



philippines

In the Philippines, where the ICRC has been working since 1982, the delegation assists and protects civilians displaced or otherwise affected by armed clashes between the government and insurgent groups, primarily on the southern island of Mindanao. It acts as a neutral intermediary between the parties in humanitarian matters, visits security detainees and works with the Philippine National Red Cross through its network of regional chapters and local branches to assist displaced people and promote compliance with IHL.

EXPENDITURE IN CHF

Protection	1,014,069
Assistance	249,701
Preventive action	553,435
Cooperation with National Societies	204,421
General	-
	▶ 2,021,626
	of which: Overheads 123,386

PERSONNEL

7	expatriates
58	national staff

KEY POINTS IN 2004

- ▶ ICRC delegates visited 90 detention facilities housing 57,531 detainees.
- ▶ The ICRC ensured the safe medical evacuation of a wounded NPA combatant in Mindanao and facilitated the handover of two members of the armed forces by the NPA to government officials.
- ▶ The ICRC held numerous presentations and workshops throughout the country to broaden knowledge of IHL and Red Cross activities among the military, police and armed groups.
- ▶ The ICRC part-financed the medical treatment of 152 individuals who had been wounded in armed clashes and were unable to meet the cost of their treatment.
- ▶ A review of cooperation programmes with the Philippine Red Cross resulted in enhanced collaboration between the ICRC and the National Society in the fields of assistance and dissemination.
- ▶ The ICRC provided technical support to the Philippine Red Cross for its tracing activities when two typhoons devastated the north-east of the country in November.

CONTEXT

May saw political unrest in connection with national and local elections: during the campaigning some of the candidates were targeted and two bomb attacks occurred in Mindanao. The presidential contest was won by the incumbent, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, with Noli de Castro, a senator and former broadcaster, as her vice-presidential running mate. To meet the challenges facing the country, President Arroyo announced a ten-point plan in June.

A team of observers from Malaysia and Brunei were deployed to Mindanao in October with the task of monitoring compliance with the 2003 ceasefire agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), prior to the resumption of formal talks. Despite occasional clashes and skirmishes, the ceasefire held.

The Abu Sayyaf Group remained active. Police filed multiple murder charges against six suspected members after investigators concluded that the group was behind the bombing of a passenger liner that killed more than 100 people.

The National Democratic Front – the political wing of the New People’s Army (NPA) – continued talks with the government through formal meetings held in Oslo, Norway. The two sides formed a Joint Monitoring Committee in April to receive and investigate allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) committed by either side.

Follow-up talks scheduled for the end of the year were suspended.

The government of the Philippines withdrew its troops from Iraq in response to the demands of hostage-takers who had seized a Filipino worker there. The hostage was subsequently released.

ICRC ACTION

In 2004 the ICRC continued its efforts to collect information about civilians killed, wounded or displaced owing to internal armed conflict or disturbances and relayed its concerns on their behalf to the relevant authorities. It focused special attention on the plight of children and women caught up in fighting or held in detention. All dissemination to armed groups, the military and civilian authorities stressed the protection owed to these vulnerable groups. Joint assistance programmes of the ICRC and the Philippine Red Cross continued to benefit populations in need, particularly in regions inaccessible to the ICRC.

Visits to places of detention to register and keep track of detainees falling within its mandate remained a priority for the ICRC. It also worked to improve all detainees' treatment and living conditions through a confidential dialogue with the various authorities.

The ICRC continued to support the national IHL committee in its endeavour to promote the implementation of IHL. The ICRC and the Philippine Red Cross worked closely with the authorities on the adoption of a law repressing grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols of 1977.

By conducting training sessions or providing expertise and materials to support IHL instruction for the armed, security and police forces, the ICRC pursued its long-term goal of ensuring the forces' autonomy in IHL training and the integration of IHL (and human rights law in the case of the police) into their doctrine, manuals and operational procedures.

The ICRC continued to raise awareness of and respect for IHL among the authorities and civil society. Particular emphasis was placed on promoting IHL in universities, which were given encouragement and support in incorporating the subject into their curricula.

The ICRC cooperated with the National Society to enable detainees to receive visits from relatives and to keep in contact with them through the Red Cross message (RCM) service. The two organizations also worked together to disseminate IHL to a wide range of audiences.

CIVILIANS

Protecting civilians

A large proportion of the civilian population of the rural Philippines continued to live in proximity to the fighting between insurgents and soldiers and police. The ICRC monitored the situation of the civilian population following armed incidents in Mindanao, Mindoro, Bohol and northern Luzon. The organization investigated alleged abuses of IHL and presented confidential reports to those concerned, so that appropriate measures could be taken.

During dissemination sessions, the ICRC and the Philippine Red Cross stressed, in particular, the prohibition under IHL of the recruitment of children by armed groups and the obligation to protect women in armed conflict.

