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Yasser Darwish

When violence breaks out in the autonomous territories, the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" is on the alert, ready to evacuate the wounded and give them first aid before driving the seriously wounded to hospital. The ICRC supports the efforts both of the Israeli "Magen David Adom" and of the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" to assist victims of the violence.

The Near East

ICRC delegations:

Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria

The Gulf

ICRC delegation:

Iraq

ICRC regional delegation:

Kuwait

North Africa

ICRC delegation:

Egypt

ICRC regional delegation:

Tunis

Staff

ICRC expatriates¹: 67

National Societies¹: 2

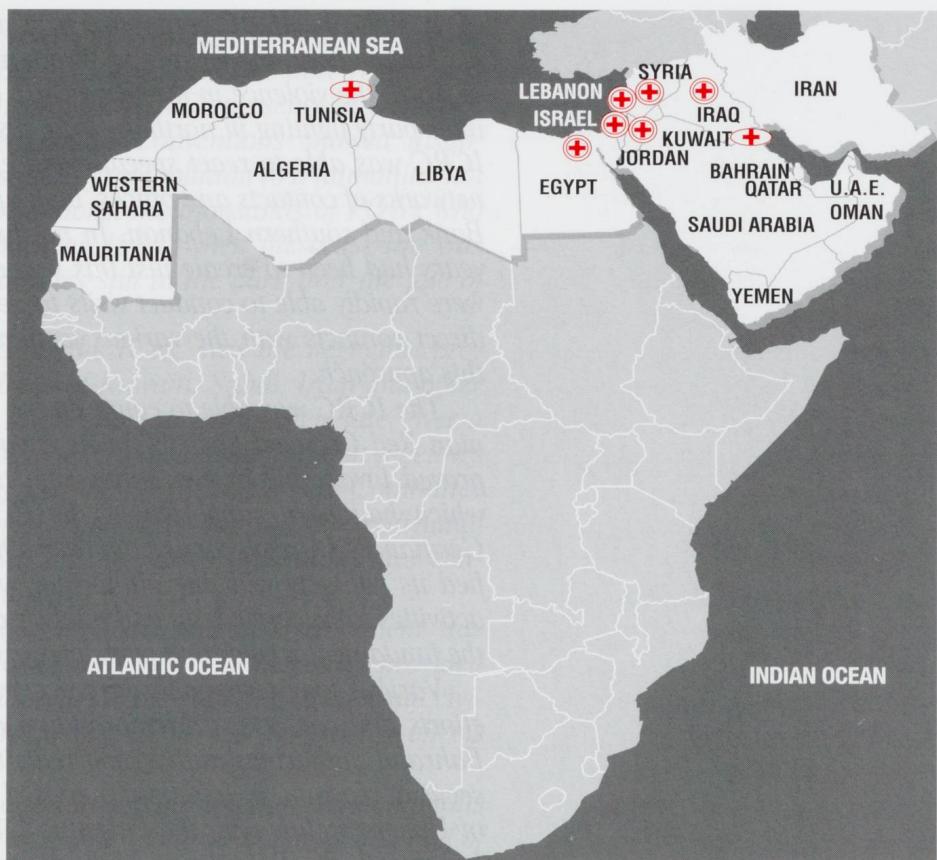
Local employees²: 356

Total expenditure

Sfr 34,108,878

Expenditure breakdown

	Sfr
Protection/tracing:	15,590,031
Relief:	883,586
Health activities:	8,614,466
Cooperation with National Societies:	2,760,319
Dissemination/promotion:	1,613,492
Operational support:	2,601,763
Overheads:	2,045,221



ICRC / AR 12.96

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1996.

In 1996 the ICRC responded to a number of emergency situations in the Middle East: the *Grapes of Wrath* military operation in southern Lebanon in April; the violence in the Gaza Strip and West Bank in September; and the inter-party fighting in northern Iraq, also in September. In all these cases, the ICRC was able to react speedily and effectively thanks to its well-established networks of contacts and offices, built up over 30 years in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and southern Lebanon. In northern Iraq a goal over the last couple of years had been to create just this sort of network, and the fact that delegates were rapidly able to conduct visits to persons held by the parties, by means of direct contacts with the various factions involved, was a clear vindication of this approach.

The ICRC was able to count on the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" in its emergency response. The LRC first-aiders proved invaluable in evacuating and treating the wounded, and the PRCS, which had been supported by the ICRC with technical back-up from the German Red Cross, carried out over 600 such evacuations. The ICRC intensified its contacts with the authorities which are so necessary to enable such activities to be carried out and publicly called on the parties involved to respect the fundamental rules and principles of humanitarian law.

