

AZERBAIJAN



ICRC/AR_2015

+ ICRC Delegation
 + ICRC sub-delegation
 + ICRC mission

The boundaries, names and designations used in this report do not imply official endorsement, nor express a political opinion on the part of the ICRC, and are without prejudice to claims of sovereignty over the territories mentioned.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2015

- ▶ The authorities were reminded of their responsibility to protect civilians, particularly those living near the front lines. At ICRC workshops, army officers learnt about incorporating IHL in their decision-making.
- ▶ Civilians living near the front lines had better access to water and improved their livelihoods through ICRC projects, some of which were implemented with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan.
- ▶ With the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary, a civilian internee and a POW were voluntarily transferred/repatriated across front lines, and 2 soldiers' remains were retrieved by the Azerbaijani authorities.
- ▶ The ICRC's updated regional list of persons missing in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was submitted to the authorities, who were urged to use it as a common reference for following up cases.
- ▶ Collection of DNA samples from the families of the missing was expanded, to aid future identification efforts. The families also obtained psychosocial and other support via ICRC-trained local service providers.
- ▶ Detainees, including POWs held in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, received ICRC visits. An agreement with the Azerbaijani government on access to detainees under their authority was renewed.

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	1,688
Assistance	4,116
Prevention	560
Cooperation with National Societies	333
General	40
Total	6,735
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	411

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	82%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	15
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	75

The ICRC has been working in Azerbaijan 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 Line of Contact and the international border with Armenia. It promotes implementation of IHL and its integration into armed and security forces' training and into academic curricula. The ICRC works in partnership with and aims to help the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan strengthen its capacities.

YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

MEDIUM

PROTECTION	Total
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)	
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	90
RCMs distributed	89
Phone calls facilitated between family members	60
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	7
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	13,723
Detainees visited and monitored individually	204
Number of visits carried out	87
Number of places of detention visited	29
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	177
RCMs distributed	109
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	60

ASSISTANCE	2015 Targets (up to)	Achieved
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)		
Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	20
Productive inputs	Beneficiaries	3,600
Cash	Beneficiaries	2,002
Services and training ¹	Beneficiaries	2,004
Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	5,626
		3,061

1. Owing to operational and management constraints, figures presented in this table and in the narrative part of this report may not reflect the extent of the activities carried out during the reporting period.

CONTEXT

The consequences of the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continued to be felt, particularly along the Line of Contact and the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The situation remained tense; an increase in military activity, and mines/explosive remnants of war (ERW), caused military and civilian casualties. The insecurity limited daily movement, access to essential services and livelihood opportunities for civilians in border areas. Thousands of families remained without answers on the fate of relatives missing in relation to the conflict.

Mediators from the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe regularly visited the region and met with Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders. The presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia also met in December. However, no progress was made towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued working to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It monitored the situation of civilians living near the Line of Contact and the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia, raised concerns with the relevant authorities and reminded them of their obligations under IHL.

The ICRC implemented an integrated approach to helping front-line communities strengthen their resilience and improve their living conditions; some projects were conducted with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan. Five villages had reliable access to water/electricity after key infrastructure was repaired, and a few households were less exposed to crossfire after protective walls were built around their homes. Civilians learnt about the sustainable use of water and related infrastructure during National Society/ICRC information sessions. Economically vulnerable households – including those with family members wounded by crossfire and injured by mines/ERW – boosted their income through micro-economic initiatives that they started with ICRC support. Some villages improved their livelihoods through projects that they helped design, such as seed distributions. To strengthen their emergency preparedness, communities were trained in first aid by the National Society.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, families of mine/ERW victims improved their living conditions after receiving support for micro-economic initiatives and home repairs. Monthly cash allowances enabled vulnerable pensioners to meet their basic needs.

Clarifying the fate of people who went missing in relation to the conflict remained a priority. The ICRC's updated regional list of missing persons was submitted to all of the authorities concerned, who were encouraged to use it as a source of reference for following up cases. In coordination with the Azerbaijani State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons (CEPOD) and the *de facto* commission in Nagorno-Karabakh, the ICRC expanded a DNA sample-collection project – piloted in 2014 – to facilitate future identification of human remains. Buccal swabs were collected from relatives of missing persons, whose informed consent had been obtained and who had access to psychological support throughout the process. Aided by the ICRC's technical expertise, the two commissions continued to compile ante-mortem data on missing persons in their centralized databases.

Families of the missing addressed their needs with the assistance of ICRC-trained service providers. Notably, they received psychological support in groups or individually, and were referred to other actors for, *inter alia*, administrative/legal and medical assistance. The Azerbaijani authorities continued to be encouraged to adopt national measures protecting the rights of missing persons and their families.

The ICRC visited detainees, including those held in relation to the conflict, and monitored their treatment and living conditions to ensure compliance with IHL/internationally recognized standards. Visits to people held under the authority of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Internal Affairs resumed, as an agreement on the ICRC's access to detainees was renewed. Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC facilitated the voluntary transfer/repatriation of one civilian internee and one POW across front lines; it also obtained consent for the retrieval of the remains of two Azerbaijani soldiers from no-man's-land.

Humanitarian issues arising from the conflict remained central to dialogue with all actors. Through ICRC presentations/seminars, officers from the Azerbaijani armed forces and the *de facto* armed forces in Nagorno-Karabakh added to their knowledge of IHL considerations in military decision-making, and front-line troops strengthened their understanding of IHL. Azerbaijani security forces learnt more about international policing standards during ICRC workshops. Briefings for government officials, diplomats and the media helped them learn more about the ICRC and its work, and local/international events encouraged the development of IHL expertise in academic circles. Support related to implementation of the Hague Convention on Cultural Property was not taken up by the Azerbaijani authorities, as another actor offered them assistance in this regard.

With support from Movement partners, the National Society strengthened its emergency-preparedness/response, public-communication, and fundraising capabilities. It also continued to work with the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) to address the impact of mines/ERW. Movement partners coordinated their activities regularly.

CIVILIANS

Parties to the conflict are reminded to take extra precautions

Civilians, including IDPs, along the Line of Contact and the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia continued to be affected by military activity, incidents of cross-border fire and the presence of mines/ERW; these caused insecurity and at times, casualties. Through its presence in border regions and contact with local communities, civilian and military authorities and National Society branches, the ICRC kept abreast of the humanitarian situation, monitored respect for IHL among the parties to the conflict, and noted the issues faced by the population. These concerns were raised with the relevant authorities, including the *de facto* authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh, who were reminded of their obligations under IHL, especially regarding the protection of civilians and the need for extra precautions during the farming season, public holidays and the implementation of ICRC activities for front-line communities.

The remains of two Azerbaijani soldiers were retrieved from no-man's land by the Azerbaijani authorities after the ICRC – acting as a neutral intermediary – helped them obtain consent from the Armenian authorities.

People separated by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict maintained contact with relatives through ICRC-provided family-links services. Members of one family separated by the Line of Contact met each other twice at ICRC-organized meetings in Georgia. Afghan and Chechen refugees were resettled in third countries by other agencies after the ICRC issued 34 sets of travel documents.

Ethnic Armenians living in Azerbaijan received legal assistance to help them clarify their legal status and obtain government benefits.

Civilians living near the front lines have reliable water access and boost their food production

The ICRC continued to address the urgent needs of front-line communities through an integrated approach aimed at strengthening their resilience and improving their living conditions; some projects were carried out with the National Society. Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC also obtained temporary security guarantees from the parties concerned to facilitate activities for civilians.

Over 3,000 people benefited from projects to improve their living conditions. Among them were 1,790 people in five villages, who had more reliable access to water after systems were repaired/reconstructed in cooperation with local authorities; one remote community also had electricity after their power line was fixed. In addition, maintenance personnel were provided with training and tools. Over 1,000 beneficiaries of water-supply systems constructed/repared in 2014 learnt about the sustainable use of water and related infrastructure through National Society/ICRC information sessions. At their request, twenty-nine households (some 150 people) near the Line of Contact had their homes modified and protective walls built, reducing their exposure to crossfire.

Nearly 270 economically vulnerable households (over 1,330 people) in front-line communities – including those with a family member who had recently been wounded by crossfire or injured by mines/ERW – met some of their needs after pursuing livelihood activities with ICRC support. This support included cash grants and training sessions on, *inter alia*, business skills, livestock rearing and beekeeping. Owing to operational constraints, however, residents in two villages did not receive cash grants. In five villages, some 3,200 people improved their livelihoods through community-based projects that they helped design; notably, they increased their food production after seed was distributed and storage sheds were constructed.

Two civilians wounded by crossfire partially covered the expenses of their medical treatment with ad hoc ICRC financial assistance. To prepare them for emergencies, people in three front-line communities were trained in first aid by the National Society, with ICRC support.

Mine/ERW victims augment their income through micro-economic initiatives

Nineteen families – who had lost their breadwinners to mine/ERW incidents some years back – started small businesses after being selected by the National Society to receive ICRC financial assistance.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, over 50 economically vulnerable households (some 265 people) – mainly mine/ERW victims' families – boosted their income through ICRC-supported micro-economic initiatives. With ICRC financial assistance, six mine victims had their houses

repaired and three others partially covered their medical expenses. Efforts to mobilize the *de facto* authorities and relevant agencies to address the needs of mine/ERW victims and other vulnerable people were maintained. Around 300 vulnerable elderly people living alone in Nagorno-Karabakh supplemented their pensions with monthly cash allowances distributed in coordination with the *de facto* authorities; this enabled them to meet their basic needs. Four of them also had their houses repaired.

The ICRC, in some cases with ANAMA/the National Society, continued to collect information on mine/ERW incidents and the needs of the victims and/or their families. The National Society also received technical support for managing such data.

Authorities receive an updated regional list of missing persons

By the end of 2015, nearly 4,500 people remained unaccounted for in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; 3,716 of them were registered as missing by the ICRC delegation in Baku, and 372 by the ICRC mission in Stepanakert/Khankendi.

A regional list of missing persons that was consolidated by the ICRC – the fourth of its kind, and the first since 2004 – was submitted to the Azerbaijani and Armenian governments and the *de facto* authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh. The pertinent authorities were encouraged to use the list as a common source of reference for following up cases. However, progress in clarifying the fate of the missing continued to be hampered by the absence of an agreed-upon mechanism for the relevant parties to share information; the ICRC, as a neutral intermediary, facilitated the exchange of queries about missing persons among the respective CEPODs.

Full roll-out of the DNA-collection project begins

The ICRC also continued, through other initiatives, to facilitate future efforts to identify human remains and provide answers to the families concerned.

The relevant authorities and the ICRC continued to collect DNA samples from missing persons' families. Following last year's pilot phase, the project was fully expanded, and an updated protocol for sample collection signed. Trained ICRC and hospital staff, as well as CEPOD personnel, collected buccal swabs from 1,566 relatives of missing persons, in line with standard operating procedures, which included obtaining the families' informed consent and ensuring confidentiality. Psychological support was made available to the families throughout the process. Samples sent for profiling and quality control to a DNA laboratory abroad returned with a 100% success rate.

In parallel, the ICRC continued to review and hand over ante-mortem data to the Azerbaijani CEPOD and the *de facto* commission in Nagorno-Karabakh; this included questionnaires filled out by the families, together with pertinent documents and photographs. Trained administrators entered the information into centralized ante/post-mortem databases.

Relatives of missing persons receive comprehensive support for their specific needs

Many families continued to struggle with the uncertainty surrounding the fate of missing relatives. They often faced emotional, psychological, medical, economic, legal and administrative difficulties, owing to the lack of official recognition for their status.

Over 490 members of missing persons' families met their multi-faceted needs with the help of ICRC-trained counsellors and local organizations. For instance, some 330 of them spoke about their difficulties and received psychological support during peer-group sessions and individual home visits. A total of 45 people were referred to local authorities for their legal/administrative concerns, and 125 to the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for health services. Twenty people received material assistance according to their specific needs, such as blood pressure monitors.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, 40 people with relatives who were missing received similar support through individual counselling by ICRC-trained psychologists, peer-group discussions, and sessions with specialists on health, legal, social and other issues affecting them. In all, 140 individual visits and 27 group meetings took place. Additionally, 15 people improved their employability after attending a vocational workshop, and one family supplemented its income via an ICRC-supported microeconomic initiative. The social concerns of five people were resolved after ICRC interventions on their behalf to the *de facto* authorities.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Over 13,000 detainees, including 2 POWs held in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, received ICRC visits, conducted in accordance with the organization's standard procedures. Delegates checked whether their treatment and living conditions complied with internationally recognized standards and IHL and, following visits, confidentially shared their findings and recommendations with the authorities concerned. Visits to detainees held under the authority of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Internal Affairs resumed, after the renewal of an agreement with the government on the ICRC's access to detainees.

Detainees contacted their families through RCMs, oral messages relayed by ICRC delegates and, in some cases, phone calls. At the main prison in Nagorno-Karabakh, some detainees with particularly vulnerable families received visits from them; the travel costs were covered by the ICRC.

Vulnerable detainees received clothes and hygiene items to ease their situation; one detainee received orthopaedic assistance. In December, seven cells at the main prison in Nagorno-Karabakh were renovated, with a view to improving the living conditions there.

Acting as a neutral intermediary at the request of all parties concerned, the ICRC facilitated the handover of one POW across the Line of Contact, and the voluntary repatriation of one civilian internee – who had been temporarily detained after crossing the international border into Azerbaijan – to Armenia.

Chinese officials learn from Azerbaijan's TB-control model during a study tour

Representatives from China's justice ministry learnt from the Azerbaijani authorities' continued efforts to address multi-drug-resistant TB in prisons via a study tour. This was organized by the ICRC in coordination with the medical department of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Justice, after the Chinese authorities had expressed interest in the subject.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

The humanitarian consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the ICRC's work for conflict-affected people remained at the centre of dialogue with the authorities, armed forces, the diplomatic corps, international organizations and members of civil society. Regular contact with these actors, supported by newsletters/reports based on ICRC communication materials, kept them and the wider public informed about these topics and contributed to securing acceptance for the ICRC's mandate, access to conflict-affected people, and respect for IHL (see *Civilians and People deprived of their freedom*).

Armed forces personnel learn about IHL considerations in military operations

Through ICRC workshops and participation in an advanced course in San Remo, 30 army officers and a senior commander learnt more about incorporating IHL considerations in military decision-making. The defence ministry's legal department, in collaboration with the ICRC, continued to work on incorporating IHL in military curricula. During workshops, police/security forces learnt more about international policing standards, IHL and the ICRC's work for detainees.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, over 400 military personnel stationed along the Line of Contact strengthened their understanding of the basic provisions of IHL and their application in armed conflict, as well as the ICRC's mandate, during information sessions organized in coordination with the *de facto* armed forces. During an ICRC

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict	not related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
ICRC visits		
Detainees visited	4	13,719
	<i>of whom women</i>	633
	<i>of whom minors</i>	53
Detainees visited and monitored individually	4	200
	<i>of whom women</i>	5
Detainees newly registered	2	71
	<i>of whom women</i>	2
Number of visits carried out	31	56
Number of places of detention visited	8	21
Restoring family links		
RCMs collected	102	75
RCMs distributed	96	13
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	6	54
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		7
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC	2	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		1

workshop, 22 officers learnt about IHL in relation to military decision-making. Articles published in the *de facto* armed forces' newspaper made soldiers more aware of IHL.