Barangay dissemination programme

For the fourth year the ICRC supported the *barangay* (village) dissemination programme, which aimed to increase knowledge of IHL among local leaders and civilian security forces. Some 150 sessions were conducted for 7,220 *barangay* leaders, health workers and schoolteachers, organized by local Red Cross chapters, mostly in Mindanao.

The displaced

Displaced populations in the Philippines were mainly concentrated in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, and displacement in 2004 was usually short term, with only a temporary need for food and shelter.

The ICRC and Philippine Red Cross conducted field missions to assess the needs of communities displaced by fighting, and where necessary distributed tarpaulins and/or essential household items to families who had lost all their belongings.

The ICRC provided technical support to the Philippine Red Cross for its tracing activities when two typhoons devastated the north-east of the country in November.

- ▶ 274 displaced families assisted

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Visits to places of detention and the individual follow-up of detainees registered by the ICRC remained a priority in 2004. Delegates visited all categories of detainees held by the Philippine authorities, paying special attention to suspected members of

rebel groups, individuals held within the broad framework of the "war on terrorism" and military personnel detained in connection with the July 2003 mutiny and the 2004 Kawal Pilipino coup plot. They also checked on the living conditions of ordinary detainees, including vulnerable groups such as women and children. The ICRC engaged in dialogue with the various authorities in charge of detention and lobbied relevant groups (including the Human Rights Commission and members of the Philippine Congress) in an effort to raise awareness of problems in prisons, to mobilize resources and to meet the most urgent needs of detainees.

Through a regular dialogue, the ICRC brought several issues of concern to the attention of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology under the responsibility of the Department of the Interior and Local Government. The Bureau and the ICRC signed a memorandum of understanding to formalize the ICRC's activities in places of detention under the Bureau's control.

The ICRC and the Philippine Red Cross continued to make family visits to detainees possible by covering their travel costs.

Assistance to detainees focused particularly on Antipolo City Jail in Rizal, which required specific attention and follow-up.

- ▶ 57,531 detainees visited (including 87 newly registered, 448 followed up individually, 14 women and 6 minors) in 90 places of detention
- ▶ 197 individual detainees benefited from the ICRC/National Society family visits programme
- ▶ 7 RCMs delivered to an Iraqi detainee
- ▶ building-maintenance projects carried out in 3 prisons: Davao del Sur provincial and Antipolo (water systems), Sorsogon provincial and General Santos city (accommodation)
- ▶ a three-day scabies treatment programme conducted for 310 young offenders at the National Training School for Boys
- ▶ 27,334 inmates in various prisons received hygiene, medical and recreational items (laundry and bath soap, disinfectant, medicines, pencils, notebooks, dictionaries)

WOUNDED AND SICK

Sporadic clashes persisted in various parts of the country, particularly Mindanao, with civilians wounded in the crossfire between

government forces and rebel factions. Medical care was free of charge in government-run hospitals and dispensaries, but the facilities often lacked medicines, blood and medical equipment.

In Mindanao, the ICRC:

- supported surgical treatments for 152 wounded people, including 132 civilians injured in bomb blasts, ambushes and indiscriminate firing in Mindanao and 14 members of the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit;
- with the Philippine Red Cross, provided medical assistance to 6 civilians wounded in an incident with the NPA in Mabini;
- provided blood for transfusions for 18 victims needing surgery;
- fitted 29 prostheses and delivered 19 sticks and crutches, 2 braces and 7 wheelchairs.

AUTHORITIES

The ICRC continued to work closely with the Philippine Red Cross and the national IHL committee, as well as with government authorities and law-makers, to promote and support the incorporation of IHL into domestic legislation. Discussions were pursued regarding a draft law on the repression of war crimes prepared by the national IHL committee with financial and legal assistance from the ICRC. The draft bill was filed with Congress for consideration and approval.

Presentations on the ICRC and IHL were held for a congressional group studying legislation on internally displaced people. About 60 officials from the House of Representatives and Senate attended, along with representatives of the military, the government departments of health, social welfare and development, various government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The ICRC also participated in the first Asian Victims' Forum on the International Criminal Court, held in Manila under the auspices of the University of the Philippines and leading national and international NGOs. The ICRC legal adviser gave a presentation on ICRC activities for representatives of over 10 countries in South and South-East Asia.

A one-day seminar on missing persons was held in Manila and attended by international legal and medical experts from India, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Nepal, the

Philippines and Sri Lanka. The event was organized by the Indo-Pacific Legal and Medical Science Congress and co-sponsored by the ICRC. The delegation also took the opportunity to showcase some of its publications and to air the ICRC's film on the missing.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

IHL and the army

The ICRC had established good cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) since 2000. ICRC-trained instructors based at military academies conducted IHL sessions as part of the regular training curricula. In 2004 military instructors trained, with ICRC support, at the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy, began conducting IHL sessions independently.

