



belgrade (regional)

The ICRC has been working in the countries of the region since 1991. The regional delegation in Belgrade, together with the ICRC's independent mission in Pristina, works to assist the families of missing persons throughout Serbia, including Kosovo, and Montenegro in their efforts to shed light on the fate of their relatives. It also monitors the situation of minority communities, IDPs and returnees facing security problems, and lobbies the authorities and other international organizations in the country to support them. Throughout the region, the ICRC visits detainees, promotes the implementation of IHL and supports the development of the National Societies.

COVERING

Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia), Montenegro, Serbia (including Kosovo)

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	2,993
Assistance	1,300
Prevention	2,351
Cooperation with National Societies	1,838
General	-

► **8,482**

of which: Overheads 518

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	97%
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PERSONNEL

14	expatriates
96	national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2007, the ICRC:

- continued to chair the Working Group on Missing Persons in Kosovo, enabling Belgrade and Pristina to maintain a structured dialogue on the issue
- referred security issues to the authorities following an assessment of the humanitarian situation of minority communities in Kosovo
- pre-positioned relief assistance in isolated minority enclaves in Kosovo in order to respond to an emergency situation in the case of an outbreak of violence or restrictions on movement
- carried out a full round of visits to people detained on war-crime and security-related charges
- welcomed the decision of the highest military authorities in Montenegro and Serbia to organize IHL training courses for all military services at all levels
- organized a national IHL moot court competition in Serbia and a regional one in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the participation of teams from the FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia

CONTEXT

In Serbia, a three-month-long political crisis was resolved in May with the establishment of a democratic coalition government. As a result, the European Union (EU) resumed Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) talks with Serbia, suspended in 2006 because of the country's non-cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Following the arrest and handover of two more war-crime fugitives, the EU initialled the SAA with Serbia in November. Presidential elections were called for early 2008.

With respect to the issue of Kosovo's final status, the president and the prime minister of Serbia reasserted that under no circumstances would Serbia accept Kosovo's independence. The process itself saw two cycles of talks between Belgrade and Pristina. The first, mediated by the UN special envoy, resulted in a proposal for Kosovo's future status based on supervised independence. Although supported by the United States and the EU, the plan was opposed by the Russian Federation. In the hope that direct talks between the two sides could overcome the impasse, a second, 120-day cycle of negotiations was initiated in September. It, too, failed to bring about the desired result, as the two sides remained entrenched in their initial positions.

In Kosovo itself, the overall security situation was stable but fragile and volatile. Minorities, IDPs and returnees continued to face difficulties in going about their daily lives, with discrimination and security problems persisting. As a result, few members of minority groups returned to Kosovo.

Despite tensions, Albania and the FYR Macedonia remained relatively stable and on track for NATO membership. However, reform processes slowed down and EU membership negotiations were postponed.

Montenegro was stable, became a member of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, signed an SAA as a first step towards eventual EU membership, was admitted to the Council of Europe and made progress towards joining NATO.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

	Total
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)¹	
Detainees visited	148
Detainees visited and monitored individually	122
Number of visits carried out	20
Number of places of detention visited	16
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	10
RCMs distributed	9
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	26
<i>of whom females</i>	2
Tracing cases closed positively (persons located)	168
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2007 (people)	1,990
<i>of which for females</i>	296
<i>of which for minors at the time of disappearance</i>	176
DOCUMENTS ISSUED	
People to whom travel documents were issued	10

1. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia), Montenegro and Serbia, including Kosovo

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC remained committed to resolving issues related to missing persons. It maintained contact with the relevant national and international authorities in the region, with the aim of providing families with answers on the fate of their missing relatives. As chair of the Working Group on Missing Persons in Kosovo, the ICRC facilitated communication between Belgrade and Pristina in order to help them move forward in this slow and fragile process.

The ICRC pursued its visits to people deprived of their freedom, focusing on those held on war-crime or security-related charges.

