

EGYPT



ICRC delegation

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	272
Assistance	-
Prevention	747
Cooperation with National Societies	185
General	-

► **1,204**

of which: Overheads 74

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	100%
---------------------------	------

PERSONNEL

Expatriates	4
National staff (daily workers not included)	35

KEY POINTS

In 2010, the ICRC:

- helped the Egyptian Red Crescent Society expand its logistical capacity in the northern Sinai to improve the channel of vital relief aid to the Gaza Strip and cope with any emergencies at the Egypt-Gaza border
- engaged the authorities in confidential discussions aimed at alleviating the plight of would-be irregular African migrants to Israel
- together with the League of Arab States, actively promoted the integration of IHL into national legislation, university and school curricula, and the training of national armed forces in Egypt and throughout the Arab world
- co-organized with the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union and the Egyptian parliament the 2nd meeting on IHL for parliamentarians from 11 Arab countries, who agreed a plan of action to adopt and implement IHL treaties
- restored and maintained contact between family members separated by armed conflict, detention, displacement or natural disaster
- pursued discussions with the Egyptian authorities on ICRC access to security detainees in the country

The ICRC has been in Egypt, with some interruptions, since the beginning of the Second World War. It promotes the incorporation of IHL into domestic legislation, military training and academic curricula in Egypt. Its Cairo-based regional legal advisory, communication and documentation centre works in close cooperation with the League of Arab States and other ICRC delegations to do the same throughout the Arab world. The ICRC supports the work of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. It also seeks to visit people deprived of their freedom in Egypt.

CONTEXT

The ruling National Democratic Party won a large majority in parliamentary elections held in June and November. Many, including observers and human rights organizations, alleged that the elections were marred by fraud.

In May, parliament extended the state of emergency, in place for three decades, by a further two years, despite strong criticism from opposition circles. The government limited application of the emergency law to cases of “terrorism” and drug-related crimes. Twenty-six Islamist militants of different nationalities were sentenced to heavy prison terms on charges of plotting to attack tourist and commercial sites.

Egypt contested an agreement signed by several other Nile River basin countries giving them a greater share of the Nile water flow, and sought to ensure respect for a 1959 accord granting it a majority share of the water.

Egypt continued to attract large numbers of people fleeing armed conflict, other situations of violence and economic hardship, mainly from the Horn of Africa. Thousands sought irregular entry into Israel, some of whom were killed by Egyptian border guards and others detained and deported. Many were reportedly held and abused by criminal gangs in the Sinai.

The Egyptian-brokered agreement between Fatah and Hamas was put on hold owing to persistent disagreement between the parties. In September, Egypt hosted the second round of direct Israeli-Palestinian talks, which ultimately collapsed over the Israeli settlement issue. Meanwhile, the Rafah border with the Gaza Strip was opened on a more regular basis to allow the passage of Palestinians to and from Egypt. Construction of a steel wall continued on the Egyptian side of the border, intended to stop the smuggling of goods and people through underground tunnels.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PROTECTION

CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)			
Red Cross messages	Total	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected	42		
RCMs distributed	80		
Phone calls facilitated between family members	65		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons	Total	Women	Minors
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	39	14	8
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	19		
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	2		
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2010 (people)	44	14	13
Documents			
People to whom travel documents were issued	1,173		
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines	3		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

Egypt continued to be a base of ICRC activities to support the promotion of neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action and the national implementation of IHL in the 22 member countries of the League of Arab States (Arab League).

Government officials, parliamentarians, judges, academics, military staff and diplomats of Arab League member States attended regional seminars to promote the integration of IHL into national legislation, university and school curricula, and armed forces' training programmes. In support of these activities, governments and national implementation bodies, as well as key civil society audiences, such as the national and international media, human rights NGOs and faith-based Arab humanitarian organizations, received relevant information from the ICRC's regional documentation and promotion centre in Cairo, which continued to produce written and audiovisual materials on IHL. The ICRC's

Cairo-based Arabic-language website remained a key reference on IHL-related issues. IHL courses for senior editorial staff from major Egyptian and international media outlets, including pan-Arab satellite broadcasters, resulted in more accurate and extensive coverage of IHL-related issues.

Together with the Inter-parliamentary Union and the Egyptian parliament, the ICRC organized the 2nd meeting on IHL for Arab parliamentarians, held in Cairo, during which 37 representatives of 11 Arab States agreed a plan of action to adopt and implement IHL treaties. Egypt's national IHL committee, with ICRC input, submitted to the Foreign Affairs Ministry a proposal on accession to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and made further progress with the Egyptian parliament on the adoption of laws on the protection of the emblem and the prosecution of war crimes.

Asylum seekers and refugees, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, continued to rely on ICRC family-links services to

exchange news with relatives in their home countries. Families living in Egypt used the same services to contact relatives either detained/interned abroad or present in countries where communications had been disrupted by armed conflict, other situations of violence or natural disaster. Refugees without valid identity papers resettled in third countries using travel documents issued by the ICRC in coordination with the embassies and organizations concerned.

The ICRC pursued discussions with high-level officials regarding authorization to visit people detained on charges of endangering State security or in connection with the fight against “terrorism”, as yet to no avail. It also raised other issues of humanitarian concern with the relevant authorities, including the plight of irregular migrants trying to enter Israel via Egyptian territory.

A first-ever formal cooperation agreement was concluded between the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and the ICRC. A project to expand the National Society’s logistical capacity in northern Sinai was initiated to better enable it to manage the flow of relief aid to Gaza and cope with any emergencies at the Egypt-Gaza border.

CIVILIANS

Asylum seekers and refugees, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, continued to rely on the ICRC family-links service to exchange news with relatives in their home countries. Families living in Egypt used the same service to trace and re-establish contact with relatives either detained/interned abroad or present in countries where communications had been disrupted by armed conflict, other situations of violence or natural disaster. In addition to the exchange of news via RCMs, dispersed family members also had direct contacts through phone calls facilitated by the ICRC. The remains of one Egyptian national who had died abroad were repatriated under ICRC auspices.

Family-links activities were carried out in close coordination with the IOM, UNHCR, NGOs and the Egyptian Red Crescent, as well as with community-based associations of refugees and migrants from Africa and Iraq. Information sessions held within these circles raised awareness of the Movement family-links network, thereby encouraging its use when required.

Families of people detained/interned make use of the family-links service

Families of Egyptian nationals detained/interned abroad were visited by ICRC staff to deliver RCMs from and collect RCMs for their relatives. Phone calls, including video calls, allowed them to have direct contact with relatives held in the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba.

After receiving certificates confirming the detention of their relatives, families were able to claim social welfare allowances and enrol their children in school. The situation of former detainees/internees released and transferred back to Egypt, including two Egyptian nationals repatriated under ICRC auspices after

their release from detention in Iraq, was assessed with a view to helping the most indigent among them. One Egyptian national formerly held in the Guantanamo Bay internment facility received assistance to help him start a small income-generating project, and another former Guantanamo internee received medical care.

Refugees assisted in resettling in third countries

Large numbers of people fleeing their home countries for political or economic reasons continued to arrive in Egypt. The majority came from Sudan but some from other countries in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and West Africa and from Iraq. Only a limited number were granted refugee status and accepted for resettlement in third countries.

Unaccompanied minors required particular attention. Coordination between organizations dealing with minors ensured maximum impact and the identification of unmet needs. Thus, when family reunifications were in their best interests, some minors joined their relatives abroad, having been provided with ICRC travel documents. Others, notably those without papers who had lost all support upon reaching majority and others awaiting family reunification, received psychological and vocational counselling provided by an NGO, with ICRC support.

Refugees without valid identity papers were able to resettle in third countries with travel documents issued by the ICRC in coordination with the embassies and organizations concerned.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Based on its right of initiative conferred by the Movement’s Statutes, the ICRC continued to engage in discussions with high-level officials regarding authorization to visit people held on charges of endangering State security or in connection with the fight against “terrorism”, as yet to no avail.

The Interior and Foreign Ministries and the ICRC held confidential discussions on the plight of would-be migrants to Israel either arrested by the Egyptian authorities prior to being deported or allegedly held and abused by people-trafficking gangs in the Sinai Peninsula. An ICRC report on this issue was submitted to the ministries in December with a view to developing discussions and cooperation with them regarding the welfare of these people.