Minimal progress is made in IHL implementation

While mobilizing the authorities to advance efforts to clarify the fate of missing persons and meet the needs of their families (see *Civilians*), the ICRC updated a study on the compatibility of Azerbaijani legislation with a draft law on the status of missing persons and the rights of their families, and shared it with the relevant authorities. Government officials discussed legal frameworks for missing persons and recent developments in IHL implementation at a regional seminar (see *Moscow*). Support related to implementation of the Hague Convention on Cultural Property was not taken up by the authorities, as another actor offered assistance in this regard.

Community leaders are brought up to date on IHL and pertinent humanitarian issues

Local authorities from 13 front-line communities were brought up to date on ICRC activities at two round-table meetings. Staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and members of the diplomatic corps and the media, learnt more about IHL and the ICRC's mandate and activities at ICRC briefings. At an ICRC workshop, journalists in Nagorno-Karabakh furthered their understanding of the organization's activities and of IHL, in particular, the need to protect the privacy of POWs and civilian internees. The general public learnt more about the ICRC and its work through interviews and articles disseminated/produced by the local media.

Academics expand their practical knowledge of IHL

Students at Azerbaijani universities added to their knowledge of IHL during ICRC guest lectures and a summer course on the subject, which also enabled local IHL professionals to meet international experts and expand their academic network. Two professors developed their expertise at an international conference on the development of IHL (see *Moscow*). Students from Nagorno-Karabakh participated in a summer course, a moot court competition and an international IHL conference (see *Armenia*).

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Azerbaijani Red Crescent, in partnership with the ICRC, assisted conflict-affected communities. It also worked with the ANAMA to collect data on mine/ERW incidents and assess the needs of mine/ERW victims and their families (see *Civilians*).

With ICRC support, the National Society continued to strengthen its ability to prepare for/respond to emergencies – particularly by providing first aid and family-links services – and to promote the Movement's work and the Fundamental Principles. Training for personnel from front-line branches tackled, *inter alia*, needs assessment and public communication; a workshop supported by ANAMA, the Azerbaijan Campaign to Ban Landmines and the ICRC covered mines/ERW and their consequences. Following on from an assessment conducted in 2014 with the Austrian Red Cross and the ICRC, the National Society began to implement a two-year plan to develop its first-aid services; notably, it organized first-aid courses in conflict-affected villages (see *Civilians*). Funds could not be transferred to the National Society because of amendments to local laws, but its fundraising efforts continued to be supported.

Movement partners met regularly to coordinate their activities.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
Red Cross messages (RCMs)			UAMs/SC*		
RCMs collected		90			
RCMs distributed		89			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		60			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		10	1	1	
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		7			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		4,096	331	19	47
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		3			
Documents					
People to whom travel documents were issued		34			
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		1			
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)					
ICRC visits			Women	Minors	
Detainees visited		13,723	633	53	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		204	5		
Detainees newly registered		73	2		
Number of visits carried out		87			
Number of places of detention visited		29			
Restoring family links					
RCMs collected		177			
RCMs distributed		109			
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		60			
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		7			
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC		2			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued ¹		4			

*Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Owing to operational and management constraints, figures presented in this table and in the narrative part of this report may not reflect the extent of the activities carried out during the reporting period.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	20	16%	1%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	6		
Productive inputs	Beneficiaries	3,208	40%	20%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	153		
Cash	Beneficiaries	2,004	59%	13%
Services and training ¹	Beneficiaries			
Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)				
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	3,061	40%	27%
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection programme)				
Essential household items ¹	Beneficiaries	55		
Health				
Number of visits carried out by health staff		15		
Number of places of detention visited by health staff		7		
Number of health facilities supported in places of detention visited by health staff		1		

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