

Suva (regional)



Since 2001, ICRC operations in the Pacific have been carried out by the Suva regional delegation. It assists governments in the ratification and implementation of IHL treaties and promotes respect for and compliance with IHL among the region's armed and security forces. It also promotes IHL among academic circles, the media and civil society. The ICRC visits people detained in connection with past unrest in Fiji and the Solomon Islands. It also helps build the conflict response capacities of the region's National Societies.

COVERING

Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and autonomous states, territories and colonies of the Pacific

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	293
Assistance	-
Prevention	1,340
Cooperation with National Societies	1,441
General	-

► **3,074**

of which: Overheads 188

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	85%
---------------------------	-----

PERSONNEL

7	expatriates
25	national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2007, the ICRC:

- provided technical support to governments in acceding to IHL treaties and implementing them at national level
- for the first time, visited a detainee in Australia following his transfer from the US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba
- responded to a request from the armed and police forces in Tonga for support in training their personnel in IHL and international human rights law
- welcomed the establishment within the Fijian armed forces of a dedicated training unit for peacekeepers
- closed its mission in the Solomon Islands, and opened a new mission in Papua New Guinea to enable it to better respond to internal violence in the country
- supported the region's National Societies in strengthening their capacities to promote humanitarian principles and to respond to emergencies

CONTEXT

In Papua New Guinea, political continuity was ensured when prime minister Michael Somare was re-elected in August. Violence remained rife in the Highlands, as did criminality in the capital, Port Moresby.

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) remained in the Solomon Islands, despite calls from ex-prime minister Manasseh Sogavare to reduce its role.

Following the coup d'état in Fiji in December 2006, interim prime minister Commodore Frank Bainimarama launched a wide consultation to address inequities between Fijians and Indo-Fijians, allegedly the root cause of the instability in the country. The interim prime minister announced the holding of elections using a new non-racial system in early 2009, thereby committing to a return to democratic rule as soon as feasible.

Australia went to the ballot, electing Kevin Rudd as the country's new prime minister. He immediately sought to improve relations with Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

In Tonga, the state of emergency declared after the 2006 riots remained in effect in the capital Nuku'alofa.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

	Total		Total	Women	Children
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)¹		CIVILIANS²			
Detainees visited	185	<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>			
Detainees visited and monitored individually	86	Essential household items	Beneficiaries	290	
Number of visits carried out	5				
Number of places of detention visited	5				

1. Australia, Fiji and Solomon Islands

2. Papua New Guinea

ICRC ACTION

In 2007, the ICRC mission in the Solomon Islands moved to Papua New Guinea to enable the ICRC to better understand the situation of violence-affected communities in the Highlands and to provide increased support to the National Society in addressing humanitarian needs.

The ICRC continued to visit people detained in connection with past unrest in Fiji and the Solomon Islands. In Australia, a former internee transferred from the US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba received an ICRC visit before his release later in the year.

Work with the governments of the region on accession to and implementation of IHL instruments progressed well. The year saw a number of treaty ratifications and enactments of national laws incorporating IHL provisions. The ICRC continued to organize or participate in IHL-related events with a view to spurring on the authorities to further promote and implement IHL. Following one such event, the Second Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent IHL Conference in New Zealand, the governments of the Cook Islands and Samoa were inspired to establish national IHL committees.

Promotion of IHL among the region's armed and security forces continued. The ICRC not only conducted seminars and gave presentations on theoretical elements of IHL, but also helped forces and training institutes plan and carry out practical training exercises, ensuring that humanitarian aspects were duly incorporated into these exercises. The ICRC also conducted pre-deployment briefings for Fijian soldiers bound for Iraq and for Papuan troops to be assigned to RAMSI.

As in past years, the ICRC fostered relations with the media, academic circles, NGOs and think-tanks, to enlist their support for the promotion of IHL and for ICRC activities.

Cooperation with the region's National Societies and the International Federation remained a priority for the delegation. Although technical support and advice were given to many of the region's National Societies in 2007, the ICRC focused on the Red Cross Societies of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu with a view to boosting their ability to respond to any unrest in their countries. Support for the National Societies also involved strengthening their IHL-promotion capacities.

CIVILIANS

To keep abreast of the situation in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and to identify needs as they arose, the ICRC made regular field trips and conducted various needs assessments with the relevant National Society. As a result, in Papua New Guinea, 150 victims of violence in Bougainville and 140 IDPs in settlements in Port Moresby received essential household items to help them cope with their losses or displacement.

During these trips, the ICRC spoke to various representatives of the authorities and other relevant contacts to explain its mandate and enlist their support in ensuring that the needs of vulnerable populations were met.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

People detained in connection with past unrest in Fiji and the Solomon Islands continued to receive visits from ICRC delegates, who monitored their treatment and living conditions and made confidential reports to the relevant authorities.

In Australia, the ICRC visited a detainee before his release later in the year. He had previously been interned by the United States of America at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba.

