

ARMENIA



The ICRC has been working in Armenia since 1992 in relation to the Nagorno Karabakh armed conflict. It focuses on the issue of missing persons and on detainees held for conflict-related or security reasons, and works to protect and assist communities living along the international border with Azerbaijan. It promotes the national implementation of IHL and its integration into the armed and security forces' doctrine, training and sanctions and into academic curricula. The ICRC works in partnership with and aims to strengthen the capacities of the Armenian Red Cross Society.

CONTEXT

A tripartite meeting between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, mediated by the president of the Russian Federation, and several meetings with the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe concluded with no progress made in finding a peaceful solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, despite an official consensus on the need to strengthen confidence-building measures.

Tensions remained high along the Line of Contact and the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Incidents of cross-border fire and the presence of mines/explosive remnants of war (ERW) continued to pose a danger to civilians living in the area, in addition to causing both military and civilian casualties and exacerbating political tensions between the two countries.

The parliamentary elections in May were generally peaceful, with President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party winning the majority of seats in the new assembly ahead of the 2013 presidential elections.

Spurred by improvements in agricultural production and increased exports and remittances, Armenia's economy performed well in comparison with previous years. Emigration remained high, however, despite measures taken by the government to sustain the country's economic growth.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued working to alleviate the humanitarian consequences in Armenia of the unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Regular field visits enabled it to monitor the situation of civilians living on both sides of the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, when necessary raising concerns with the relevant authorities and reminding them of their obligations under IHL.

In front-line communities where insecurity prevented people from accessing water and livelihood opportunities, the ICRC rehabilitated irrigation and drinking water infrastructure and distributed agricultural inputs or cash to help the people meet their basic economic needs. With local legal practitioners, it conducted workshops for leaders of border villages to raise awareness of potential legal issues arising from the location of their homes and to inform them about Armenian laws and regulations applicable to their situation.

Resolving the fate of people who went missing during the conflict remained a priority. The ICRC assisted the authorities in setting

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	371
Assistance	930
Prevention	405
Cooperation with National Societies	241
General	-

► 1,947

of which: Overheads 119

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	95%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	4
National staff (daily workers not included)	29

KEY POINTS

In 2012, the ICRC:

- monitored the situation of civilians living near the international border with Azerbaijan, raising their concerns with the authorities and helping them meet their economic needs through water and livelihood-assistance projects
- assisted the authorities in managing ante-mortem data and, with the Armenian Red Cross Society, in preparing a DNA-sample collection to help clarify the fate of people missing in relation to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict
- helped more families of missing persons access psychological, social, legal and economic support by extending its comprehensive support programme for them, in cooperation with local partners and the National Society
- helped reduce the impact of weapon contamination by working with the National Society to assess the needs of affected people, while supporting the authorities in shaping a national mine-action strategy
- acted as a neutral intermediary in the repatriation of 1 civilian internee from Armenia to Azerbaijan
- participated in a regional military training exercise for the first time, in support of the armed forces' process of integrating IHL into their doctrine, training and operating procedures

Main figures and indicators	PROTECTION	Total		
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Red Cross messages (RCMs)			UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected		21		
RCMs distributed		5		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Minors
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		3		
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		436	30	17
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
ICRC visits			Women	Minors
Detainees visited and monitored individually ¹		11		
Detainees newly registered		4		
Number of visits carried out		12		
Number of places of detention visited		6		
Restoring family links				
RCMs collected		9		
RCMs distributed		12		
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		10		
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		2		
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC		1		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		2		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Including one POW held in Nagorny Karabakh before being transferred to Armenia

up a centralized system for the management of ante-mortem data collected from the families of missing persons, providing technical support throughout the process. It also worked with them and the Armenian Red Cross Society in preparing for the planned collection of DNA samples from relatives of the missing, with a view to preserving as much information as possible to facilitate future efforts to identify human remains and, upon matching with the ante-mortem data, provide answers to the families.

While continuing to encourage the authorities to meet the needs of families of the missing, including through the adoption of a law protecting their rights, the ICRC extended its comprehensive support programme aimed at addressing their multi-faceted needs. With the assistance of local service providers and National Society staff, more families were then able to access psychological, social and legal support to help them cope better with their situation. Based on the results of a 2010 household needs survey, vulnerable families also received economic assistance in the form of grants or interest-free loans to start income-generating activities, vocational training or home rehabilitation.