In Kosovo, the ICRC conducted an assessment of the security situation and continued to refer to the authorities issues affecting minority communities so as to improve their living conditions and safety. To be able to respond to the immediate needs of minority communities potentially at risk in the case of an outbreak of internal violence, in particular during or after the status definition process, the ICRC pre-positioned relief stocks in the most isolated and vulnerable minority enclaves.

Within the framework of preventive activities aimed at improving awareness, implementation and integration of IHL, the ICRC gave presentations on IHL and supported training sessions and similar events throughout the region for representatives of academia and relevant military and police structures. Student competitions contributed to the advancement of IHL teaching at universities in the region. In all four countries covered, further progress was made in integrating the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme into formal school systems.

The ICRC worked with the National Societies in the region to strengthen their structures and capacities in dissemination, the restoration of family links and conflict preparedness. Support was given to the Red Cross of the FYR Macedonia in sharing its Promoting Human Values dissemination programme with other National Societies in the region. In Kosovo, the ICRC supported the programmes of the two local Red Cross units.

Scaled-down activities in Montenegro no longer required a permanent presence, leading to the closing of the ICRC mission in Podgorica, as planned, in December.

CIVILIANS

Clarifying the fate of missing persons

Kosovo conflict

The ICRC-chaired Working Group on Missing Persons in Kosovo continued to meet, but with limited results. Very few sets of human remains were exhumed in Kosovo following an exchange of information between the delegations. Despite the pressure associated with the ongoing discussions on Kosovo's status, the dialogue at the Working Group escaped politicization and remained within its humanitarian framework. Representatives of the Contact Group and of both Kosovo Albanian and Serb family associations participated in two closed sessions as observers. The ICRC-chaired Sub-Working Group on Forensic Issues continued to meet, facilitating information exchange between the parties involved in the identification process.

By the end of the year, the number of cases of missing persons still open with the ICRC dipped below 2,000 for the first time. This was the result of forensic work to identify already exhumed human remains. Lack of progress in obtaining fresh information regarding locations of gravesites slowed down new exhumations and prevented clarification of the fate of any more individuals. The ICRC nevertheless pursued its search for further information in the archives of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the ICTY.

The ante-mortem data of 34 individuals were collected from their families living in Kosovo and Serbia proper. Exhumations took place at 4 locations following the submission of information on 22 gravesites for assessment by the Office on Missing Persons and Forensics of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). A total of 214 sets of human remains (including those of 25 females) were handed over to their families, specifically: 24 from Kosovo to Serbia, 1 from Kosovo to Montenegro and 189 within Kosovo.

A psychological support handbook was finalized by the ICRC for use by non-professionals in dealing with families of the missing. Representatives of the Serbian State Commission on Missing Persons, the Red Cross of Serbia and family associations attended workshops on how to support families of the missing during the identification process. Members of the National Society's psychological support working group attended train-the-trainer courses.

- ▶ 1 public and 5 closed sessions of the Working Group on Missing Persons in Kosovo, 3 meetings of the Sub-Working Group on Forensic Issues and 6 teleconferences held

The new State Commission on Missing Persons established in Montenegro held its constitutive meeting. A comprehensive briefing and relevant materials were provided by the ICRC.

Croatia conflicts 1991–95, Bosnia conflict 1992–95

Cooperation between the respective State Commissions on Missing Persons of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, although improved, did not yield satisfactory results for the families, who found the process too slow.

In February, the first *Book of Missing Persons in the Territory of the Republic of Croatia* was published, listing a total of 2,384 individuals recorded as missing by the ICRC and the Croatian Red Cross and acknowledging the suffering of the families (see *Budapest regional*).

Exhumations took place at 3 gravesites near Belgrade where 23 sets of human remains were dug up for DNA bone sampling. The antemortem data of 101 individuals missing in relation to the conflicts in Croatia and of 9 in relation to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina were collected from families in Serbia.

Two six-month projects were supported financially by the ICRC, enabling commemoration ceremonies to be held and preparatory meetings to take place with the families of missing persons prior to their travel to Croatia to identify remains. Thirty-five family members from Serbia were assisted in travelling to Croatia to confirm identification of 21 bodies. Fourteen family members from Serbia were assisted in travelling to Croatia to bury the bodies of 5 of their relatives.

