

BRUSSELS

COVERING: Institutions of the European Union, NATO, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and specific armed forces in Western Europe and Belgium

The ICRC has been working in Brussels since 1999, building strong institutional and operational relations with European Union institutions, NATO, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, specific armed forces based in Western Europe, and Belgium. It aims to make the ICRC's mandate better known, to mobilize political, diplomatic and financial support for its activities and to ensure that relevant military decision-makers in Western Europe view the ICRC as the main reference point for neutral and independent humanitarian action, as well as for IHL.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2016

- ▶ European Union (EU) institutions continued to be engaged by the ICRC in dialogue, including at high level, helping ensure that they gave due consideration to humanitarian perspectives and IHL in their policies and programmes.
- ▶ NATO considered ICRC input on IHL, notably for its: lessons-learned process on Afghanistan; implementation of a new protection-of-civilians policy; and establishment of new training standards to help ensure safe health-care access.
- ▶ Dialogue with influential actors – which complemented ICRC operations in areas where EU and NATO missions were also ongoing – helped increase support for the ICRC's neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.
- ▶ Coordination between the Red Cross EU Office and the ICRC ensured the coherence of Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy with European institutions, particularly on the Movement's response to the needs of migrants.

YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	49
Assistance	-
Prevention	2,837
Cooperation with National Societies	206
General	19
Total	3,112
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	<i>190</i>

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	102%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	2
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	17

CONTEXT

The European Union (EU) maintained its involvement in crisis management and conflict resolution worldwide and remained a major humanitarian donor. It expressed concern about the conflicts in such countries as Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria) and Ukraine, and about regionalized conflicts in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region. Seventeen missions, under the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, were ongoing at year-end.

EU Member States and institutions continued to develop the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, particularly by refining the positioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Political and Security Committee of the EEAS remained a key body in this regard.

The rotating biannual presidency, held in 2016 by the Netherlands and Slovakia, chaired some working groups of the EU Council, including the Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) and the Working Group on Public International Law (COJUR). The European Commission's (EC) Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) remained the primary EU body handling humanitarian affairs.

EU Member States faced different political, economic and social challenges, some linked to: large migrant influxes into Europe; the decision of voters in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to leave the EU; and regionwide security.

NATO continued to build its crisis-response capacities and strengthen cooperation with various international partners. Notably, it sustained its support for local security actors in Afghanistan, in line with its Resolute Support Mission, launched in 2015.

Belgium remained committed to supporting humanitarian action and the development and promotion of IHL.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

In 2016, the ICRC's Brussels delegation continued to cultivate relations with EU institutions and NATO, particularly in terms of crisis management and conflict prevention, helping ensure that humanitarian perspectives and IHL were given due consideration in the policies and programmes of these bodies. It highlighted specific issues towards complementing European initiatives that had bearing on people affected by armed conflict and other humanitarian emergencies.

Dialogue with EU institutions – notably, the EU presidency, the EU Council, the EC, including ECHO, and the EEAS – covered the situation in conflict-affected countries and the ICRC's work there, and other matters of humanitarian concern, such as: sexual violence in armed conflict; the goals of the Health Care in Danger project; the plight of migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees; and the potential implications of EU data-protection reforms on humanitarian activities.

The ICRC maintained its dialogue with NATO headquarters, and with NATO's two strategic commands: Allied Command Operations (ACO) in Mons, Belgium, and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk, Virginia, United States of America (hereafter United States). Discussions covered the situation in conflict-stricken countries of common interest, notably Afghanistan, regarding which

NATO's lessons-learned process continued; and the implementation of the 2012 agreement between the strategic commands and the ICRC, particularly in terms of training. NATO's focal point for its policy on the protection of civilians considered ICRC input towards the implementation of such policy. The NATO Standardization Office established new training standards to help ensure safe health-care access, based on recommendations from a past workshop on the Health Care in Danger project. The ICRC contributed to the planning of a major NATO training exercise. Officers and troops received briefings on IHL and the ICRC's activities.

In parallel, the ICRC's networking with other humanitarian actors fostered exchanges on shared concerns and helped strengthen coordination. Its contact with academic circles – including the College of Europe and the Network on Humanitarian Assistance (NOHA), a consortium of European universities – think-tanks, journalists and other key actors, through such means as public events, broadened awareness of IHL and humanitarian issues.

The ICRC sustained its regular dialogue with the Belgian authorities on IHL-related matters.

Periodic contact with the Red Cross EU Office ensured the coherence of Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy, particularly in underscoring the strictly humanitarian nature of the Movement's family-links activities for migrants. The ICRC maintained cooperation with the Belgian Red Cross on promoting humanitarian issues and IHL.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

In Belgium, no detainees were serving sentences handed down by the UN Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals or the International Criminal Court; the ICRC, however, remained ready to visit any such detainees transferred to the country by these courts.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

To promote humanitarian perspectives and IHL, and to reinforce support for the ICRC – especially its specifically neutral and independent status, and its position as a main reference on IHL-related matters – the organization sustained its dialogue with EU institutions, NATO, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Belgian authorities and Europe-based armed forces. In parallel, the ICRC's networking with other humanitarian actors fostered exchanges on shared concerns and helped strengthen coordination. Its contact with academic circles, think-tanks, journalists and other key parties broadened awareness of humanitarian concerns.