Various long-term goals were accomplished in 1996. After years of patient efforts and contacts, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Bahraini authorities authorizing visits to prisoners arrested and detained for security reasons. In addition, a revised version of the previous Memorandum of Understanding with the Palestine Liberation Organization, acting "for the benefit of" the Palestinian Authority, was signed, following discussions held throughout the year. In both cases, visits to detainees started in the autumn. The ICRC was able to provide protection to detainees essentially because it respected the rule of confidentiality throughout the negotiations, demonstrating how a discreet and low-profile approach can bear fruit. Elsewhere in the region too, the ICRC visited security detainees on the basis of its right of humanitarian initiative, and maintained its medium- and long-term goal to gain access to such detainees in all Arab countries.

For a number of years, the ICRC had been approaching national armed forces with a view to organizing intensive courses on humanitarian law for military instructors. Significant progress was made in this regard, and representatives of Arab national armed forces attended such courses in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Syria and the United Arab Emirates.

Regarding issues of long-standing concern to the ICRC, some favourable developments took place. Under the organization's auspices, 66 Sahrawis held in Morocco were returned to their families in October. The ICRC hoped that this move represented progress towards finding an overall solution to the

humanitarian problems outstanding from the Western Sahara conflict. In December, also under the ICRC's auspices, 722 Iraqi POWs were repatriated by Iran (in addition to the 150 repatriated in the ICRC's presence in October). Nevertheless, the States party to the Geneva Conventions showed disappointingly little interest in the continued lack of any solution to a humanitarian problem which was covered by the Conventions: the thousands of POWs who should have been repatriated as far back as 1988, when the cease-fire was signed, and the tens of thousands of families still in the dark over the fate of their relatives.

A further source of disappointment for the ICRC was the negligible progress made in accounting for the hundreds of Kuwaiti, Saudi, Iraqi and other nationals missing after the Gulf war. In an effort to clarify their fate, over a period of two and a half years a total of nine Tripartite Commission meetings had been held regularly in Geneva, as well as 19 Technical Sub-Committee meetings on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. Despite this, far too few individual search files met with sufficient goodwill on the part of the authorities concerned to enable real solutions to be found.

With regard to Iraq, the ICRC welcomed the fact that agreement was finally reached on implementing UN Resolution 986. The measures provided for were expected to bring at least partial relief to the suffering of the Iraqi civilian population under sanctions, but by the end of the year no positive effects had yet been observed.

Following a year in which the situation in the occupied and autonomous territories had appeared to be more or less under control, in the second half of 1996 the ICRC became alarmed at the rising number of incidents between Palestinians and Israeli armed forces or settlers. The continuing presence and, indeed, the growing number of settlers living in the Gaza Strip and especially the West Bank — in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention — gave rise to tension as a result of the close proximity of Israeli and Palestinian communities and the presence of troops to protect the settlers.

The tragic situation in Algeria, with the ever-spiralling and sickening violence against civilians, prompted the ICRC to step up its efforts to intensify contacts with the Algerian authorities. Unfortunately, these failed to open the way for activities to bring assistance and protection to victims of the situation.

In order to facilitate the incorporation of the provisions of international humanitarian law into domestic legislation and regulations, the ICRC had set up an Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law in 1995 to provide technical assistance to the world's States in taking these national measures. A legal adviser for the Middle East and North Africa was posted to Amman at the beginning of the year, and started to work closely on this subject with the National Societies and national authorities in the region.



⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation ♦ ICRC mission + ICRC office

*closure of Gaza Strip
and West Bank*

The Near East

ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES

Implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement made little headway in 1996, and relations between the two parties became more tense in the latter months. While Israeli troops had been withdrawn from most of the main towns in Gaza and the West Bank by the end of the year, redeployment from the city of Hebron was still delayed.

Four suicide bomb attacks were carried out on Israeli civilians early in the year. These attacks took a very heavy toll: more than 60 people were killed and over 200 injured. Subsequently, the occupied and autonomous territories were almost completely sealed off between end-

February and July: at times, movement by Palestinians was restricted even inside the territories. During the summer, specific groups of Palestinian workers were again allowed to enter Israel, but following a spate of violence at the end of September the closure was strictly reimposed. Although by the end of 1996 tens of thousands of Palestinians were authorized access once more to their place of work, the majority of the population were still unable to leave the Gaza Strip and West Bank to sell their produce on the Israeli market. The economic implications for the Palestinians were disastrous. Problems were also encountered in transport, education and health care, particularly since access to Jerusalem was likewise restricted.

Also as a result of the closure policy, many families remained separated for several months, since there was no free passage for people between the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Palestinian security detainees, now held almost exclusively on Israeli soil, had to forgo visits by their families for months, and students were unable to reach their place of study. In addition, a number of

medical evacuations were delayed, with very serious consequences, and required the ICRC's intervention.