Restoring family links

While a number of people sought by their families were located, new tracing requests were opened, and the names of those still being sought were published on the ICRC website (www.familylinks.icrc.org). Separated family members continued to keep in touch by means of RCMs.

- ▶ 8 RCMs collected from and 6 RCMs distributed to civilians
- ▶ new tracing requests related to Kosovo registered for 13 people (including 2 females and 1 minor at the time of disappearance); 155 people located; 1,976 people (including 296 females and 175 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- ▶ new tracing requests registered in Macedonia for 13 people; 13 people located; 14 people (including 1 minor at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- ▶ 55 certificates of various types issued to families

Providing assistance in Kosovo

The uncertainty over the future status of Kosovo was a source of concern for minority communities, be they residents, IDPs or returnees. The ICRC took the decision to pre-position essential food and non-food items in selected locations after undertaking an assessment of the humanitarian situation of these minority communities, which identified actual and perceived insecurity and limited freedom of movement and access to public services as the main issues of concern. Security incidents were documented and reported to the relevant authorities, which took into consideration recommendations made for remedial action.

In order to ensure an emergency supply of basic commodities was available on the spot in the event of an outbreak of violence or severe restrictions on movement in minority enclaves, the ICRC pre-positioned assistance items, i.e. food, hygiene and baby parcels, to partially respond to the needs of 12,600 beneficiaries for one to two weeks. The minorities concerned thus benefited from an enhanced sense of security.

The most vulnerable IDP and minority communities within Kosovo received small assistance from the ICRC. In total, 188 households from urban Roma communities and IDP families headed by either women or disabled people were provided with 2 cubic metres of firewood. Isolated social cases among minority communities also received basic material assistance.

To ensure a coherent protection approach, close coordination was maintained with other organizations monitoring the security situation of minority communities, such as the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), the OSCE and UNHCR.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Throughout the region, people deprived of their freedom received visits from ICRC delegates, including a doctor, in accordance with the organization's mandate. The focus was on those detained on war-crime or security-related charges. The authorities were kept informed of the ICRC's observations and recommendations through confidential oral and written reports.

Eight ex-detainees from the US detention facility at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, who had been transferred to Albania to be given refugee status and then integrated into local society, were visited. Measures were taken, in cooperation with the Interior and Foreign Ministries and UNHCR, to improve the ex-detainees' living conditions in the Tirana refugee centre and to streamline the integration process.

- ▶ in Serbia, 48 detainees visited, of whom 23 monitored individually and 18 newly registered during 5 visits to 4 places of detention; 1 RCM distributed to 1 detainee
- ▶ in Kosovo, 54 detainees visited and monitored individually of whom 12 newly registered, during 8 visits to 8 places of detention; 2 RCMs collected from and 2 RCMs distributed to detainees
- ▶ in the FYR Macedonia, 33 detainees visited, of whom 32 monitored individually and 14 newly registered, during 3 visits to 2 places of detention
- ▶ in Montenegro, 13 detainees visited and monitored individually, of whom 1 newly registered, during 4 visits to 2 places of detention
- ▶ 10 detention certificates issued to former detainees or their families

AUTHORITIES

In order to solicit their support, international decision-makers in Kosovo and representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) were regularly briefed on the ICRC's work to elucidate the fate of missing persons and on its activities related to the protection of the civilian population. Contact was maintained with UN agencies to coordinate contingency plans in response to humanitarian consequences potentially arising in Kosovo during and after the status definition process.

Serbia continued to advocate the introduction of measures to limit the humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions and, to this end, hosted in October an international conference of States affected by cluster munitions.

The new national IHL committee of the FYR Macedonia met to establish its rules of procedure and draft a plan of action.

In Montenegro, parliamentarians learned about IHL during a presentation of the publication *Respect for international humanitarian law: Handbook for parliamentarians*.