EU institutions are engaged on policies and programmes pertinent to humanitarian affairs

The ICRC maintained dialogue with the EU Council, the EC, the EU presidency and the EEAS, including through: the ICRC president's bilateral discussions with the presidents of the European Council and the European Parliament, the commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis management, the commissioner for budget and human resources, and the commissioner for international cooperation; periodic meetings with COHAFA; and participation in an EEAS-led crisis-management exercise.

These interactions covered, *inter alia*: the humanitarian situation and ICRC operations in conflict-stricken countries (see *Context*); the ICRC's mandate and working procedures; sexual violence in armed conflict; the goals of the Health Care in Danger project; the plight of migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees;

the potential implications of EU data-protection reforms on humanitarian activities; and the need to uphold IHL in relation to counter-terrorism policy, particularly given a new EU directive in this regard. ECHO and the ICRC discussed topics of mutual interest, notably during their annual strategic dialogue. COJUR was briefed on the progress of the Strengthening IHL process.

During one of its biannual sessions, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly drew on contributions from the ICRC, particularly on the need to uphold principled humanitarian action amid growing security challenges.

As necessary, the ICRC's Brussels delegation engaged with the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, in support of dialogue led by ICRC headquarters.

NATO considers ICRC input on IHL

The ICRC and various NATO bodies – notably, the North Atlantic Council, which was briefed by the ICRC president – sustained their exchanges on IHL-related strategic and operational issues. These included: the situation in conflict-affected countries of common interest, notably Afghanistan (see *Context*), regarding which NATO's lessons-learnt process continued, and to which the ICRC contributed a report; and the implementation of the 2012 memorandum of understanding between NATO's strategic commands and the ICRC (see below).

Headquarters-level discussions at the 11th annual NATO-ICRC staff talks covered: NATO's defence capacity-building initiatives; migration; and the protection of civilians. The focal point for NATO's protection-of-civilians policy formulated an action plan towards its implementation, taking into account the ICRC's input. The NATO Standardization Office established new training standards to help ensure safe health-care access, based on recommendations from a past workshop on the Health Care in Danger project.

NATO's strategic commands and the ICRC cultivated their relationship through, for instance, round-tables on subjects of mutual concern. The ICRC joined reviews of Trident Juncture 15, a major training exercise held in 2015, where it had directly engaged participants on IHL-related issues, and provided input for planning the edition held in 2016. Units undergoing the NATO Response Force certification process interacted with the ICRC during training events. ACO and ACT officers shared their IHL expertise at a workshop in Lucerne, Switzerland (see *International law and policy*). ACT continued to use ICRC-produced tools in its e-learning courses. ACO, ACT and the ICRC completed the annual plan defining the ICRC's involvement in the strategic commands' 2017 training and educational programmes.

While taking courses at the NATO School or other institutions, NATO officers and troops continued to receive briefings on IHL and ICRC activities. NATO officers departing for Afghanistan participated in mission-specific predeployment training. Contact was maintained with NATO Special Operations Headquarters and Europe-based forces of the United States.

Belgian authorities maintain regular dialogue on IHL-related matters

In their regular dialogue, the Belgian authorities – including representatives of the development cooperation, foreign affairs and justice ministries and of the national IHL committee – and the ICRC covered such topics as: the Strengthening IHL process;

measures to address sexual violence and violence affecting health care during armed conflict; and the ICRC's activities. Diplomats strengthened their grasp of IHL during an ICRC-facilitated session.

Key actors broaden awareness of humanitarian concerns

Representatives from the EU, NATO, other international organizations, and universities shared insight into: legal issues linked to “terrorism”, during an annual IHL colloquium organized with the College of Europe; and the protection of migrants, during a conference hosted with the EU Institute for Security Studies. Humanitarian professionals and other pertinent parties joined an introductory IHL course run by NOHA, the Belgian Red Cross and the ICRC. Post-graduate students advanced their knowledge of IHL during seminars delivered with the College of Europe, with Swiss government backing. Law students demonstrated their competence in IHL at moot court competitions held by the National Society, with ICRC support.

Pursuant to its 2014 agreement with ECHO on joint communication, the ICRC: produced a short animated film, on its efforts to tackle sexual violence; and, with the National Society, launched a public-information campaign on the protection afforded by IHL to conflict-affected people.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Coordination with the Red Cross EU Office ensured the coherence of Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy with European institutions, particularly in underscoring the strictly humanitarian nature of the Movement's response to the needs of migrants (see also *Paris*). The Office helped to monitor progress in implementing pledges made by EU Member States and National Societies at the 32nd International Conference.

The Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants and the European Legal Support Group drew on the ICRC's expertise.

The Belgian Red Cross and the ICRC sustained cooperation on promoting humanitarian issues and IHL (see *Actors of influence*).