The prolonged delay in the full implementation of the Interim Agreement¹ as well as the announcement by the Israeli government that it was lifting the freeze on the development of existing settlements in the occupied territories, contributed to an increase in tension between Israeli settlers and armed forces on the one hand, and the Palestinian population on the other. Eventually, on 25 September, after the opening of the Hasmonean tunnel in the Old City of Jerusalem, violence flared, pitting Israeli forces against Palestinians, including some security force members. The armed clashes, which lasted five days, spread rapidly through several towns and villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, resulting in around 70 deaths and over 1,450 injured, the overwhelming majority of them Palestinian civilians. Several Palestinian-run ambulances were damaged: one ambulance team member was killed and at least seven were injured. The ICRC called on the parties involved to respect the fundamental rules and principles of humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the civilian population and medical facilities and ambulances. Delegates distributed emergency medical supplies to hospitals in the autonomous territories on the basis of an on-the-spot survey of needs and maintained constant contact with Israeli and Palestinian authorities in order to facilitate medical evacuations, 650 of which were carried out by the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society". The situation remained volatile as the year drew to a close.

Following the suicide bomb attacks in Israel early in the year, the ICRC also issued a strong condemnation, stressing that indiscriminate attacks which resulted in the death and wounding of civilians and spread terror among them constituted a serious violation of the basic principles of international humanitarian law.

During the 29th year of its presence in Israel and the occupied territories, the ICRC delegation continued its activities for the occupied population. It sought to enhance compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention by calling on the Israeli government to respect its provisions and, at the same time, took practical steps to help the civilians whom the Convention protects. It acted as a neutral intermediary between the Israeli authorities and civilians under occupation, making representations on behalf of people from the occupied territories. However, despite years of approaches to the Israeli authorities and the latter's response, the ICRC did not succeed in obtaining full respect for the provisions of the Convention.

Both the Israeli army and the Palestinian police force carried out major security operations following bomb attacks in Israel, and the IDF,* citing secur-

¹ Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

* IDF: Israel Defence Forces

status to detainees

violence in September

attacks on
Israeli civilians

civilians
under occupation

ity reasons, destroyed nine houses belonging mainly to families of suicide bombers. This was in contravention of the Convention, which prohibits destruction of real or personal property, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations. Once Israeli troops had been redeployed from the Gaza Strip and the main West Bank towns (apart from Hebron), the delegation noted a decline during the first six months of the year in the number of incidents in the occupied territories. Incidents were reported specifically in connection with the closure of the occupied and autonomous territories and with the presence of Israeli settlers in the territories. The announcement that settlements were to be expanded was therefore the cause of grave concern for the ICRC, particularly in view of the serious consequences, in humanitarian terms, for the protected population. The number of incidents rose again significantly towards the end of the year.

Civilians living in and near the Israeli-occupied "security zone" in southern Lebanon continued to be affected by military operations in the area. Operation Grapes of Wrath in April prompted several hundred thousand people to flee the affected area in southern Lebanon.² During the same period Hezbollah launched daily rocket attacks on towns and villages in northern Israel, wounding over 60 civilians and forcing more than 20,000 to leave the area. With the support of the Israeli authorities and the "Magen David Adom", ICRC delegates assessed the effects of the attacks on the civilian population in northern Israel, and ascertained that their needs were being covered by the authorities and the MDA. From the outset of the operation, the ICRC reminded the belligerents of their obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly with regard to civilians and medical facilities and vehicles.

In accordance with the ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary between Israel and countries with which the latter had not signed peace agreements, its delegations in Israel and Syria cooperated to enable Syrians, mainly pilgrims and students, to cross the demarcation line between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and Syria. In a rare family reunification, a woman who had been living in Damascus for many years was able to return to her native Golan Heights. However, for the third consecutive year, 73 people from the Golan Heights were still refused permission by the Israeli authorities to cross the line to visit relatives in Syria, despite several representations by the ICRC.³

The number of Palestinian detainees held by Israel stabilized at an average of 4,000 following the last major release of some 1,200 in January 1996 under the Interim Agreement. Arrests nevertheless continued at an average rate of more than 300 per month. Virtually all Palestinian detainees were imprisoned

² See *Lebanon* pp. 240-243.

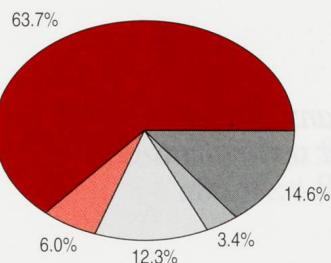
³ See also *Syria* p. 244.

southern Lebanon

ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES

Total expenditure in 1996:

Sfr 10,155,180



- Protection / tracing
- Cooperation with National Societies
- Dissemination / promotion
- Operational support
- Overheads

in places of detention on Israeli soil, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The ICRC was given access to all detainees protected by the Convention, with the exception of two Lebanese nationals detained in Israel since 1989 and 1994, respectively. It was also denied access to a further detainee known to be held by the Israeli authorities since early 1996. The ICRC repeatedly requested the release on humanitarian grounds of 29 Palestinians held by the Israeli authorities. By the end of 1996, seven of the detainees concerned had been released, while the majority remained incarcerated.