- the chairperson of the Macedonian IHL committee attended the Second Universal Meeting of National IHL Committees held in Geneva, Switzerland, in March
- in the FYR Macedonia, judges, prosecutors and legal staff attended an IHL training course organized in cooperation with the Justice Ministry and the OSCE

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Cooperation with the armed forces

In both Montenegro and Serbia, the highest military authorities issued instructions for IHL training courses to be put in place for all military services at all levels as of 2008, and preparatory steps were taken to this effect. The General Staff of the Serbian armed forces hosted a round-table on the integration of IHL into military training. Fifteen Montenegrin army officers participated in an IHL train-the-trainer workshop organized in cooperation with the Defence Ministry. One representative each of the Montenegrin and Serbian armed forces participated in the San Remo course for directors of IHL teaching programmes sponsored by the ICRC. In Serbia, cooperation on the development of an IHL handbook for the armed forces continued.

Albanian and Macedonian armed forces personnel regularly attended IHL briefings by the ICRC prior to deployment on peace-support missions abroad.

The Danube Guard 07 military exercise, bringing together the armed forces of Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia, took place with the participation of the Red Cross of Serbia and the ICRC, which contributed expertise on practical IHL matters.

Contacts between the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the ICRC at headquarters and regional level focused on humanitarian activities related to missing persons and the security of minority communities.

- 15 Albanian military instructors participated in an IHL train-the-trainer workshop
- 12 Macedonian army officers and non-commissioned officers from the Special Forces Regiment unit engaged in Iraq participated in an IHL workshop
- 25 Slovenian KFOR officers based in Peja/Pec attended a presentation on IHL

Cooperation with the police and security forces

UNMIK police officers and KPS and Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) commanders were briefed on the ICRC's humanitarian activities related to missing persons and security concerns of minority communities.

- Macedonian border police and army officers participated jointly in 2 IHL seminars as part of their pre-deployment training for missions in Afghanistan and Iraq
- 20 KPS officers operating in the Peja/Pec region attended a presentation on the ICRC's activities related to the protection of the civilian population
- 70 newly recruited KPS officers attended IHL presentations
- 120 KPC officers participated in 8 IHL training courses

CIVIL SOCIETY

Raising awareness of IHL among the general public

Regular contact with media representatives enabled them to better promote the ICRC's mandate and raise awareness of IHL. A *Guide to IHL* booklet targeting journalists, NGOs and other elements of civil society was produced in cooperation with the IHL Centre of the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade.

On the International Day of the Disappeared (30 August), all major media in Belgrade and Pristina highlighted the plight of families of the missing. In Kosovo, a reception was organized on the occasion of the launch of the 4th edition of the *Book of Missing Persons in Kosovo*, bringing together the main stakeholders from the international community, the PISG and civil society. Members of human rights, veterans' and women's organizations attended presentations on ICRC activities related to missing persons and the security concerns of minority communities.

- in the FYR Macedonia, 15 representatives of the national media took part in a training course on the ICRC's mandate and activities organized in cooperation with the Macedonian National Society

Teaching humanitarian values to schoolchildren

The Exploring Humanitarian Law programme continued to develop throughout the region.

In Albania, the FYR Macedonia and Montenegro, the decision to integrate the programme into primary school curricula was officially confirmed. In Serbia, the education authorities decided to integrate the programme into secondary school curricula.

Teachers of the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme continued to receive relevant training supported by the ICRC.

Promoting IHL among students

Key universities across the region pursued their cooperation with the ICRC on issues of IHL dissemination. Practically all the major academic centres offered IHL courses at undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels.

- ▶ a national IHL moot court competition held in Serbia, and a regional one held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the participation of teams from the FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia
- ▶ Belgrade University participated in the Jean Pictet IHL competition in El Escorial, Spain, in April
- ▶ 30 students from the western Balkans attended a regional IHL course in Belgrade

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Cooperation with the region's National Societies continued to focus on capacity building in dissemination, tracing and conflict preparedness.

The Red Cross of the FYR Macedonia shared its Promoting Human Values dissemination programme with other National Societies in the region.

In Kosovo, the two local Red Cross units continued to receive ICRC support through training in the Safer Access approach, mine-risk education, tracing and dissemination.