

# kuwait (regional)



The ICRC has been in Kuwait since the outbreak of the 1990–1991 Gulf War. Its presence in the region is linked to humanitarian issues still outstanding from that war and those arising from the current armed conflict in Iraq, as well as to work relating to people deprived of their freedom in the GCC 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 internal violence. Reinforcing cooperation with the National Red Crescent Societies of the region is another priority.

## COVERING

Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	774
Assistance	-
Prevention	1,064
Cooperation with National Societies	286
General	91

► **2,214**

of which: Overheads 135

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	86%
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## PERSONNEL

5	expatriates
17	national staff (daily workers not included)

## KEY POINTS

### In 2007, the ICRC:

- pursued action to clarify the fate of persons unaccounted for in connection with the 1990–91 Gulf War in the framework of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-committee set up under the auspices of the ICRC to address the issue
- restored contact between families in GCC countries and their relatives either detained/interned abroad or separated from them by conflict, in coordination with the region's National Societies
- visited detainees in Kuwait and Qatar in order to monitor their treatment and living conditions
- co-organized with the International Islamic Charitable Organization a workshop on IHL and the ICRC for representatives of various Islamic charitable organizations
- worked with National Societies in GCC countries to coordinate assistance activities in conflict areas and to enlist their support in promoting knowledge and implementation of IHL

## CONTEXT

The political situation in all six GCC countries remained relatively calm, despite the violence and political tension in a number of neighbouring countries such as Iraq and Lebanon and in the Palestinian territories.

Saudi Arabia was increasingly involved in efforts to restore stability to the Middle East, taking a lead regional role in mediation to put an end to the violence in Iraq, the political standoff in Lebanon and the factional fighting in the Gaza Strip.

In March, Saudi Arabia hosted a League of Arab States summit at which GCC countries and other Arab States re-endorsed a Saudi-sponsored initiative launched in 2002 to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The plan offered full recognition of Israel by the Arab States in exchange for a return of Palestinian land seized in the 1967 war, acceptance of East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital, and the return of Palestinian refugees to their former homes.

Countries in the region remained concerned about the ongoing violence in Iraq and its potential spillover into their territory along sectarian lines. Another of their major concerns was the continuing standoff between the Islamic Republic of Iran and certain members of the international community over Tehran's nuclear programme. This issue was discussed with the Iranian president at a GCC summit in Qatar in December – the first time that an Iranian leader had been invited to a GCC summit. The summit also endorsed proposals for GCC countries to form a common trading market by 1 January 2008 and to create a common currency by 2010.

GCC countries reinforced regional security cooperation and continued to arrest people charged with endangering State security or suspected of links to al-Qaeda. Meeting in Saudi Arabia in November, GCC foreign ministers called for the revitalization of the Peninsula Shield, a joint military force established to counter any external threat to their security.

There were two notable security incidents in Saudi Arabia in 2007. In February, four French nationals were killed in an attack near the north-western ruins of Madain Saleh, a popular tourist site. In April, Saudi police arrested 172 "terrorism" suspects.

## MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

	Total
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)<sup>1</sup></b>	
Detainees visited	96
Detainees visited and monitored individually	96
<i>of whom females</i>	1
Number of visits carried out	6
Number of places of detention visited	4
<b>RESTORING FAMILY LINKS</b>	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	235
RCMs distributed	512
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	32
<i>of whom females</i>	7
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance</i>	2
Tracing cases closed positively (persons located)	12
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2007 (people)	544
<i>of which for females</i>	20
<i>of which for minors at the time of disappearance</i>	47
<b>DOCUMENTS ISSUED</b>	
People to whom travel documents were issued	8
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	1,648

1. Kuwait and Qatar

## ICRC ACTION

Resolving humanitarian issues still outstanding from the 1990–91 Gulf War and others arising from the regional consequences of the conflict in Iraq and the global fight against “terrorism” remained top priorities for the ICRC in 2007.

ICRC activities related to the 1990–91 Gulf War continued to focus mainly on assistance to clarify the fate of people still unaccounted for from that conflict, in order to relieve the anguish of their families.

Further visits were made to people deprived of their freedom in Kuwait and Qatar, and the ICRC continued to explore the possibility of offering its services on behalf of detainees and the detaining authorities in other countries of the region. As in past years, families in GCC countries were able to locate and re-establish contact with their relatives detained/interned abroad or present in countries affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence where communications remained unreliable.

Progress was achieved in efforts to incorporate IHL into national legislation, school and university curricula, and the teaching and training programmes of national armed forces in the region.

Networking was expanded with officials, religious and opinion-leaders, and the media in GCC countries to gain increased acceptance of and support for the ICRC’s mandate and humanitarian activities worldwide.

The ICRC worked with the National Societies in GCC countries to better understand their respective strengths and constraints, with a view to enhancing operational cooperation.

A regional seminar organized by the government of Kuwait and the ICRC in Kuwait City brought together officials of GCC States to

discuss the humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war. The seminar reviewed ongoing initiatives to reduce the impact of these weapons worldwide and in the Middle East in particular.

## CIVILIANS

### Restoring family links

Families in the region continued to require assistance to trace and restore or maintain contact with family members detained/interned abroad or located in countries disrupted by armed conflict or other situations of violence. Many of the requests concerned family members held in detention facilities in Iraq and in the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba.

- 234 RCMs collected from and 512 RCMs distributed to civilians
- new tracing requests registered for 32 people (including 7 females and 2 minors at the time of disappearance); 12 people located; 544 people (including 20 females and 47 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought

### Tracing missing persons from the 1990–91 Gulf War

The ICRC continued to chair meetings of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-committee dealing with cases of persons missing from the 1990–91 Gulf War. Work on this issue was slowed down by the security situation in Iraq, which prevented exhumation and identification at gravesites there. Three meetings of the Technical Sub-committee took place in 2007.

- the fate of 3 Kuwaitis and 9 Iraqis clarified in the framework of the Tripartite Commission, bringing to 293 the number of cases resolved since 2003

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

In Kuwait, foreign detainees held in the central prison for men, the central prison for women and the deportation centre received regular ICRC visits. Most of these detainees were Iraqis or stateless persons with no diplomatic representation in Kuwait, where they had been in custody since the end of the 1990–91 Gulf War.

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 both Kuwait and Qatar, the findings of detention visits were shared confidentially with the authorities concerned.

In August, the Kuwaiti foreign minister and the ICRC exchanged views on ICRC access to security detainees.

- ▶ in Kuwait, 68 detainees visited and monitored individually (including 1 female) and 3 newly registered (including 1 female), during 5 visits to 3 places of detention
- ▶ in Qatar, 28 detainees visited and monitored individually during 1 visit to 1 place of detention
- ▶ 1 RCM collected from 1 detainee
- ▶ 1,648 detention certificates issued to former detainees or their families

## AUTHORITIES

During a visit to Saudi Arabia in March, the ICRC vice-president met the Saudi foreign minister and the president of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society to update them on the ICRC's humanitarian work in general and in the Arab world in particular, as well as on the humanitarian challenges facing the organization.

Regular contact was maintained with GCC government officials, national IHL committees, parliamentarians and judicial institutes regarding their countries' accession to and implementation of IHL instruments. In May, Saudi Arabia announced that it had joined Kuwait and the UAE in establishing a national IHL committee. Oman and Qatar planned to do likewise.

- ▶ representatives of governments, armed forces and national IHL committees attended various regional seminars on IHL implementation organized by the League of Arab States and the ICRC
- ▶ 40 members of the Kuwaiti judiciary and 25 magistrates from 11 Arab countries attended a course on IHL at the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, in implementation of an agreement between the institute and the ICRC on the conduct of such courses
- ▶ 30 officials from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended a seminar on IHL as a first step towards inclusion of the subject in courses for new diplomats
- ▶ 3 members of the Kuwaiti IHL committee and 2 members of the UAE committee participated in the Second Universal Meeting of National IHL Committees held in Geneva, Switzerland, in March
- ▶ government officials from GCC member States attended a seminar on the Ottawa Convention, co-organized by the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry and the ICRC, following which Kuwait acceded to the Convention

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Following IHL courses conducted by the ICRC over the years for members of the armed forces of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the UAE, the military authorities in each of these States continued to teach the subject autonomously in military colleges and academies and in army units. The ICRC maintained contact with the armed forces in the region and offered training support when required.

- ▶ some 60 multinational officers at the Command and Staff College in Kuwait attended IHL sessions
- ▶ more than 20 Omani armed forces training officers took part in a three-day refresher course on IHL
- ▶ throughout the region, armed forces libraries received IHL documents and, on request, the authorities concerned were provided with ICRC legal advice on the inclusion of IHL in theoretical and practical military training courses

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Contacts with religious and opinion leaders in GCC countries were intensified to increase understanding of the independent, neutral and impartial nature of the ICRC's humanitarian mandate and activities worldwide. Work also continued to promote the teaching of the ICRC's Exploring Humanitarian Law programme in schools and the inclusion of IHL in university law curricula.

The Arab and international media based in GCC countries were regularly briefed on ICRC activities, humanitarian issues and IHL.

- ▶ 30 representatives of various Islamic charitable organizations for the first time attended a workshop in Kuwait on IHL and the ICRC, co-organized with the International Islamic Charitable Organization
- ▶ some 40 media representatives in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar attended presentations on IHL
- ▶ 11 universities in the 6 GCC countries and the ICRC explored ways to include IHL in law curricula, and 5 faculties had integrated the subject by year-end
- ▶ Ministry of Education and university representatives from the 6 GCC countries participated in regional meetings on IHL and the ICRC's Exploring Humanitarian law programme
- ▶ legal experts from 4 GCC countries participated in the launch of the Arabic version of the ICRC's study on customary IHL in Cairo (see *Egypt*)

## RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Representatives of National Societies of GCC countries and the ICRC held several meetings to exchange field experiences and to discuss how to work together more closely with an improved mutual understanding of relief operations for conflict victims.

National Societies in the region and the ICRC also explored ways to integrate IHL and tracing expertise into annual refresher/training courses for staff and volunteers.

Representatives of the Red Crescent Societies of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the Lebanese Red Cross, participated in April in a workshop organized in Kuwait by the ICRC on ways to improve cooperation and efficiency when involved in international relief operations.

- more than 60 Bahraini Red Crescent staff and volunteers attended presentations on IHL and the ICRC
- 40 staff and volunteers of the Red Crescent Society of the UAE attended a two-day tracing workshop, co-organized by the National Society and the ICRC
- 18 volunteers and staff of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent and 6 ICRC staff members met to exchange field experiences and to develop awareness of the Fundamental Principles and the importance of cooperation and coordination among components of the Movement
- a member of the ICRC Committee attended the 35th General Assembly of the General Secretariat of the Organization of Arab Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies held in Qatar in February, providing an opportunity to exchange views on cooperation in various fields
- the ICRC vice-president participated in the 2nd Saudi Conference on Voluntary Work held in Riyadh in March, providing an opportunity to develop good relations with the new leadership of the Saudi Red Crescent