The family visits programme for Palestinian detainees, run by the ICRC in cooperation with the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" (PRCS), was seriously hampered and eventually suspended because of closures of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, despite the fact that detainees are entitled to regular visits under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Visits resumed at the beginning of July following lengthy negotiations with the Israeli authorities, but under much more stringent conditions which required far more involvement by the ICRC and PRCS. In particular, the ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary became even more important to ensure that the programme functioned properly. The programme was suspended once more during the clashes in September and again in October, and resumed only in December.

Discussions were held throughout the year with a view to resuming visits to people detained by the Palestinian authorities. In particular, the matter was discussed in Switzerland in February by the ICRC President and the President of the Palestinian Authority. On 1 September the ICRC signed a revised version of its Memorandum of Understanding with the Palestine Liberation Organization, which was acting "for the benefit of" the Palestinian Authority, and visits started on 27 November.

Delegates endeavoured to increase awareness of the principles of international humanitarian law and the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement by organizing information sessions for various target audiences, both in Israel and in the occupied and autonomous territories. The Israeli media failed to show any great interest in such sessions, while the Palestinian media published numerous articles provided by the ICRC.

The ICRC continued to assume the general direction of the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the occupied and autonomous territories. In January the ICRC completed its programme in support of clinics in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The PRCS clinics assisted under this programme were subsequently covered by the Federation's programme on the PRCS primary and secondary health care activities. The Federation also supported the Society's institutional development.

visits to detainees

dissemination/information

cooperation within the Movement

The Australian Red Cross completed a two-year “Released Palestinian Detainees” project in Gaza and the West Bank and started a “Women’s Development” programme in Gaza. The Netherlands Red Cross provided medical assistance to 11 non-governmental hospitals in the occupied and autonomous territories, including PRCS medical facilities.

The ICRC and the PRCS pursued their close cooperation on the provision of emergency medical care. With ICRC support, the PRCS set up a special department to coordinate and develop the emergency medical services of the Red Crescent branches. In November the Society was officially mandated by the Department of Health of the Palestinian Authority to take on the entire responsibility for this service in the Gaza Strip, a mandate which it had previously received for the West Bank. The ICRC helped to ensure that procedures, training and structures were developed and strengthened in order to improve performance in the medium and long term. A specialist seconded by the German Red Cross worked with the PRCS to consolidate the service and improve its efficiency.

The ICRC also lent support in developing the PRCS dissemination department and the Finnish Red Cross seconded a delegate to work with it. The department coordinated the dissemination activities of the Red Crescent branches, including an extra-curricular programme on the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Palestinian schools, using locally produced materials, and produced a slide show and brochure on the PRCS’s activities, which were used in particular for the 8 May celebrations and at holiday camps for young people. The Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre agreed that texts on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement should be included in the new school textbooks.

The ICRC maintained regular contact with the “Magen David Adom” and provided it with financial support to replace material for its blood bank. It also facilitated a working meeting between representatives of the MDA and the PRCS with a view to building confidence and establishing regular relations between the two organizations in the long term.

“Palestinian Red Crescent Society”

“Magen David Adom”



IN 1996 THE ICRC:

- visited Palestinian detainees on a regular basis: in all, carried out 341 visits to 1,453 detainees in 30 places of detention, registering 1,074 for the first time; held 1,385 private talks with detainees under interrogation; monitored detainees' medical situation;
- restored and maintained contact between detainees and their families by forwarding 4,062 Red Cross messages, kept track of individual detainees protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention and informed their families of their whereabouts; issued 18,375 detention certificates and 115 powers of attorney;
- in cooperation with the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" (PRCS), ran the family visits programme, enabling family members to visit their detained relatives;
- handed over 3 released detainees to the care of the Lebanese or Syrian authorities.



- restored and maintained contact between residents of the occupied and the autonomous territories and their families living in countries without official relations with Israel by passing on 8,066 Red Cross messages and radio messages and dealing with 40 tracing requests;
- at the request of the parties concerned, acted as a neutral intermediary on behalf of families of Israeli

servicemen and Arabs reported missing in action and, on 21 July, following an agreement negotiated under the auspices of the German government, supervised the release of prisoners and carried out the repatriation of mortal remains in the hands of Israel, the SLA* and Hezbollah;

- arranged for 21 transfers between Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights to enable 413 people to cross the demarcation line.



- made representations to the appropriate authorities when the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention were not respected during or after incidents between Palestinian civilians and Israeli security forces or settlers.



- supplied 69 tents to people whose houses in the occupied territories had been destroyed by the Israeli forces.



- when the Gaza Strip and West Bank were completely closed, facilitated emergency medical evacuations for people in Gaza who required hospital treatment in Israel, and transported urgently needed medicines from Israel and the West Bank to the main hospital in the Gaza Strip;
- during the violence in September, provided emergency medical sup-

plies to hospitals in the autonomous territories;

- supported and strengthened the Emergency Medical Service of the PRCS by paying for running costs and equipment and providing technical expertise via a representative from the German Red Cross;
- purchased medical equipment for the blood bank of the "Magen David Adom" in order to replace old material.



- held the regular yearly session to introduce international humanitarian law to about 40 IDF trainee legal officers;
- organized dissemination sessions in April for 30 officers of the Palestinian Preventive Security Service in several West Bank towns, and in August in Gaza and Jericho for members of the Palestinian police academy; in all, five sessions were held for around 150 people;
- regularly provided the Palestinian media with information on its activities, including a documentary on the ICRC's action as a neutral intermediary on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights: the information provided was used regularly;
- gave support to the PRCS dissemination department and was involved in four camps for about 400 children and various World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day activities.

* SLA: South Lebanon Army



– carried out 60 visits to 672 security detainees in 9 places of detention, registering 643 for the first time, and exchanged 1,614 Red Cross messages to and from their relatives on their behalf.



– restored and maintained contact between families living in Jordan and their relatives detained in Israel and Kuwait by forwarding 3,541 Red Cross messages;

– restored and maintained contact between Jordanian families separated as a result of various conflicts by forwarding 205 Red Cross messages;

– forwarded 274 official and urgent documents for families in Jordan who were separated from their relatives in Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories, and assisted in special hardship cases;

– issued 255 travel documents for Arab refugees who had been granted refugee status in third countries.



– in cooperation with the Jordan National Red Crescent Society, gave regular courses on humanitarian law and principles to schoolchildren, teachers and National Society members, reaching a total of 2,714 people;

IN 1996 THE ICRC:

– organized the distribution of the Cairo delegation's 1996 Arabic calendar to schools, and the printing of its cartoon series *Ahlam-Ahlaam* in two publications circulated to Jordanian schools and made available to the public;

– strengthened the Jordan Red Crescent's dissemination capacities by training volunteers in the local branches, gave a talk on the relationship between humanitarian law and disasters at a three-day disaster preparedness seminar organized by the National Society, and helped to organize an essay competition in schools on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



– held courses in international humanitarian law at the Institute of Diplomacy and at military training academies; continued dissemination programmes for Jordanian military and police contingents being sent on UN missions;

– maintained and developed contacts with the media and with various target groups such as universities (for instance, contributed to an exhibition at Yarmouk University's Centre for Refugees and Displaced Persons by providing publications and photos illustrating the ICRC's operations around the world).



– made available to the media comprehensive and updated media kits, photos, audio and video material on the effects of mines on civilians: the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation made use of the material in its broadcasts. The printed press ran articles on the issue and published the ICRC-designed advertisements in two Arabic and one English daily newspapers.

JORDAN

The Amman delegation continued to carry out a wide range of traditional ICRC activities, including protection for detainees. Delegates paid regular, twice-monthly visits to security detainees held under interrogation at the GID* and were also given access to detainees in facilities under the responsibility of the Public Security Directorate, mainly the Rehabilitation and Correctional Centres of Juweideh and Swaqa, and in the Zarqa Military Centre. Whenever requested, Red Cross messages were exchanged between detainees and their relatives. In July, an ICRC team carried out a round of visits to three detention centres in order to evaluate the medical services provided. The delegation subsequently submitted reports on their visits to the relevant authorities, including, when necessary, the Ministry of Health and the Public Security Department.

In the wake of the unrest which broke out in mid-August in the south of Jordan, there was a sharp but short-lived increase in the number of detainees. The ICRC therefore stepped up its visits to the GID and the Correctional and Rehabilitation Centres. Delegates subsequently followed up individual cases, informing the many families who had approached the delegation of the whereabouts of their relatives.

As a postal service had been set up between Jordan and Israel, the ICRC limited its services to forwarding official personal documents and urgent humanitarian radio messages between Palestinians in the occupied and autonomous territories and their relatives in Jordan. The number of messages forwarded increased markedly when the West Bank and Gaza Strip were subject to strict closure.

In its efforts to promote awareness of and respect for international humanitarian law, the delegation kept up a variety of contacts in military and police academies, universities, schools, research and documentation institutes and cultural associations. Delegates enjoyed good relations with journalists (both Jordanian and based in Jordan), the International Organization of Journalists and Jordanian TV, and through them encouraged the dissemination of knowledge of the principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and humanitarian law, as well as information on ICRC activities throughout the world. Relations with these various bodies were thereby strengthened and extended, ensuring wider knowledge of the principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the ICRC's activities and humanitarian law.

* GID: General Intelligence Directorate

A particular effort was made to promote the ICRC's campaign against anti-personnel mines. The military study on anti-personnel mines published by the ICRC was circulated to contacts in the armed forces, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the media, and both the Arabic and English-language media reported on it.

The delegation, together with the Jordan National Red Crescent Society and the Jordanian Ministry of Education, regularly organized courses on humanitarian law and the Movement in schools and encouraged the introduction of such teaching into the school curriculum. To celebrate World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, exhibitions of the Movement's posters and publications were mounted in several schools and students were briefed on the protective role of the emblem and the need not to misuse it, as well as on the ICRC landmines campaign being conducted worldwide.

The delegation in Jordan continued to act as the logistical base for the ICRC's activities in Iraq, particularly its assistance programmes.

LEBANON

In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the ICRC continued to deal with the consequences in humanitarian terms of the Israeli occupation of part of southern Lebanon, the so-called security zone. Civilians living in the occupied area and north of the front line were once more affected by sporadic military operations, and the Israeli navy maintained its blockade on the southern part of the Lebanese coastline.

At the beginning of April, tension increased significantly and, following several incidents between the Israeli army and armed groups, the Israeli army launched the two-week Operation Grapes of Wrath. The price paid by civilians was high: 170 Lebanese dead (more than 100 of whom died in the shelling of the Qana UNIFIL compound), 350 wounded, 350,000 displaced, and hundreds of houses damaged or destroyed; on the Israeli side, over 60 people were wounded and some 20,000 displaced.

During and after the military operations, the ICRC provided protection and assistance to those civilians who had remained in the area of southern Lebanon under fire and to displaced people who were sheltering in public places in Sidon, Beirut, the Chouf and the Bekaa valley. In doing so, it cooperated closely with the Lebanese Red Cross Society and maintained close contact with the Federation (see below). The ICRC also worked in coordination with Lebanese government bodies, the local NGOs active in the field and UN

*operation
Grapes of Wrath*

agencies (UNDP,* UNICEF* and UNIFIL*). It provided health facilities in southern Lebanon with emergency items to enable them to cope with the influx of wounded and to continue routine treatment for those who had stayed in the area. When the hostilities ceased, the ICRC distributed medical supplies to all health facilities along the front line to help them to replenish their stocks.

On 16 April the ICRC issued a solemn reminder to the warring parties of their duty to comply with the rules of humanitarian law intended to protect all victims of armed conflicts. On 19 April it publicly condemned the shelling of civilians in the UNIFIL base in Qana and stressed the absolute ban on indiscriminate attacks. It also made representations to the belligerents, urging them, in particular, to give civilians and medical facilities and vehicles the respect to which they are entitled.

More than two weeks after Operation Grapes of Wrath had started, a *de facto* cease-fire was established and civilians on either side of the Israeli-Lebanese border were no longer to come under attack. A monitoring committee composed of representatives from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States was set up to supervise its implementation. Towards the end of the year tension was again mounting in southern Lebanon, and several complaints regarding failure to respect the agreement were examined by the committee. In December, Lebanese civilians were injured by IDF shelling, while unknown fighters fired a Katyusha rocket at northern Israel.

To protect the civilian population, ICRC delegates in the occupied zone in southern Lebanon collected information on alleged violations of humanitarian law, and representations were made to the parties to the conflict urging them to spare civilian lives and property. The delegation had negotiated security guarantees with all the parties in order to carry out its humanitarian activities and give medical and material assistance to civilians living on the front line and near the Israeli-occupied zone. It ran five mobile clinics to serve seven villages in and close to the occupied zone.

Whenever civilians in Israel fell victim to rocket attacks by armed groups, as in April in particular, the ICRC delegation in Tel Aviv provided information to the Beirut delegation so that the appropriate representations could be made.

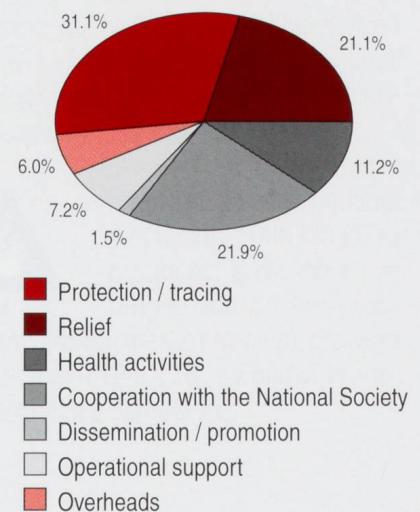
ICRC delegates paid regular visits to prisoners held in the Khiam detention centre in the Israeli-occupied territory. Ways of improving treatment and conditions of detention were discussed with the authorities, and assistance was distributed to the detainees. Families of detainees benefited from a family visit

protection of civilians and detainees

LEBANON

Total expenditure in 1996:

Sfr 4,186,125



* UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

* UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

* UNIFIL: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Palestinian refugee camps

cooperation within the Movement

programme set up and facilitated by the ICRC, and Red Cross messages exchanged between detainees and their families. Detainees also received parcels from their relatives.

On 21 July, following an agreement negotiated under the auspices of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, and at the request of the parties concerned, the ICRC supervised the simultaneous release of 62 prisoners and the repatriation of the mortal remains of 125 people in the hands of Israel, the SLA and Hezbollah. The operation ended years of uncertainty for families on both sides as to the fate of their relatives (see box).

One of the two Palestinian ex-detainees deported by Israel to southern Lebanon in April 1995 in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention remained stranded in the UNIFIL compound in Naqoura, despite the ICRC's efforts to enable him to return home. ICRC delegates visited him regularly to collect and deliver Red Cross messages and give assistance.

A source of concern for the ICRC in Lebanon was the precarious and deteriorating situation of some 350,000 Palestinians living in refugee camps, most of them since 1948. UNWRA* assisted them by providing health care and education. The potential for violence remained strong, owing to political differences and the severe frustration rife amongst the refugees. The ICRC distributed emergency supplies to medical facilities in the camps.

During Operation Grapes of Wrath, the ICRC worked closely with the Lebanese Red Cross Society. The National Society performed outstanding services in April: it mobilized over 600 first-aid volunteers, carried out emergency transfers of sick and wounded people and blood supplies, collected the dead and ran more than 200 first-aid posts and 130 mobile clinics.

The ICRC supported the National Society's ambulance service and its community health centres situated inside the occupied zone.

Close contacts were maintained with the Federation throughout the year, but especially in April; the Federation continued to support the institutional development of the Lebanese Red Cross, as well as its primary health care and blood bank activities. This close cooperation and exchange of information enabled all the components of the Movement to avoid duplication.

* UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

IN 1996 THE ICRC:

- carried out 39 visits to 248 detainees in the Khiam detention centre, including 90 who were newly registered;
- arranged for 87 released detainees to be transferred out of the Israeli-occupied zone, organized visits by 1,177 people to their relatives held in the Khiam detention centre; forwarded 6,465 Red Cross messages to or from detainees and issued 447 certificates of detention;
- acted as a neutral intermediary in the release of 45 people from the Khiam detention centre and the handing over of 18 bodies by the SLA to the ICRC; in the release of 17 SLA prisoners and the handing over of the mortal remains of 2 Israeli servicemen by Hezbollah; and in the handing over by the Israeli authorities of the mortal remains of 105 people, including those of Hezbollah combatants;
- provided needy families of detainees held in Israel and the Khiam detention centre with ad hoc assistance.



- restored and maintained links between family members separated as a result of the conflict by forwarding 1,320 Red Cross messages.



- made representations to the parties to the conflict when civilians were victims of failure to respect humanitarian law, both during Opera-

tion Grapes of Wrath and when any other incidents were brought to its attention.



- during and after the major military operations in April, distributed relief supplies to benefit 225,000 people, mainly in the area affected by military activities in southern Lebanon and in centres where displaced people had gathered (Sidon, Beirut, Chouf, Bekaa);
- provided ad hoc assistance to victims of the conflict and inhabitants of villages cut off because of it.



- provided ad hoc medical assistance to hospitals, dispensaries and first-aid posts along the front line between the Israeli-occupied zone and the rest of the country, and ran five ICRC mobile clinics in the area, which gave 2,846 consultations;
- during Operation Grapes of Wrath, extended this assistance to all medical facilities treating the wounded or the displaced who had sought shelter in public places: in all, 96 facilities were assisted;
- provided Palestinian hospitals and dispensaries in refugee camps with emergency assistance.



- helped to maintain the operational capacity of the Lebanese Red Cross Society in the occupied

zone by providing financial and material support for its first-aid services in areas affected by conflict, and medical supplies for its dispensaries;

- supported the National Society's dissemination, volunteer training and communication activities.