As part of the battalion- and brigade-level basic courses conducted by the army, the Philippine Red Cross and the ICRC were regularly invited to conduct sessions on IHL and the role and activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Information materials on IHL – leaflets, booklets and CDs – were distributed at the training and dissemination sessions. The ICRC financed the salary of a new National Society disseminator specifically trained to reach fighters on the island provinces of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi Tawi, in areas not accessible to the ICRC.

As in the past, special attention was paid to paramilitary units of the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), organized and supervised by the AFP. CAFGU members (farmers-by-day/soldiers-by-night) had little or no academic training, and remained an ICRC priority in the dissemination of IHL.

Among the notable achievements of 2004 were:

- the reintroduction of IHL instruction in the curricula of military academies;
- the training of a further 20 AFP instructors in IHL, conducted by the ICRC in cooperation with the Civil-Military Operations office of the Philippine Military Academy;
- the holding of more than 180 ICRC/National Society dissemination sessions on IHL for some 11,000 brigade, battalion or company members, CAFGU trainees and non-commissioned officers;

- the organization, by the Philippine Human Rights Commission, of a human rights/IHL advocacy course on the rights of the child for 175 military officers, conducted jointly by the ICRC and the AFP Civil-Military Operations office.

Philippine National Police

The Philippine National Police numbered some 118,000 officers who could at any time be called on to participate in counter-insurgency operations. A presidential decree made regular instruction in IHL and human rights law compulsory for the police in 2000, but the force still needed assistance in achieving full compliance.

In cooperation with the Philippine Red Cross, the ICRC:

- held 24 IHL dissemination sessions for 1,664 police officers and special action forces;
- raised awareness of IHL, the basics of human rights and the role and mandate of the ICRC among junior officers at the Philippine Public Safety College during their month-long advanced leadership course.

Members of armed groups

While direct contact with the leadership of most armed opposition groups was on the whole difficult owing to the lack of security guarantees and inaccessibility of mountain camps, in 2004 the *barangay* dissemination programme (see *Civilians*) resulted in IHL sessions for the combatants and supporters of both the NPA and the MILF. Dissemination materials on IHL and the Movement were distributed during the sessions.

The ICRC facilitated the handover of two members of the armed forces by the NPA to government officials.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Promoting IHL among tomorrow's decision-makers

Following the participation of a law professor in the IHL symposium organized by the ICRC in Kuala Lumpur (see *Kuala Lumpur*), the dean of the College of Law of the University of the Philippines announced the revival of its master's degree in IHL and human rights.

In Mindanao, two symposiums on IHL were held for 118 college and university students in General Santos City. Another two sessions were conducted for 55 political

science and law students of the University of the Philippines. The sessions included films and a workshop on the ICRC and IHL, in preparation for the university's first participation in the Jean Pictet international moot-court competition, held in France in April. The ICRC provided financial support to the university team and to students from the Ateneo de Manila law school who qualified to compete in the competition.

Two training courses on IHL for 49 university professors were organized by the Institute of International Legal Studies of the University of the Philippines Law Centre. The ICRC participated in the courses, provided financial support and distributed publications on IHL. Four university professors, two military officers, one police official and a National Society staff member were granted scholarships to the Institute, financed by the ICRC.

With ICRC support, the Philippine Red Cross gave over 500 presentations for more than 25,000 young people and adults, dealing with topics such as first aid, health, and disaster management.

The ICRC conducted several dissemination sessions on IHL and its mandate and activities for representatives of local NGOs active in similar fields.

NATIONAL SOCIETY

Early in the year, a review of the ICRC's cooperation programmes with the Philippine National Red Cross took place, resulting in enhanced collaboration between the two organizations in the fields of assistance and dissemination. Cooperation continued to benefit vulnerable populations, particularly in regions inaccessible to the ICRC, and detainees, who with ICRC/National Society support received visits from family members.

Ten years after an Abu Sayyaf attack that razed the public market and killed a number of civilians in the area, the National Society created its new Sibuguey sub-chapter. With ICRC support, the nascent sub-chapter conducted two dissemination sessions for 309 *barangay* leaders in the municipality of Kabasalan.

In conjunction with the national IHL committee, the Philippine Red Cross organized a series of IHL seminars and round-tables with the University of the Philippines. The

National Society also worked to promote IHL in the media.

The National Society continued with its internal dissemination programme, briefing staff on the mandate of the Red Cross assigned to it under IHL. More than 30 sessions on IHL were conducted for over 1,000 volunteers.

In 2004 ICRC support to the dissemination activities of the Philippine Red Cross included:

- ▶ conducting 2 three-day sessions to train 55 volunteers (from 13 chapters) as IHL disseminators;
- ▶ holding a dissemination event for 150 staff members of the Zamboanga City chapter during its general assembly;
- ▶ overseeing logistics and providing transport for National Society disseminators;
- ▶ helping with vehicle maintenance;
- ▶ supplying tens of thousands of leaflets and booklets on IHL for distribution by the National Society;
- ▶ organizing a meeting for all chapters to introduce the ICRC's Safer Access approach (see *Glossary*).