

ARMENIA



ICRC/AR, 2015

+ ICRC delegation
+ ICRC sub-delegation
+ ICRC mission

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KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2015

- ▶ The authorities were reminded of their responsibility to protect civilians, particularly those living along the international border with Azerbaijan. Army commanders/troops learnt about IHL at ICRC workshops.
- ▶ Civilians living along the international border with Azerbaijan had better access to water, reinforced their self-protection mechanisms, and coped with conflict-related losses via ICRC-supported projects/grants.
- ▶ With the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary, a civilian internee was voluntarily repatriated from Azerbaijan, 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 received psychosocial/other support via local partners, including the National Society.
- ▶ People in front-line communities learnt how to mitigate the risks they faced from mines and crossfire, via ICRC-supported information sessions implemented with the National Society and another organization.

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF	
Protection	312
Assistance	1,297
Prevention	392
Cooperation with National Societies	213
General	27
Total	2,242
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	137

IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	85%

PERSONNEL	
Mobile staff	3
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	32

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 help the Armenian Red Cross Society 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	8
RCMs distributed	4
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	1,046
Detainees visited and monitored individually	4
Number of visits carried out	1
Number of places of detention visited	1
Restoring family links	
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	1

ASSISTANCE	2015 Targets (up to)	Achieved
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)		
Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Cash	Beneficiaries	4,160
		303
Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Water and habitat activities ¹	Beneficiaries	80
		4,780

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 international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Line of Contact. 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. Hundreds of families in Armenia 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 Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders. The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan 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 on both sides of the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, raised concerns with the relevant authorities and reminded them of their obligations under IHL.

The ICRC implemented an integrated approach to helping border communities improve their living conditions and strengthen their resilience. At the request of local leaders, basements and other areas were renovated and rooms built, providing people – especially schoolchildren – with places to seek refuge in during emergencies; others walled up their windows with ICRC-provided materials, giving them some protection against cross-border fire. Some villages had better access to drinking water after infrastructure was constructed/improved. Following surges in military activity, a few of the households affected received ad hoc financial assistance for unexpected/urgent expenses. During ICRC-supported information sessions conducted by the Armenian Red Cross Society and the Armenian Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE), people learnt how to mitigate the risks they faced from cross-border fire and mines/ERW. To strengthen their emergency preparedness, they were also trained in first aid. The National Society/ICRC concluded their efforts to collect data on mine/ERW incidents and on the needs of victims and their families. Preparations to hand over the data to the CHDE began, with a view to supporting its development of a national strategy to address mines/ERW and their consequences.

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 Armenian State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons (CEPOD), and in cooperation with the National Society, the ICRC expanded a DNA sample-collection project – piloted in 2014 – to facilitate future identification of human remains. Trained National Society/ICRC teams collected buccal swabs from relatives of missing persons, whose informed consent had been obtained and who had access to psychological support throughout the process. The CEPOD continued, with ICRC technical support and training, to compile ante-mortem information on missing persons in a centralized database and began to systematically collect information on possible gravesites.

Families of the missing addressed some of their needs with help from the National Society, local service providers and the ICRC. The families received individual visits, were referred to specialized services, and attended group information sessions and community events. Economically vulnerable families also improved their living conditions after receiving support for repairing their homes, and strengthened their ability to earn an income through cash grants and vocational training. Preparations for the erection of a monument in recognition of missing persons began. The authorities decided not to pursue the adoption of an ICRC-promoted model law aimed at enhancing the rights of missing persons' families, as related legislation existed.

Detainees were visited to monitor their treatment and living conditions; security detainees were followed up individually. Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC facilitated the voluntary repatriation of one civilian who had been temporarily detained in Azerbaijan after crossing the international border; 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. IHL promotion among the military continued, notably, through dissemination sessions for units deployed along the international border with Azerbaijan and workshops abroad for senior commanders. Using ICRC communication materials, the media broadened public awareness of the plight of conflict-affected people and the ICRC's humanitarian activities. Academics furthered their understanding of IHL at events organized with the National Society and other local partners. Dialogue on the establishment of a national IHL committee remained pending.

The National Society strengthened its emergency response and communication capabilities with financial and technical support from the ICRC.

CIVILIANS

Parties to the conflict are reminded to take extra precautions

Civilians along the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan 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, 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 border 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.

Civilians obtain access to places to seek refuge in during emergencies

The ICRC continued to address the humanitarian needs of border communities through an integrated approach aimed at strengthening their resilience and improving their living conditions. Acting as a neutral intermediary, it also obtained temporary security guarantees from the parties concerned to facilitate activities for civilians.

