

# CARACAS (regional)

**COVERING:** Suriname, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean Community: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago



ICRC regional delegation

The Caracas regional delegation was established in 1971. It reinforces the capacities of the region's National Societies in the fields of IHL promotion, restoring family links, emergency response and assistance to victims of violence. It seeks to visit security detainees in Venezuela and monitors the humanitarian situation along the Venezuelan border with Colombia. It promotes the incorporation of IHL into national legislation and into the operational procedures and training of the region's armed forces, as well as the inclusion of human rights standards in police manuals and training.

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

In 2014:

- ▶ during protests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (hereafter Venezuela), 145 people received life-saving care from ICRC-supported volunteers of 6 Venezuelan Red Cross branches
- ▶ people living in states along the Colombia-Venezuela border benefited from basic health care, such as cancer screening for women, provided by newly launched Venezuelan Red Cross health camps
- ▶ at round-tables in their countries, Belizean, Jamaican and Trinbagonian security officials discussed the integration of internationally recognized standards for law enforcement into joint police/military operations
- ▶ Venezuela's National Assembly approved a law promoting respect for the Movement's emblems and another one on the creation of a national IHL commission
- ▶ dialogue with the Venezuelan authorities on the resumption of ICRC visits to detainees – suspended since 2012 – made no headway

## YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

MEDIUM

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)	
Protection	549
Assistance	-
Prevention	1,718
Cooperation with National Societies	1,049
General	-
	<b>3,316</b>
	<i>of which: Overheads 202</i>
IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>154%</b>
PERSONNEL	
Mobile staff	5
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	11

## CONTEXT

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (hereafter Venezuela), massive street protests, reportedly related to the deteriorating economic situation, erupted in several cities in February and lasted for nearly three months. Some 40 people were killed, 835 injured and around 3,300 arrested during the violence accompanying these protests.

Communities in border areas hosted people who had fled the conflict in Colombia.

In a number of States in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), many urban districts continued to grapple with high rates of crime and violence; military forces were often required to support the police in law enforcement operations.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The internal disturbances in Venezuela led the ICRC to prioritize its support for the emergency response activities of the Venezuelan Red Cross. As a result, the implementation of the organization's other objectives for 2014 faced delays or made little progress. Visits to detainees in Venezuela remained suspended.

ICRC financial, material and technical support enabled the Venezuelan Red Cross to conduct communication campaigns, give first aid to people injured during the disturbances and evacuate them to hospital. Such support also allowed National Society volunteers to maintain first-aid services to people in states along the Colombian border; the launch of National Society health camps gave people in one of these states access to comprehensive health-care services.

Some CARICOM countries advanced the incorporation of internationally recognized standards on the use of force in security forces' training/operations, notably through workshops and round-tables on joint police/military operations for instructors and officials concerned in Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The ICRC continued to provide technical support to the region's authorities for ratifying humanitarian treaties and integrating their provisions into domestic law. As a result, five countries ratified the Arms Trade Treaty; Venezuela approved a law promoting respect for the Movement's emblems and another on the creation of a national IHL commission. To foster understanding of humanitarian issues of common concern, the ICRC maintained dialogue and cooperation with regional bodies and multilateral fora.

The region's other National Societies continued to receive various kinds of ICRC support for strengthening their operational, managerial and legal capacities, for example, to be able to respond more effectively to violence. The Jamaica Red Cross School maintained its educational activities for children in violence-affected neighbourhoods. Regular coordination among Movement partners helped ensure effective implementation of projects.

## CIVILIANS

### People injured during protests in Venezuela receive timely medical assistance

ICRC financial, material and technical support enabled the Venezuelan Red Cross to strengthen its ability to respond effectively to outbreaks of violence and to the needs of people in areas along the border with Colombia. Training for National Society volunteers and staff focused on the Safer Access Framework, first-aid services and logistics management. Radio spots helped

raise awareness of the National Society's emergency response capacities, notably among community leaders and security forces.

In six cities affected by the mass protests (see *Context*), 145 injured people received first aid and/or were promptly taken to hospital. Surgical kits pre-positioned at its branches in these cities ensured the National Society's preparedness to support hospitals dealing with an influx of patients.

### Venezuelan border communities affected by the Colombian conflict benefit from health services

People fleeing the conflict in Colombia received first aid from staff members of Venezuelan Red Cross branches in the border states of Apure, Táchira and Zulia. Some 70% of the communities in one region in Apure boosted their emergency response capacities by participating in first-aid training. In line with its health objectives, and at the request of community leaders, the National Society branch in Apure set up a series of one-day health camps. Displaced persons and residents, including members of host communities, benefited from basic health care, such as cancer screening for women; they also attended dissemination sessions on sexual violence.

At the Jamaica Red Cross School, financially supported by the ICRC, close to 90 children living in violence-affected Kingston neighbourhoods learnt effective methods of self-protection and benefited from informal/alternative education and vocational training.