National Society/ICRC teams also surveyed victims of mines/ERW and their families in order to gain an insight into their needs and plan assistance accordingly. Through these efforts, the ICRC aimed to reduce the impact of weapon contamination in the country, while supporting the authorities in shaping a national strategy to address the problem.

Partnering the National Society also meant supporting it in strengthening its core capacities, particularly in the areas of first-aid training, emergency preparedness and response, restoring family links, and the dissemination of IHL and Movement principles.

In parallel, ICRC delegates visited people deprived of their freedom, including those held in connection with the conflict, to monitor their treatment and living conditions, and provided confidential feedback to the authorities. In its capacity as a neutral intermediary and upon the request of all parties concerned, it facilitated the repatriation of a civilian internee from Armenia to Azerbaijan.

In its dialogue with the authorities, the ICRC raised humanitarian issues stemming from the conflict and encouraged Armenia's accession to and implementation of IHL treaties. Operational dialogue with the armed forces on the integration of IHL principles into military doctrine, training and operations saw notable progress with the ICRC's participation for the first time in a regional military exercise led by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Contacts with the media helped enhance their reporting on ICRC activities, thus raising public awareness of the plight of conflict-affected people.

CIVILIANS

Civilians living along the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan faced continued insecurity caused by cross-border fire and the presence of mines/ERW. Through field trips to border regions and contacts with local communities, civil and military authorities and National Society branches, the ICRC kept abreast of the humanitarian situation in these areas and monitored respect for IHL, raising civilians' concerns with the relevant authorities. When necessary, written representations reminded the authorities of their obligations under IHL, in particular the protection of civilians. Meanwhile, during workshops conducted in cooperation with local partners, the leaders of 11 border villages learnt about the ICRC's activities in the region and met lawyers to discuss legal issues their communities faced as a result of living in close proximity to conflict areas, in the light of Armenian laws and regulations applicable to their situation.

Conflict-affected communities meet their needs

To add to the prevailing security risks, other issues such as problematic access to land, lack of job opportunities and dilapidated infrastructure continued to impede the livelihoods of front-line communities, most notably in the Tavush region. On the basis of a needs assessment conducted in 2011, ICRC teams launched tailored livelihood-support activities for the most vulnerable people in some of the most-affected villages. Following the rehabilitation of water and irrigation networks, some 1,000 residents in four villages enjoyed safer access to water for drinking and agricultural purposes, thus reducing their exposure to risks while going about their daily activities. In addition,

Main figures and indicators	ASSISTANCE	Total	Women	Children
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)				
Productive inputs	Beneficiaries	1,076	30%	40%
Cash	Beneficiaries	2,885	30%	41%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	2		
Work, services and training	Beneficiaries	28	50%	29%
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	1,028	40%	20%

713 local farming households (2,674 individuals) received cash for improving their farming, and 330 households in two communities (1,076 individuals) received agricultural inputs to help boost their food production and income.

Some 500 people were estimated to be living in mine/ERW-contaminated areas in Armenia. In order to assess their situation and ensure they received the appropriate assistance to support their social and economic reintegration into society, the Armenian Red Cross, with ICRC support, and in cooperation with the Armenian Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE), started collecting information on their needs using standard mine-action forms. Some 60 mine/ERW victims in the five most-affected regions (Ararat, Gegharkunik, Syunik, Tavush and Vayots Dzor) and in Yerevan city had their social and economic needs assessed by 12 ICRC-trained National Society volunteers; a specially trained database administrator centralized the findings in the internationally recognized Information Management System for Mine Action. To ensure the sustainability of these endeavours, the CHDE received ICRC funding in support of its efforts to draft a national strategy to address weapon contamination in the country. This enabled its director to go on an educational trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina's demining centre and learn from the extensive experience of his counterparts in the field of demining.

To help build local response capacities in the event of an emergency, around 60 Red Cross volunteers and other residents learnt first aid during six training courses held by the National Society in communities near the international border.

Families of the missing receive comprehensive support

At the end of December, 4,627 people remained unaccounted for as a result of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, with 436 people registered as missing in Armenia.