At the request of local leaders, support was provided for infrastructure projects to help mitigate the risk to civilians from cross-border fire. In 11 front-line communities, some 1,550 people had places to seek refuge in during emergencies after basements and other areas were renovated, and/or rooms constructed for this purpose. These rooms, which were mainly in schools/kindergartens and cultural centres, were also supplied with first-aid kits, water and other essentials. In two communities, 33 households (132 people) used ICRC-provided materials to wall up windows and other openings in their homes that faced military positions, giving them some added protection against bullets.

In five villages, around 4,780 people had better access to water after infrastructure was constructed/repared, based on their specific requests. For instance, some residents had a regular supply of good-quality drinking water after existing pipelines were extended.

Following surges in military activity that affected front-line communities, fourteen vulnerable households (some 50 people) received ad hoc ICRC financial assistance for repairing their homes, buying medicines and covering other unexpected/urgent expenses before winter.

Civilians learn about first aid and ways to reduce their risks from mines/ERW and cross-border fire

During information sessions conducted by the National Society and the CHDE, with ICRC support, over 3,300 residents in 17 front-line communities learnt how to mitigate the risks they faced from mines/ERW and cross-border fire. With a view to reaching more people, around 6,500 leaflets on these subjects were distributed. To strengthen their emergency preparedness, 76 people from 13 communities were trained in first aid through ICRC-backed courses organized by the National Society.

The National Society/ICRC's efforts to collect data on mine/ERW incidents and on the needs of victims and their families concluded, as information on the last 570 cases was entered into the Information Management System for Mine Action database, which was managed by an ICRC-trained National Society representative. Preparations to hand over the data to the CHDE began, with a view to supporting its development of a national strategy to address mines/ERW and their consequences. The CHDE also received other forms of assistance from the ICRC in this regard. A CHDE representative learnt more about addressing weapon contamination at a regional workshop abroad, which was organized by the Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre (see *Tashkent*). The CHDE's Victim Assistance department also received technical advice.

A few vulnerable mine/ERW victims received ICRC assistance (see below).

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; 405 of them were registered as missing by the ICRC delegation in Yerevan.

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 Armenian and Azerbaijani 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 Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Health's forensics centre 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 National Society and ICRC staff collected buccal swabs from 196 relatives of missing persons, in line with standard operating procedures, which included obtaining the families' informed consent and ensuring respect for 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. Over 100 samples were placed in long-term storage to facilitate future identification of exhumed remains.

In parallel, the ICRC, in cooperation with the National Society, continued to review and hand over ante-mortem data to the Armenian CEPOD; this included questionnaires answered by the families, together with pertinent documents and photographs. The database manager, with ICRC support, continued to enter these into the CEPOD's centralized database.

Following a three-day training session conducted by the ICRC, the Armenian CEPOD began to systematically collect information on possible gravesites by launching a mapping project in the Syunik region. It also expanded its forensic capabilities with technical equipment and advice from the ICRC. In preparation for future exhumations, a draft agreement on recovering, managing and analysing human remains was submitted to the CEPOD by the ICRC.

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.

Fifty-three people were referred to other organizations for legal, medical and/or psychosocial support and for assistance in obtaining government benefits by the ICRC, with the help of ICRC-trained National Society staff and other local partners; some families received follow-up home visits. During more than 40 information sessions throughout Armenia – which were attended by local NGOs, specialists and the authorities – relatives of the missing discussed their various needs and learnt of services that could help them. Skill-building workshops, such as a basic computer course, aimed to help 41 of them cope with their situation. Community members and local authorities encouraged

community/peer support for the families of missing persons, and raised awareness of the issues they faced, through commemorative and recreational events. In Yerevan, preparations began for the construction of a monument to commemorate missing persons in Armenia and acknowledge the plight of their families.

A total of 68 vulnerable households (more than 250 people) with relatives that were missing or victims of mines/ERW started small businesses using cash grants and interest-free loans, or covered their most pressing needs through unconditional cash assistance. Twenty-five vulnerable families (100 people) had their homes repaired through a programme run by the Fuller Center for Housing in Armenia and the ICRC.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

The ICRC visited people held in the largest detention facility in Armenia, in accordance with its standard procedures. Security detainees received particular attention; subsequently, findings and recommendations were confidentially shared with the pertinent authorities.