Networking and field trips helped the ICRC understand issues of widespread concern in the region and to formulate appropriate responses together with parties concerned. Contacts with the authorities, security forces and civil society organizations in Caribbean countries resulted in an ICRC study on patterns of violence in urban settings and on the use of force by State actors. The American Red Cross, the International Federation and the ICRC conducted an evaluation mission, with a view to determining the nature of their support for the Bahamas Red Cross Society's work for migrants in detention and irregular migrants.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Dialogue between the Venezuelan authorities and the ICRC on the resumption of ICRC visits – suspended since administrative changes in detention facilities in 2012 – made no headway.

## ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

### Police/military officers take steps to incorporate internationally recognized policing standards in joint operations

Given the military's frequent involvement in law enforcement operations in CARICOM countries, training in internationally recognized standards on the use of force and the integration of these standards into police/military doctrine, training and operations remained a priority.

Discussions with the police/defence forces of Belize, Guyana and Jamaica aimed to encourage the dissemination of these standards among personnel. In Jamaica, judicial and law enforcement authorities boosted their understanding of the ICRC's mandate and activities during briefings at the Office of the Public Defender.

In Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, some 90 police/defence forces instructors were trained to promote internationally recognized standards on the use of force among their personnel. A course

organized with the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force furthered understanding of the practical aspects of these standards among 32 officers.

To identify issues that recurred in joint police/military operations and to further adapt operational procedures to applicable standards, senior officials from the security forces of Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago attended round-tables, some organized jointly with the authorities concerned. The participation of officers from the Jamaican and Guyanese defence forces in an international workshop on rules governing military operations supported these efforts (see *International law and policy*).

In Venezuela, the organization of similar activities for/with the security forces was delayed owing to the security situation and the turnover of staff concerned. However, dialogue on the importance of such activities was broached with various national authorities and parties of influence, such as the Ombudsman's Office.

Senior officials of the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) received ICRC briefings on issues of humanitarian concern, particularly in connection with the proper use of force during law enforcement operations. At the Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police, police authorities throughout the region and the ICRC engaged on the subjects mentioned above; some of the participating authorities committed themselves to establishing working groups to ensure their personnel's respect for these standards.

#### **Venezuelan National Assembly approves law creating a national IHL commission**

The Foreign Affairs and National Security Ministries of Belize, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, and the ICRC, maintained dialogue on issues of humanitarian concern and on domestic implementation of pertinent treaties.

Belize ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions; Bahamas, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines ratified the Arms Trade Treaty. Twenty government officials from 12 CARICOM member States attended a regional seminar in Trinidad and Tobago, organized by IMPACS and the ICRC, and received technical guidance for facilitating domestic implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

In Venezuela, the National Assembly approved a new law promoting respect for the Movement's emblems and another for creating a national IHL commission. Surinamese government officials convened a workshop to discuss the establishment of a national IHL committee.

A Venezuelan parliamentarian and the Venezuelan Red Cross's health director attended two international workshops on issues related to the Health Care in Danger project (see *Brussels* and *Colombia*). They discussed with their counterparts ways to help ensure the safety of health personnel and facilities, and a related draft law they submitted for legislative approval.

Dialogue continued between regional bodies/multilateral fora and the ICRC on issues of humanitarian concern; however, there was little progress in making these issues the subject of national debate or in ensuring these were taken into account in pertinent legal frameworks.

## **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

### **National Societies take steps to integrate the Safer Access Framework into their operations**

The National Societies in the countries covered continued to receive technical, financial and material support from Movement partners to improve their operational capacities and institutional set-up. Such support enabled the Venezuelan Red Cross to respond promptly to the consequences of the violence that occurred during protests (see *Civilians*).

To bolster their emergency response capacities, staff members and volunteers from some National Societies, including the Jamaica Red Cross, were trained in the Safer Access Framework. The National Societies in Belize and Trinidad and Tobago drafted guidelines for emergency response in line with the framework. The Venezuelan Red Cross reviewed the internal promotion of and training of staff in the Safer Access Framework guidelines in Spanish. In Guyana, modules on the framework were integrated into National Society training sessions in community health.

Representatives of the Bahamas Red Cross participated in a regional meeting on family-links services (see *Mexico City*); however, the National Society did not advance in incorporating these services in its emergency response.

Through dialogue, online publications and interviews in local media, the Venezuelan Red Cross helped raise the authorities' and the public's awareness of humanitarian concerns, the Movement and its emblems, and the Health Care in Danger project.

### **National Societies enhance their legal capacities**

To strengthen its operational/managerial capacities, the Venezuelan Red Cross launched an organizational capacity assessment; newly elected officials of the Barbadian and Surinamese National Societies participated in the Movement's induction and leadership course in Switzerland.

With a view to helping the Belizean, Guyanese, Saint Lucian, Surinamese and Trinbagonian National Societies develop their statutes or emblem laws or strengthen their ability to lobby for domestic IHL implementation, legal advisers were sponsored to attend meetings abroad and/or received technical guidance. The Suriname Red Cross Society supported ICRC efforts to promote the establishment of a national IHL committee (see *Actors of influence*).

Movement partners throughout the region held coordination meetings periodically to ensure effective implementation of projects and to share experiences.

<b>MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION <sup>1</sup></b>		<b>Total</b>		
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>				
		<b>Women</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)	1		1	
<b>Documents</b>				
People to whom travel documents were issued	8			

1. Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela