publications, including articles for the ICRC's Arabic quarterly, *Al-Insani*, with ICRC funding and technical support. Staff and volunteers of the Bahrain and the Kuwait Red Crescent Societies learnt about IHL and the Movement during ICRC presentations; the Bahrain Red Crescent staged the "Humanity in War" photo exhibition and presented its activities to the armed forces during an ICRC seminar (see *Armed forces and other bearers of weapons*).