Many families struggled to live with the torment of not knowing the fate of their missing relatives, often lacking opportunities to improve their economic conditions and suffering from feelings of isolation and hopelessness, in part owing to the lack of official recognition of their status. To address their various psychological, social and legal needs, the ICRC launched a comprehensive support programme for them in 2011, and in 2012 extended its scope to cover nine regions, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 198 families (310 individuals). With the help of ICRC-trained local partners and National Society staff, families shared their pain and voiced their concerns during group meetings and information sessions, and those requiring additional support benefited from individual follow-up or referral to the appropriate social services. While mothers and wives of the missing were often the most affected, local partners also explored with young people their specific vulnerabilities as a result of having grown up with missing family members, and possible ways to address them. In addition to mobilizing community support around the families, the programme contributed to raising public awareness of the

issues they faced through local events, commemoration activities and the direct involvement of municipal authorities, for instance during focus group meetings. Given its widespread presence in all affected regions, the National Society received training support to further increase its capacity to cater to the needs of these families, thereby also ensuring the sustainability of the programme.

ICRC teams surveyed families of missing persons in Armavir, Gegharkunik, Shirak and Syunik regions to gain an insight into their needs and determine the most suitable type of economic support for them. Based on the results of the assessment, 23 families (111 individuals) received grants to start income-generating micro-enterprises; of these, 7 families (28 individuals) also benefited from vocational training attended by their main breadwinners with ICRC support. With the cooperation of local partner institutions, 3 families (10 individuals) received interest-free loans to run small businesses, while 23 families (78 individuals) enjoyed better living conditions following the rehabilitation of their homes.

Efforts to clarify the fate of missing persons continue

Electronic files containing some 4,000 ante-mortem data questionnaires completed by families of the missing and collected by National Society/ICRC teams between 2008 and 2011, together with their translations, photographs and other relevant documents, continued to be prepared for handover to the authorities. Of these files, 336 related to people missing in Armenia and over 3,600 to people missing in Azerbaijan, including Nagorny Karabakh. The Armenian State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons (CEPOD) continued to receive support in setting up a centralized system for the management of these files, which it progressively received for input into the ante/post-mortem database managed by an ICRC-trained database administrator. At the same time, efforts to locate families who had not been interviewed during the data collection period continued. To this end, National Society data collectors attended refresher training and, following the location of 11 families, gathered detailed information on their missing relatives.

With the aim of preserving key information to facilitate the future identification of exhumed human remains and the provision of answers to families, the Armenian CEPOD, the National Society and the ICRC prepared draft agreements and forensic operating procedures for the planned collection and storage of DNA samples from relatives of the missing. Though originally scheduled to begin implementation in 2012, the project's pilot phase was postponed as the scale and complexity of the endeavour required an extended preparatory phase and additional forensic resources.

Meanwhile, acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC transmitted requests for information concerning missing persons between the Armenian and Azerbaijani CEPODs. Despite ICRC efforts to encourage direct communication, a meeting between the two coordinating mechanisms was not possible owing to the prevailing tensions.

Families restore or maintain contact

With communication lines still not fully restored between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including Nagorny Karabakh, family members separated by the conflict used the ICRC's family-links services, such as RCMs and phone calls, to keep in touch with relatives, including those held in detention facilities (see *People deprived of their freedom*).

Non-conflict-related cases of separated family members continued to be processed by the National Society's tracing service, which resolved two cases during the year.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Sporadic captures occurred along the Line of Contact and the international border with Azerbaijan. In total, 11 detainees – including 2 POWs and 1 civilian internee held in relation to the Nagorny Karabakh conflict – in six places of detention received visits, conducted in accordance with the ICRC's standard procedures. During these visits, delegates monitored the detainees' treatment and living conditions to ensure their compliance with IHL and/or internationally recognized standards, and shared their findings and any recommendations confidentially with the authorities concerned. At the request of all parties concerned, the civilian internee was repatriated from Armenia to Azerbaijan, with the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary. Upon his wish, one POW resettled in a third country.

Detainees, including foreigners, women and minors, maintained contact with their families via RCMs and, in some cases, phone calls. Two detainees received family visits with ICRC financial support. Vulnerable detainees received small-scale assistance, including clothing and books for the POWs and civilian internee, to help make their time in detention more bearable.