The ICRC offered its services to the Tongan authorities to visit the 500 or so people charged with arson, sedition and disruption of public order during the November 2006 riots. The organization was informed, however, that most of those arrested had been released on bail until their trials and that only a few trials had been conducted in 2007.

Fiji

- ▶ 29 detainees visited, of whom 26 monitored individually and 1 newly registered, during 3 visits to 3 places of detention

Solomon Islands

- ▶ 155 detainees visited, of whom 59 monitored individually and 5 newly registered, during 1 visit to 1 place of detention

AUTHORITIES

With the technical support and advice of the ICRC, the Pacific States made headway in acceding to IHL instruments and in incorporating their provisions into domestic legislation:

- ▶ the Cook Islands passed legislation to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Ottawa Convention

- Fiji promulgated a new Geneva Conventions Act to implement the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their three Additional Protocols
- Samoa passed legislation to implement the Rome Statute
- Australia and New Zealand acceded to Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons on explosive remnants of war
- Palau acceded to the Ottawa Convention
- Vanuatu became party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- New Zealand released a consultation paper on possible accession to the Hague Convention on Cultural Property and its protocols

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in conjunction with the New Zealand Red Cross, hosted the Second Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent IHL Conference, in which the ICRC participated. Some 150 delegates from Commonwealth countries and non-Commonwealth Pacific States came together to discuss IHL implementation. Following the conference, the Cook Islands and Samoa established national IHL committees to assist in their countries' implementation efforts. The ICRC made a presentation to lawyers at the national conference of the Advocate General's Office in Fiji to promote the creation of an IHL committee in that country.

Decision-makers and opinion-leaders throughout the region were informed about IHL and humanitarian issues through the ICRC's participation in various events. For example, participants in a regional seminar on the International Criminal Court hosted by the Australian government and in meetings of the Pacific Island Law Officers' Network in Kiribati and the Cook Islands heard presentations on the importance of acceding to the Rome Statute.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The region's armed and security forces continued to increase their knowledge of IHL by attending ICRC workshops, seminars and presentations, including those held at the Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law. The armed and police forces in Tonga requested ICRC support in training their personnel in IHL and international human rights law.

The Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law and the ICRC jointly organized a seminar in Australia on law enforcement in peacekeeping operations. Thirteen high-ranking police officers from nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region and from the secretariat of the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police took part. Participants shared their experiences and contributed to a working paper to provide guidance to police training institutions throughout the region. The Fijian police force subsequently formed a dedicated training unit for their peacekeeping personnel. Fijian peacekeepers bound for Iraq and personnel of the Papua New Guinea armed forces to be assigned to RAMSI attended pre-deployment briefings.

Participants in Talisman Sabre, a major biannual US-Australia command post exercise, benefited from the ICRC's participation in role-play simulating humanitarian responses in situations of armed conflict. The Australian Command and Staff College had the benefit of ICRC expertise in designing and running one of its training exercises so that humanitarian aspects were included.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Given their capacity to reach and influence a wide audience, the region's print, radio and television journalists were regularly briefed on IHL and ICRC activities of specific interest to encourage them to give greater and more accurate coverage to issues of humanitarian concern. In Australia, in particular, the media approached the ICRC for information on such topics.

A wide variety of people attended awareness-raising events in Australia and New Zealand to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1977 Additional Protocols and to highlight the specific needs of women in war. Photo exhibitions and seminars attracted government officials, diplomats, academics and journalists, who gave the events media coverage.

Various higher-education establishments in the region continued in their efforts to promote IHL teaching. Students at the Australian National University, the University of New South Wales and the University of the South Pacific attended ICRC lectures.

A number of NGOs working in areas of concern to the ICRC, such as conflict resolution or demilitarization, attended presentations given by the organization aimed at heightening their awareness of the organization's mandate and activities.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Cooperation with the region's National Societies remained an ICRC priority. Efforts focused on boosting the capacities of the Red Cross Societies of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and on cooperation with the Red Cross Societies of Australia and New Zealand, which were very active internationally. In addition, the ICRC visited the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Samoa and Tuvalu to discuss the action plans of established National Societies, to support the Tuvalu Red Cross Society in its efforts to gain recognition as a National Society, and to discuss the creation of a National Society in the Marshall Islands.

Responding to emergencies

The National Society of the Solomon Islands carried out tracing activities in the aftermath of the tsunami that hit the country in April. In New Caledonia, following the creation of a regional intervention platform for the South Pacific by the French Red Cross, more than 60 volunteers were recruited and trained with the support of the International Federation and the ICRC.

Promoting IHL

The National Societies of Fiji and Papua New Guinea boosted their dissemination capacities with the recruitment of extra staff and volunteers. Representatives of the National Societies of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga attended a workshop in Honiara that focused on promoting IHL among the media.

All National Societies attended the Second Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent IHL Conference (see *Authorities*), at which they renewed their commitment to promote implementation of and respect for IHL. The IHL committees of the Australian and New Zealand Red Cross Societies continued to actively promote IHL implementation in their own countries and in the Asia-Pacific region in general. The ICRC attended meetings of both bodies, providing expertise where required.