



+ ICRC delegation
 + ICRC sub-delegation
 + ICRC mission
 + ICRC office

serbia and montenegro (including kosovo)

The ICRC works throughout Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo, to assist the families of missing persons in their efforts to shed light on the fate of their relatives. It monitors the situation of minority communities, IDPs and returnees facing security problems. Having concluded its direct assistance programmes in 2004, the organization continues to lobby the authorities to support IDPs and other vulnerable groups. The ICRC has operated in Serbia and Montenegro since 1991, and in Kosovo since 1992. As of January 2006, the Belgrade delegation will also cover Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

EXPENDITURE (IN CHF ,000)

Protection	4,226
Assistance	3,091
Prevention	2,063
Cooperation with National Societies	1,943
General	-

▶ **11,323**

of which: Overheads 687

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	95.4%
---------------------------	--------------

PERSONNEL

15 expatriates
138 national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2005, the ICRC:

- ▶ chaired official sessions of the Working Group on the Missing in Kosovo, re-establishing direct talks and enabling sustained dialogue on the issue to take place between Belgrade and Pristina; continued discussions with the authorities in Serbia and Montenegro regarding the legal and administrative problems facing the families of the missing;
- ▶ monitored the situation of minorities and IDPs; assisted IDPs in Kosovo suffering from lead poisoning and alerted the authorities and other humanitarian actors to the issue; conducted a final evaluation of its assistance programmes for IDPs in Serbia and Montenegro;
- ▶ handed over the basic health services pilot project in Kraljevo to public health authorities, who adopted it as a model for primary-health-care reform and started to replicate it elsewhere in Serbia;
- ▶ with the International Federation, pursued efforts to enhance cooperation between Red Cross actors;
- ▶ supported academic circles and the authorities in implementing IHL at the national and regional levels; facilitated IHL training for the armed forces.

CONTEXT

The potential for violence persisted, particularly in Kosovo and southern Serbia, owing to the fragile coexistence of different ethnic groups and religions, rival territorial claims and imbalances in socio-economic development levels. However, in light of its improved cooperation with the international community, Serbia and Montenegro was authorized to start discussions with the European Union on a Stabilization and Association Agreement. Nevertheless, strong pressure was again exerted on Serbia to continue active cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and, should any remaining indictees be in Serbia, to arrest and extradite them.

Despite a slight improvement in some macro-economic indicators, the state of the economy remained dire and many structural reforms were still pending. The economic situation of the most vulnerable deteriorated, especially among IDPs and minorities.

A referendum on independence in Montenegro, decisive for the future of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, was announced for spring 2006. Uncertainty about future relations between Belgrade and Podgorica put the resolution of many important legal and administrative matters on hold.

Kosovo remained stable throughout the year despite some serious challenges, such as the resignation in March of Prime Minister Haradinaj of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) to face war-crime charges in The Hague. Kosovo Serb representatives maintained their boycott of Kosovo's provisional institutions.

Negotiations on the final status of Kosovo were officially launched between Belgrade and Pristina in October 2005. Consequently, the province, still administered by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), entered a sensitive phase.

Relations between UNMIK and the PISG improved as the transfer of responsibilities to the Kosovo institutions gathered momentum. In December 2005, UNMIK promulgated legislation establishing the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Kosovo Judicial Council. Dialogue between UNMIK and the Serbian authorities improved, with the resumption, after months of stalemate, of discussions on missing persons and the return of IDPs.

Tension and mistrust lingered between the majority Albanian and the main minority Serbian populations in the province, where Serbian IDPs and minorities continued to endure intimidation. The situation remained volatile, marked by attacks that left a number of people injured or dead.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
Detainees visited	142
Detainees visited and monitored individually	130
Number of visits carried out	25
Number of places of detention visited	14
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	12
RCMs distributed	2
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons¹</i>	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	85
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	601
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2005	2,450
DOCUMENTS ISSUED	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	6

1. Kosovo conflict only

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC continued to chair the Working Group on the Missing in Kosovo, promoting forensic activities in support of the exhumation and identification processes and mobilizing local and international organizations. Increasing numbers of families obtained information on the fate of their relatives. The ICRC supported the families of the missing by lobbying for recognition of their legal and administrative rights, as well as assisting family associations in project funding and capacity building.

In Kosovo, the ICRC continued to monitor the situation of minority communities and IDPs, making representations to the authorities and providing direct assistance and support. In Serbia and Montenegro, as expected, the ICRC closed all its field offices and conducted a final evaluation of the situation of the most vulnerable IDPs from Kosovo and of the impact of the organization's income-generating and cash-assistance programmes. The Belgrade delegation lobbied national and international institutions for support in favour of the most vulnerable IDPs.

The ICRC completed the transfer of its basic health services pilot project to the Serbian Health Ministry. Initiated to help the local health structure overwhelmed by the arrival of IDPs in the central Serbian town of Kraljevo, the project inspired national primary-health-care reform and replication began elsewhere in Serbia.

The ICRC continued to visit detainees in Serbia and Montenegro and in Kosovo, focusing on persons held on war-crime

charges, State security detainees and those held in connection with the past Kosovo conflict. With the increase in the detention of war-crime suspects in Serbia, the ICRC's pursuit of a formal agreement on immediate and systematic access to these and security detainees intensified. In Kosovo, the ICRC monitored developments in the prison-management sector.

With the declining need for a lead agency among Red Cross actors in Kosovo, Movement partners reviewed their shared responsibilities. The ICRC and the International Federation enhanced coordination between the two operating Red Cross units. In Serbia and Montenegro, the focus of the ICRC's cooperation with the National Society shifted from supporting operational activities to capacity building.

Preventive activities, such as promoting IHL among the national authorities and the armed forces, remained on course. The ICRC intensified its IHL training activities with academic circles and continued to introduce the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme in secondary schools.

CIVILIANS

Helping to shed light on the fate of missing persons

The issue of missing persons remained the most painful legacy of past conflicts and a major impediment to development. The ICRC continued to assist families and family associations in their search for news of missing relatives.

Kosovo conflict

The Working Group on the Missing in Kosovo, a forum for information exchange between the authorities in Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo, convened three public and three closed meetings, under ICRC chairmanship, in Belgrade and Pristina. Both parties signed a general framework agreement defining the Working Group's humanitarian mandate to clarify the fate of missing persons and the participants' responsibilities in pursuing this objective. Efforts were made to clarify the fate of individuals unaccounted for, gain information related to gravesite locations, identify corrective measures to accelerate the forensic process and offer administrative and legal support to the families of missing persons. Consequently, the human remains transfer process from Serbia proper to Kosovo was stepped up.

There was improved coordination and exchange of information between the organizations involved in forensic work, such as the Office on Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF), the International Commission on Missing Persons and the Forensics Institute in Serbia. The ICRC continued to mobilize international and local authorities in support of the Working Group process and ensured the regular exchange of information with the families through the governmental commissions on missing persons and the family associations in both Serbia and Kosovo.

In relation to the Kosovo conflict:

- ▶ 601 cases of missing persons were resolved, including identification of 546 human remains which were handed over to families/authorities

(275 from Serbia to Kosovo, 29 from Kosovo to Serbia, 1 to Albania and 241 within Kosovo);

- 2 gravesites were excavated, yielding the remains of 35 persons;
- a list of 16 alleged gravesites was resubmitted to the OMPF, and the authorities decided to start the exhumation process in 11 of the 16 locations;
- ante-mortem data were collected from 70 individuals in Kosovo and 25 in Serbia and Montenegro;
- 6 meetings on forensics were convened with institutions and organizations involved in identifications;
- 2,450 persons remained unaccounted for at end-2005 (of which 356 women and 234 minors at the time of disappearance).

In Kosovo, the ICRC:

- in cooperation with the local Red Cross, provided first aid and psychological support to families during 10 reburials and visits to morgues;
- organized 12 psychological-support group sessions for around 200 relatives of missing persons and members of associations of families of missing persons;
- assessed the impact of psychosocial programmes and provided direction for future programmes.

In Serbia and Montenegro, the ICRC:

- provided financial and technical support for 23 projects initiated and implemented by 6 family associations, which included psychosocial support programmes and dissemination activities;
- supported the organization of commemorative events for families of the missing, as well as media events to draw attention to the families' problems;
- in cooperation with the local Red Cross, organized 8 community-based projects targeting vulnerable groups and including families of the missing;
- focused on building the capacities of family associations, organizing 3 workshops on advocacy, media relations and project management;
- actively lobbied local authorities for the legal and administrative rights of families of the missing.