AUTHORITIES

Dialogue with the authorities sought to encourage Armenia's accession to key IHL treaties, including weapon-related instruments. To contribute to increasing their interest in and knowledge of IHL implementation, State officials received sponsorship to participate in a regional IHL seminar in Astana, Kazakhstan (see *Tashkent*), at which weapons conventions formed part of the discussion. The ICRC also reaffirmed its readiness to share expertise in support of their efforts to implement the provisions of the Hague Convention on Cultural Property.

A draft law protecting the rights of families of missing persons, finalized by an interministerial working group in 2011, remained pending with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ICRC offered to provide further support to ensure its full compatibility with Armenian legislation.

Humanitarian issues arising from the Nagorny Karabakh conflict remained central to all discussions, in particular the need to: protect civilians, people deprived of their freedom, and medical personnel and infrastructure; meet the needs of families of the missing; and ensure ICRC access to conflict-affected populations.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Operational dialogue with the Ministry of Defence focused on the need to respect IHL and protect civilians in insecure areas along the Line of Contact and the international border, and aimed to deepen understanding of the ICRC's mandate so as to secure its access to conflict-affected populations.

In a step towards IHL integration into military doctrine, training and operations, some 30 officers learnt about IHL and its application during two five-day courses jointly conducted by the ministry and the ICRC. To the same end, a high-ranking officer participated in an international IHL workshop in Malaysia (see *International law and cooperation*), while military contingents deployed along the international border enhanced their understanding of ICRC operations in the area at five information sessions.

In September, Armenia hosted a CSTO-led military exercise, in which the ICRC participated for the first time, simulating its humanitarian activities in armed conflict. Observed by diplomatic and CSTO member State representatives, the exercise helped illustrate the ICRC's mandate and its relevance in the region. During discussions with the Defence Ministry research group in charge of drafting recommendations for a CSTO policy on civil-military cooperation, the ICRC underlined the need for CSTO troops to ensure the protection of the civilian population and to allow humanitarian access to affected people in the conduct of their operations.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Contacts with the media aimed to enhance coverage and public awareness of humanitarian issues, including the need to safeguard health care services in armed conflict. Using ICRC press releases, national and regional media reported on the National

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	ARMENIA	IN ARMENIA IN RELATION TO THE NAGORNY KARABAKH CONFLICT
ICRC visits		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	8	3*
Detainees newly registered	2	2
Number of visits carried out	5	7
Number of places of detention visited	5	1
Restoring family links		
RCMs collected		9
RCMs distributed		12
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	1	9
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		2
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC		1
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		2

* Including one POW held in Nagorny Karabakh before being transferred to Armenia

Society's/ICRC's multidisciplinary action for families of missing persons, front-line communities and people deprived of their freedom. A workshop organized in partnership with a local media-support NGO helped journalists deepen their understanding of the ICRC's work and the protection afforded them under IHL. Following this, national media published an article highlighting ICRC activities for families of the missing in rural areas.

Academics discussed contemporary challenges to IHL at an international conference co-organized by the Russian-Armenian University and the ICRC; an online survey among the potential participants in the event revealed rising interest in the forum. Meanwhile, national IHL experts who had taken part in previous ICRC events continued to support IHL development in the region. A lecturer from Yerevan State University participated as a facilitator in a regional IHL workshop held in Almaty, Kazakhstan (see *Tashkent*), while two other experts served as jury members at the ICRC-supported International IHL Olympiad in Belarus. A team of graduate law students took part in the latter with ICRC sponsorship.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Armenian Red Cross and the ICRC strengthened their operational partnership in addressing the needs of conflict-affected people, including families of missing persons and communities in areas contaminated by mines/ERW (see *Civilians*).

The National Society also received support to reinforce its capacity to conduct its core activities, including restoring family links and emergency preparedness (see *Civilians*), as well as public communication on the Movement. A mobile photo exhibition chronicling its activities from 1990 to 2012, and various public events on World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day (8 May), helped raise awareness of the Movement's work.

Following a Movement-supported revision process in 2011, the Armenian Red Cross officially registered amendments to its statutes at the Ministry of Justice, thus strengthening its legal base. It also signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Emergency Situations to outline mutual support and formalize its role in natural disasters. In line with a tripartite agreement concluded at the 31st International Conference, the National Society, the International Federation and the ICRC strengthened the coordination of their humanitarian activities to maximize their impact and avoid duplication.