



# algeria

The ICRC has been working in Algeria, with some interruptions, since the 1954–1962 Algerian war of independence. It carries out visits to people held in places of detention run by the Ministry of Justice and to people remanded in custody in police stations and *gendarmeries*. The ICRC also works to promote IHL among Algerian civil society, the authorities and the armed forces. The ICRC supports the Algerian Red Crescent's reform process, which resumed in 2007.

## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	918
Assistance	52
Prevention	546
Cooperation with National Societies	227
General	-

► **1,744**

of which: Overheads 106

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	84%
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## PERSONNEL

6	expatriates
9	national staff (daily workers not included)

## KEY POINTS

### In 2009, the ICRC:

- ▶ following visits to people held in places of detention, shared with the detaining authorities its findings and recommendations on detainees' treatment and living conditions
- ▶ presented its mandate and activities in Algeria and worldwide to military and civilian doctors, including health professionals working in prisons, and to Algerian media representatives
- ▶ co-organized with the Ministry of Defence a training seminar for military instructors, with a particular focus on the integration of IHL into theoretical and practical military training
- ▶ co-organized with the Ministry of Religious Affairs a second seminar for influential religious leaders on the main principles common to IHL and Islamic law
- ▶ presented IHL and the Movement at events organized by various universities and by Algerian radio to mark the ICRC's "Our world. Your move." communication campaign
- ▶ together with the National Society, initiated a grassroots process to strengthen the National Society's capacity to restore family links

## CONTEXT

An amendment to the constitution adopted by parliament in November 2008 paved the way for incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to bid for a third term in presidential elections held in April 2009. Mr Bouteflika – running as an independent candidate with the support of three major parties – won the elections and was sworn in for a third five-year term. There were no major changes within the government following the vote.

During the election campaign, Mr Bouteflika promised to continue implementing his plans to boost the economy, focusing on reducing unemployment and improving public infrastructure.

While reasserting its determination to eradicate violent armed groups in the country, the government pursued its efforts to apply a Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation designed to heal the rifts in society caused by the violence of the 1990s. Prior to his re-election, the president proposed a new referendum on whether to pardon armed Islamists if they gave themselves up. Thousands of former fighters had already been amnestied and reintegrated into society as part of the national reconciliation policy.

Although the situation remained relatively calm compared with 2008, localized clashes between Algerian forces and armed groups persisted in 2009. Social unrest linked to decreasing purchasing power caused by rising prices of food and other necessities culminated in strikes and riots in various cities.

Owing to tighter restrictions on entry into Europe, large numbers of irregular migrants continued to arrive in the country, many of whom were either arrested or deported.

## MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

	Total		Total	Women	Children
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>		<b>WOUNDED AND SICK</b>			
Detainees visited	18,610	<i>Physical rehabilitation</i>			
Detainees visited and monitored individually	139	Patients receiving services	41	7	9
	<i>of whom women</i>	Prostheses delivered	18	5	
Number of visits carried out	60	Orthoses delivered	27	2	15
Number of places of detention visited	59				
<b>RESTORING FAMILY LINKS</b>					
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>					
RCMs collected	102				
RCMs distributed	165				

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

ICRC activities in Algeria focused mainly on visits to people deprived of their freedom to assess their treatment and living conditions and on maintaining a confidential dialogue with the Ministry of Justice on detention issues based on delegates' findings and recommendations.

With ongoing ICRC support, the tracing and RCM services of the Algerian Red Crescent continued to provide Algerians with the opportunity to restore or maintain contact with family members detained/interned abroad or living in conflict-affected countries. To strengthen the capacity of the National Society's tracing department, the ICRC and the Algerian Red Crescent carried out a joint assessment of the service. The findings, including recommendations for action, were discussed with the leadership of the National Society, whose president reconfirmed its commitment to developing family-links activities.

Contacts with the recently created national IHL committee were reinforced and support provided to its work. On two occasions, the committee invited the ICRC to present the Movement in general and ICRC activities in Algeria in particular to journalists and civilian and military doctors, respectively.

The Ministry of Defence continued to strengthen the integration of IHL into military training with ICRC support, more particularly by enhancing the training of instructors and starting the revision of IHL teaching manuals.

The Algerian media frequently referred to ICRC activities and IHL in print and on air, on the basis of regular contacts with the delegation and information received. The "Our world. Your move." communication campaign was a useful tool to support the promotion of the Movement and ICRC activities in the country.

Dialogue with the Ministry of Religious Affairs led to the organization of a second seminar attended by imams and female religious leaders to discuss the main principles common to IHL and Islamic law.

The authorities and the ICRC reached an agreement on the cessation of direct ICRC support to the Ben Aknoun Hospital's physical rehabilitation centre in Algiers in June 2009. The centre had received ICRC material, technical and financial support since 2001.

## CIVILIANS

Through the Algerian Red Crescent's tracing and RCM services, families in Algeria located and restored or maintained contact with relatives detained/interned abroad (and visited by ICRC delegates) or living in conflict-affected countries such as Iraq where communications remained difficult. Families exchanged news with relatives held in the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, or detained in Lebanon, by means of phone calls organized by the National Society in coordination with the authorities and the ICRC.

The Algerian Red Crescent, which had stepped up activities to restore family links since August 2008, requested and received ICRC support to reinforce its capacity in this domain. Both of its national tracing coordinators received training. A joint assessment of the national family-links service was conducted. It included a review of all pending tracing cases at the National Society's headquarters and a first joint visit to its Oran branch, followed by visits by the national tracing coordinators to other branches, with ICRC support. The findings were discussed with the National Society's leadership, in particular with its president, who confirmed his organization's commitment to strengthening family-links services and provided the necessary support to enhance their quality.

The ICRC remained at the disposal of the Algerian authorities to help them clarify the fate of people unaccounted for in relation to past violence in the country.

- ▶ 102 RCMs collected from and 165 RCMs distributed to civilians
- ▶ 14 calls facilitated between family members and 55 phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a relative detained abroad

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

At the end of 2009, around 55,000 people were being held in Algeria's 127 prisons, some of which suffered from overcrowding. To alleviate this structural problem, and in addition to the construction of new prisons scheduled to open in 2010 and 2011, the implementation of measures provided for in the 2005 penitentiary code, such as partial or conditional releases, was in progress.

People deprived of their freedom in prisons, police stations and *gendarmeries* continued to receive regular visits from the ICRC, in accordance with its standard working procedures. Visits were followed up by confidential oral and written reports to the authorities including the findings along with recommendations for improvements in detainees' treatment and living conditions when necessary.

Visits to detainees held in places of temporary detention under the authority of the Ministries of the Interior and Defence were stepped up, enabling the ICRC to further develop its dialogue with the Ministry of Justice regarding living conditions and treatment in such establishments. During all visits, particular attention was paid to the treatment and living conditions of detained women, minors and, more recently, foreign nationals, as well as to respect for judicial guarantees.

To facilitate contacts between detainees and their families, the detaining authorities started to install telephones in all prisons, which was a welcome development.

Health professionals working in prisons attended a presentation on the ICRC's mandate and activities in Algeria and worldwide (see *Authorities*).

- 18,610 detainees visited, of whom 139 monitored individually (5 women) and 60 newly registered (4 women), during 60 visits to 59 places of detention

## WOUNDED AND SICK

Until June 2009, disabled people with limited means and not registered under the national social security system were fitted free of charge with artificial limbs and other mobility aids at the Ben Aknoun Hospital's physical rehabilitation centre in Algiers. The centre received ICRC material, technical and financial support under a programme initiated in 2001 in agreement with the Algerian Ministry of Health.

The authorities and the ICRC reached an agreement that the ICRC would cease direct support to the Ben Aknoun centre in June 2009, after providing the hospital one last time with materials and components enabling the centre to give free services until mid-2011. The hospital administration and the Pedagogical Institute for Paramedical Training were informed, however, that the ICRC remained at their disposal should they need its technical expertise. The centre's only prosthetic/orthotic technician left in October and had not been replaced by year-end.