Croatia conflict 1991–95, Bosnia conflict 1992–95

The stagnation in relations between the authorities in Belgrade and Zagreb continued, hampering progress in the identification process and other efforts to resolve the issue of missing persons.

In relation to the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- 98 families from Serbia and Montenegro assisted in travelling to Zagreb, allowing the identification of the remains of 55 persons;
- ante-mortem data were collected from 43 individuals missing in relation to the Croatia conflict;
- ante-mortem data were collected from 122 individuals missing in relation to the Bosnia conflict.

Protecting and assisting vulnerable civilians

In Kosovo, the situation of minority communities remained a concern, particularly Serbs who regularly faced intimidation and attacks. Kosovo Albanians in predominantly Serb areas of Kosovo were equally at risk. Freedom of movement of resident minority communities was severely restricted owing to security threats. Access to basic public services, such as health care and education, remained difficult. Consequently, minorities achieved little integration. The ICRC maintained contacts with the communities at risk to assess their situation. Together with the local Red Cross, it provided the most vulnerable with food and material assistance and conveyed their concerns to the authorities.

The ICRC pursued its efforts in Kosovo to raise stakeholders' awareness of the difficulties discouraging the estimated 20,000 IDPs within Kosovo from returning to certain areas and stressed the importance of ensuring that they returned voluntarily. The number of returnees from Serbia proper remained low, since many considered it still unsafe to return. Restrictions on movement hampered IDPs' access to health and education. In cooperation with local Red Cross units, the ICRC carried out assessments of living conditions during displacement and upon return. It also facilitated the revival of a collective health centre in Obilić, where 468 people were subsequently treated.

To assist some 530 minority IDPs living in a lead-contaminated area of Kosovo, the ICRC made representations to the local and international authorities, leading to UNMIK's release of funds to deal with the emergency.

Concurrently, the ICRC initiated remedial measures in IDP camps, improving hygiene and offering low-fat milk to young children and pregnant women to reduce lead absorption.

In southern Serbia, the ICRC continued to monitor the fragile security situation and stayed in contact with the authorities and civil society in Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja. It likewise carried out periodic monitoring visits to the Sandzak area, home to a significant Bosniak minority, maintaining links with local community and religious leaders, as well as with grass-roots NGOs and the authorities.

Following the cessation of assistance programmes for vulnerable IDPs from Kosovo, the ICRC undertook a final evaluation to gauge the impact of its micro-economic and cash-assistance programmes and to assess the situation of IDPs in Serbia and Montenegro. Findings confirmed that the situation had worsened for all vulnerable groups, not only IDPs. However, income-generating schemes, such as micro-credit, in-kind grants and vocational training, alleviated the suffering of the most vulnerable IDPs, restored their dignity and self-reliance and significantly reduced the need for local assistance.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Visits to detainees in Serbia and Montenegro

The ICRC continued to visit detainees held on war-crime charges or for security reasons in Serbia and Montenegro. It identified problems and made recommendations to the detaining authorities. The number of people arrested for war crimes in Serbia and Montenegro increased. While access to this category of detainees was granted, the ICRC continued to negotiate for a formal agreement guaranteeing access on a systematic basis.

- 77 detainees monitored individually during 13 visits to 8 places of detention
- 33 attestations of detention delivered to former detainees visited by the ICRC

Visits to detainees in Kosovo

In Kosovo, the ICRC conducted further visits to detainees held in connection with the conflict in 1999 and the violence in March 2004. With the handover of competencies for civilian detention facilities from UNMIK to the Kosovo Correction Service, the ICRC convened frequent

bilateral meetings with the authorities involved to closely monitor the planned transfer of portfolios. It also maintained regular contact with the military detaining authorities, as well as with NGOs concerned with detention issues.

- ▶ 65 detainees visited (53 monitored individually; 22 newly registered) during 12 visits to 6 places of detention
- ▶ 109 attestations of detention delivered to former detainees visited by the ICRC

WOUNDED AND SICK

As planned, the basic health services pilot project, developed in Kraljevo to meet the primary-health-care needs of a large IDP population and vulnerable residents, was handed over to the Serbian Ministry of Health. The project served as a model for national health reform and was replicated elsewhere in the country. Together with the health authorities and international experts, the ICRC evaluated the project, the findings of which were made available at www.phckraljevo.org.