AUTHORITIES

The 22 member States of the Arab League were encouraged to promote and implement IHL, including through joint Arab League/ICRC regional seminars for government officials, in particular members of national implementation bodies, to refine mechanisms for the incorporation of IHL into national legislation and into the curricula of training institutes for future judges and diplomats (see *Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon*). To follow up a plan of action adopted by Arab government experts in 2009, feedback on an Arabic version of a draft model law on the Rome Statute

was submitted to the Arab League for circulation amongst its member States. In parallel, 37 parliamentarians representing 11 Arab countries agreed a plan of action to adopt and implement IHL treaties at the 2nd meeting of Arab parliamentarians on IHL held in Cairo and co-organized by the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union, the Egyptian parliament and the ICRC. Furthermore, 34 officials from 16 Arab States acquired the necessary skills to teach the subject to their peers during regional courses organized by the ICRC in Beirut, Lebanon, and in Cairo.

Governments in the region benefited from additional material in Arabic prepared together with the Arab League to help establish national IHL committees, organize their work or assist in any related issues. This included an updated edition of the handbook of IHL treaties, a book on the role of the ICRC in developing IHL, and a guide on national implementation of IHL.

In Egypt, in part as a result of meetings with the ICRC, the national IHL committee submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding Egypt's accession to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Three seminars on IHL implementation organized with the parliament facilitated progress in drafting legislation on the protection of the emblem and the prosecution of war crimes. There was no opportunity to initiate a planned study on the compatibility of national legislation with IHL.

Scores of Egyptian civilian and military judges and public prosecutors raised their awareness of IHL and the ICRC by participating in IHL courses and essay competitions.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The Arab League Military Affairs Department, together with the ICRC, continued to promote the integration of IHL into armed forces' doctrine and training in Egypt and throughout the Arab world. In this framework, 40 high-ranking officers from the military training and legal departments of 14 States attended a four-day IHL course co-organized by the Arab League and the ICRC in Cairo.

In Egypt, military forces participating in UN peacekeeping missions, as well as officers and judges at various military academies, attended tailored IHL training sessions. Police officers studying in academic institutes or based in the Sinai and 40 officials from six Arab States studying in the National Center for Social and Criminological Research heard presentations on IHL/international human rights law.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Pan-Arab media gave extensive coverage to IHL-related issues and ICRC operations, relaying key humanitarian messages to their audiences in the region and worldwide. In so doing, they drew on background materials in Arabic on IHL and the ICRC, including the ICRC's Cairo-based Arabic-language website and

quarterly *Al-Insani* magazine. Regional and national workshops, the latter organized by the national IHL committee, on IHL and the Movement for some 200 media professionals also contributed to more accurate reporting on these subjects. Egyptian TV channels marked International Women's Day by airing an ICRC spot on the plight of women in war zones.

The formal handover of the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme to the Egyptian Ministry of Education was due to take place at the beginning of 2011. In addition to courses organized with the Arab League (see *Authorities*), PhD students from various Arab States and other students in Egypt deepened their IHL knowledge through documentation provided by the ICRC and presentations on IHL given in collaboration with UNHCR. In order to further optimize ICRC support in this domain, a survey was conducted on the status of IHL teaching in the Arab world.

At the invitation of two NGOs in Cairo, 44 human rights activists from Egypt and the occupied Palestinian territory attended briefings on IHL and the ICRC.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Egyptian Red Crescent and the ICRC concluded their first-ever formal cooperation agreement, covering 2010–12 in the fields of best management practices, IHL promotion, communication, family links, and emergency preparedness and response.

The National Society again channelled large quantities of international and its own relief aid to the Gaza Strip. To help handle the workload and better cope with any emergencies at the Egypt-Gaza border, it launched a project in Al-Arish to expand its logistics capacity by building a warehouse and training its staff and volunteers, with ICRC technical and financial support.

Similarly, the National Society boosted its emergency preparedness and response capacities through the renovation and equipment of its first-aid branch training centre in Cairo, while some 60 volunteers and young people learnt about the Movement and IHL during 3 three-day courses.