With the consent of all parties concerned, one civilian internee – who had been temporarily detained after crossing the international border into Azerbaijan – was voluntarily repatriated to Armenia under the auspices of the ICRC, which acted as a neutral intermediary at the parties' request (see *Azerbaijan*).

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.

Army officers strengthen their understanding of IHL considerations in military decision-making

Dialogue with military authorities focused on their responsibilities under IHL, particularly the need to protect civilians, and the ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary (see *Civilians* and *People deprived of their freedom*).

Army personnel, mainly those serving along the international border with Azerbaijan, learnt more about IHL and the ICRC's work – notably, the goals of the Health Care in Danger project – during National Society/ICRC-facilitated dissemination sessions. Over 60 peacekeeping troops familiarized themselves with IHL and the ICRC's mandate at predeployment briefings. Participants in a military exercise for members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization – which the authorities hosted and the ICRC attended as an observer – also furthered their understanding of these topics during ICRC presentations.

A total of 12 officers and 1 senior commander learnt more about incorporating IHL considerations in military decision-making through a course organized by the Ministry of Defence/ICRC and a workshop in Algeria (see *International law and policy*), respectively. Military legal advisers also discussed the incorporation of IHL in the armed forces' doctrine, training and sanctions system at a regional meeting (see *Moscow*). Nine instructors from a military institute strengthened their ability to teach IHL during a train-the-trainer workshop; an ICRC manual on the proper use of force was translated into Armenian and distributed during ICRC workshops.

Officials discuss IHL implementation at a regional seminar

Government representatives discussed legal frameworks for missing persons and recent developments in IHL implementation at a regional seminar (see *Moscow*). At an ICRC-organized conference, authorities and academics from the region discussed the possible ratification/implementation of the Rome Statute. Dialogue on the establishment of a national IHL committee remained pending.

The authorities decided that the rights of missing persons' families could be enhanced through amendments to existing legislation, rather than by adopting a new law; ICRC recommendations in this regard were developed.

Law students add to their knowledge of IHL

With local partners, the International and Comparative Law Center (ICLaw) and the ICRC pursued joint initiatives to promote the study/development of IHL.

Students/teachers enriched their understanding of IHL through lectures and other events, including a summer course organized by the ICRC with the American University of Armenia and ICLaw, and a moot court competition organized by the National Society with ICLaw/ICRC support. Researchers from various countries discussed contemporary IHL issues at an annual youth conference in Yerevan, hosted jointly by the Russian-Armenian Slavonic University and the ICRC.

The media raise awareness of humanitarian issues

The media played a key role in keeping humanitarian issues visible and informing parties concerned and the wider public of the ICRC's multidisciplinary activities for conflict-affected people. Drawing on ICRC briefings/press materials, journalists reported on missing persons, front-line communities and POWs/civilian internees; for example, in a media workshop organized with the Media Initiatives Center, participants produced reports on the humanitarian situation of missing persons' families and mine victims. Following an ICRC-organized trip, local media raised awareness of the ICRC's activities for border communities through reports and an interview (see *Civilians*).

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Armenian Red Cross, with ICRC financial/material/technical support, strengthened its capacity to respond to the needs of missing persons' families and mine/ERW victims, and began to work on incorporating elements of the Safer Access Framework in its operations. It expanded its first-aid capacities through basic courses for volunteers and regional/national first-aid competitions. Its focal point for tracing learnt more about providing family-links services during disasters through a visit to the Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan. The Armenian Red Cross also promoted its tracing services and discussed other issues of interest at a round-table meeting with the authorities and other organizations.

In line with its 2013-2020 communication strategy, the National Society implemented projects in three regions, to promote its humanitarian role and activities. It continued to organize the national moot court competition, and conducted IHL dissemination sessions with the ICRC (see *Actors of Influence*).

Movement partners coordinated their activities and discussed common concerns during meetings.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
Red Cross messages (RCMs)			UAMs/SC*		
RCMs collected		8			
RCMs distributed		4			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		6	3		
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		1			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		410	25		6
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		1			
Documents					
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		1,046			
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		4			
Number of visits carried out		1			
Number of places of detention visited		1			
Restoring family links					
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		1			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued ¹		3			

*Unaccompanied minors/separated children

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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)				
Cash	Beneficiaries	303	43%	27%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i> Beneficiaries	23		
Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)				
Water and habitat activities ¹	Beneficiaries	4,780	40%	20%
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
Health				
Number of visits carried out by health staff		1		
Number of places of detention visited by health staff		1		

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