AUTHORITIES

The ICRC maintained regular contact with the authorities in Serbia and Montenegro, the PISG and Kosovo political leaders to promote IHL and raise awareness of the organization's mandate and humanitarian concerns, especially regarding missing persons and IDPs. It also participated in IHL-related events hosted by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Support was given to the national IHL committee in its efforts to encourage ratification and implementation of IHL treaties by Serbia and Montenegro. A Serbian-language translation of Volume I of the ICRC's study on customary international humanitarian law was presented to State officials.

The ICRC continued to work with representatives of the international community, particularly UNMIK, to address the legal needs of families of missing persons. Capitalizing on international policy-makers' interest in the activities of the Working Group on the Missing in Kosovo, the ICRC organized briefings for a broad range of actors at central and local levels.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Despite the difficulties plaguing military reforms, the ICRC carried out most of the planned activities with the Serbia and Montenegro armed forces aimed at promoting further integration of IHL into military training. Specialized meetings and courses were organized and publications provided. The ICRC sponsored the participation of Defence Ministry representatives in IHL courses in San Remo and Vienna.

Cooperation between the 17,000-strong NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the ICRC remained constructive. The ICRC enjoyed access to the various KFOR brigades and maintained contact with the central and regional command. It gave regular briefings on its mandate and humanitarian activities, with particular focus on missing persons and detention.

While the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe assisted in the ongoing reform of police and security forces in Serbia and Montenegro, the ICRC organized lectures on IHL provisions applicable to police functions for various law-enforcement agencies.

UNMIK police passed on some responsibilities to the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), and the ICRC shifted its focus to raising awareness of humanitarian principles and the organization's mandate among KPS personnel. It made 16 presentations to 648 KPS staff on IHL provisions applicable to internal violence and made two additional presentations to 75 KPS officers in special police units.

CIVIL SOCIETY

ICRC reports on the situation of vulnerable IDPs, Working Group sessions on the fate of missing persons and the public campaign around the International Day of the Disappeared kept media interest in humanitarian issues alive. An IHL competition for students, a regional IHL course involving universities from the former Yugoslavia, and the launch of the ICRC's study on customary international humanitarian law at the Serbian parliament were reported as contributions to a better understanding of IHL.

The ICRC maintained contacts with associations of war veterans and invalids and their families that had emerged after the conflict in Kosovo, as well as with student unions, to prepare the ground for round-tables on IHL and the ICRC's mandate and humanitarian

activities. Support was given to the Kosovo Action Network to launch a public campaign on missing persons.

By making presentations and supplying publications to the Kosovo Protection Corps, the ICRC fostered understanding of IHL and the role and responsibilities of civil defence organizations during conflict.

The Exploring Humanitarian Law school programme was extended to Serbian and Albanian classes in southern Serbia and piloted in the ethnically mixed (Bosniak/Serbian) area of Sandzak. Some 50 teachers were trained to teach the programme. In Kosovo, the ICRC strengthened its relations with the PISG Education Ministry to prepare for the introduction of a pilot project in selected secondary schools.

Ongoing reforms in university education included plans to pursue introduction of IHL in the curricula of leading law and political science faculties. The ICRC sponsored the national moot-court competition, organized a regional IHL course for 40 students and supplied standard IHL libraries to universities in Belgrade, Niš, Mitrovica and Priština.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society maintained its dissemination capacity through eight centres supporting over 100 branches. Dissemination activities covering IHL and emergency preparedness were implemented in 11 branches bordering the Kosovo province. The National Society's tracing service was assessed and a long-term development plan drawn up with ICRC support. Local Red Cross branches implemented 68 community-based projects for IDPs from Kosovo, with participation also of families of missing persons and minorities.

The ICRC relinquished its lead agency role for the Movement in Kosovo but retained the lead role in activities concerning missing persons, resident minorities, IDPs, tracing and dissemination. Together with the International Federation, it facilitated four meetings of a joint working group of the Red Cross of Kosova based in Pristina and the Red Cross of Kosovo and Metohija based in Mitrovica. The two Red Cross structures agreed to run a joint mobile clinic and received ICRC advice on how to raise awareness of mines and other explosive remnants of war.