From January to June:

- 41 patients (including 7 women and 9 children) received services at 1 ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centre
- 19 new patients (including 6 women) fitted with prostheses and 18 new patients (including 2 women and 9 children) fitted with orthoses
- 18 prostheses (including 5 for women and 3 for children, 8 for mine victims), 27 orthoses (including 2 for women and 15 for children), 9 crutches and 1 wheelchair delivered

## AUTHORITIES

The Algerian authorities and the ICRC had regular contact to discuss humanitarian issues of mutual concern in the country and elsewhere.

The national IHL committee, established in 2008, worked closely with the ICRC, which helped move forward the process of incorporating the provisions of ratified IHL instruments into national legislation. All committee members deepened their IHL knowledge during a one-day briefing. Five committee members, including officials from the Foreign Affairs and Justice Ministries, attended regional seminars on IHL organized by the League of Arab States and the ICRC (see *Egypt*).

The national IHL committee invited the ICRC to give a presentation at a seminar on IHL organized for military and civilian doctors, including health professionals working in prisons. Participants learnt about the Movement and ICRC activities in Algeria and worldwide, focusing on detention issues and the role of doctors in prisons. The committee also invited the ICRC to address Algerian media representatives on IHL and its provisions regarding the protection of journalists. Parliamentarians attended a one-day IHL briefing.

In November, 250 future magistrates from the Ecole Supérieure de la Magistrature attended a session on ICRC activities and IHL, more particularly on the protection afforded to detainees under IHL.

Algeria reportedly destroyed all its anti-personnel mines by the deadline set within the framework of the Mine Ban Convention, under the supervision of an interministerial committee.

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Pursuant to a formal order by the armed forces command, IHL was integrated into the curriculum of all military training establishments. In 2009, the Ministry of Defence and the ICRC strengthened their cooperation with a view to reinforcing the training of military instructors and their teaching tools.

The Cherchell Military Academy organized a training seminar for 60 military IHL instructors. In addition to IHL training, participants learned about ICRC detention-related activities in general and in Algeria in particular. The Ministry of Defence was provided with various IHL manuals and technical documents on topics such as the rules governing the conduct of hostilities and the use of weapons to facilitate the revision of IHL teaching manuals.

Cadets at the academy learnt about the activities of the ICRC and the Movement during an ICRC presentation.

Dialogue with the national *gendarmérie* continued with a view to organizing IHL dissemination sessions and briefings on ICRC activities for officers.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Networking within key civil society sectors continued in order to promote the ICRC and its activities and services in the country and elsewhere and to gain support for its action. The wide distribution of the ICRC's Arabic-language quarterly *Al-Insani* proved supportive in this process.

The Algerian media frequently referred to ICRC activities and IHL in print and on air. In particular, *El Djazair News* regularly published ICRC press releases in its "humanitarian section" as part of a project to increase local knowledge of ICRC activities in Algeria and worldwide. As part of the "Our world. Your move." communication campaign, the Channel 3 radio station twice invited the ICRC to present the history of the Movement and ICRC activities in Algeria. A forum organized by *El Moudjahid* enabled key media representatives and the ICRC to discuss IHL issues.

The inclusion of IHL in Algerian law curricula continued to progress. By year-end, 14 faculties had incorporated IHL into their curricula and were provided with specialized IHL training and educational materials. Universities regularly invited the ICRC to give briefings on its activities and IHL-related issues, such as that given at the University of Batna during a seminar on "60 years of the Geneva Conventions and their integration into national law".

Contacts with influential religious leaders and institutions were further strengthened. In February, 73 imams and 23 female religious leaders participated in a second seminar on IHL and Islamic law, organized jointly with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As in 2008, the seminar provided an opportunity for participants to explore and discuss similarities and differences between the two bodies of law. Members of Islamic law faculties also attended a seminar on similar issues organized by Al-Qarawiyyin University in Morocco (see *Tunis*). The ICRC was invited to speak about its neutral and independent humanitarian action at an event marking the 100th anniversary of the Tariqa Alawiya, a Muslim Sufi religious order.

## RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Algerian Red Crescent remained in a transition phase involving major management and structural changes. In coordination with the International Federation, the ICRC stood ready to support the National Society's efforts to regularize its governance and operational structures in line with the Movement's Fundamental Principles and the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures.

The National Society received ICRC support to reinforce its capacity to restore family links (see *Civilians*).