- promoted knowledge of and respect for international humanitarian law and the principles and rules of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement by maintaining and developing contacts with the media and organizing courses for the armed forces, representatives of UNIFIL, combatants from armed groups, and universities; teaching of international humanitarian law was incorporated in the training programmes for all Lebanese armed forces;
- gave a lecture on the application of international humanitarian law for some 60 high-ranking officers from the Lebanese army at a seminar organized by the army at the military academy in Beirut in September.



- arranged for the national TV channel "Télé-Liban" to broadcast a two-hour live programme on the problem of landmines in Lebanon, drawing attention to the ICRC's worldwide anti-landmines campaign.

SYRIA

The ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary for the 13,000 Syrian nationals living in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, who remained protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention. In principle they were not allowed to cross the demarcation line into Syria, and had thus been separated from their families for nearly 30 years. However there were exceptions to the rule, mainly pilgrims and students, who were transferred across the line under the auspices of the ICRC.⁴ Seventy-three people were still waiting for Israeli authorization to visit relatives in Syria, for the third consecutive year and despite ICRC representations. By handling Red Cross messages the ICRC worked as in previous years to restore and maintain links between families separated as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It also issued around 100 travel documents for Arab refugees who had been accepted by third countries.

In order to carry out its activities for people affected by the conflict, the delegation was in regular contact with the Syrian authorities; it also maintained contact with representatives of several Palestinian groups based in Damascus.

In the dissemination field, in order to improve knowledge of the law of war, delegates held courses on the subject for six high-ranking officers of the Syrian armed forces and gave presentations on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and humanitarian law to officers from the UNDOF* and the UNTSO.*

The ICRC continued to support the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society in its dissemination activities by financing the printing of leaflets for the International Book Fair and in its first-aid activities by providing material for the training programme held at the Damascus branch. Assistance for the Red Crescent's maternal and child health care programme in the form of milk powder and wheat soya milk, previously provided by the ICRC, was taken over by the Federation. In October, the ICRC President, accompanied by the Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa, attended the National Society's celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of its recognition by the ICRC. He gave a speech in which he called for intensified efforts to apply international humanitarian law, and took part in a conference on the subject chaired by a representative from the Damascus Faculty of Law.

The "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" prosthetic/orthotic centre in Damascus, which had been equipped by the ICRC, received administrative support from the ICRC for its programme, which was partly financed by the German Red Cross, and an ICRC technician made the annual visit to the centre to provide technical support.

⁴ See also *Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories*, p. 234.

* UNDOF: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

* UNTSO: United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- organized the repatriation of 2 released detainees formerly held in Israel.
- arranged for 21 transfers between Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights to enable 413 people to cross the demarcation line;
- forwarded 750 Red Cross messages and official documents, organized 1 family reunification and issued 125 travel documents.



- financed the Syrian Arab Red Crescent stand at the Damascus International Book Fair, its publications for the occasion and other dissemina-

tion material, gave financial support for the publications produced for its 50th anniversary celebrations and took part in its seminars;

- financed the purchase of materials for use in the first-aid training programme in the Syrian Arab Red Crescent branches;
- provided technical back-up for the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" prosthetic/orthotic centre in Damascus financed partly by the German Red Cross.



- organized a session on the law of war for 6 high-ranking officers of the Syrian armed forces and two sessions on humanitarian law for

the UN forces stationed on the Golan Heights;

- produced a video film on the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" prosthetic/orthotic centre entitled "Reality on both Feet", which was shown on two Syrian TV channels.



⊕ ICRC delegation + ICRC sub-delegation + ICRC office △ Prosthetic/orthotic centre/workshop

The Gulf IRAN

The ICRC kept up an office in Tehran, staffed by locally hired employees. Relations with the Iranian authorities concerning the humanitarian issues unresolved since the Iran/Iraq war were maintained from its Geneva headquarters.⁵

IRAQ

The United Nations maintained the embargo on Iraq, which had been in force since 1990. As a result the situation of the Iraqi population, particularly in terms of public health, continued to worsen inexorably. Nevertheless, the UN "oil-for-food" Resolution 986 was expected to help slow down the decline. The Iraqi government accepted the resolution on 20 May: renewable every six months, it authorized Iraq to export two billion US

dollars' worth of oil to buy mainly food, medical supplies, agricultural tools and machinery. The plan on how to distribute the goods was accepted in mid-August, agreement was reached on implementing the resolution on 27 November, and Iraq started to export oil on 9 December.

Iraqi water installations continued to deteriorate for lack of spare parts, equipment and qualified personnel. Throughout Iraq, including the three northern governorates, the ICRC kept up its efforts to lessen the effects of this deterioration on public health by rehabilitating water supply and treatment facilities which had been identified, in cooperation with the Iraqi water authorities, as priority sites. Where required, the ICRC's seven teams of locally hired technicians were available to install the pumping, chemical dosing and electrical equipment imported by it into Iraq, and the authorities were encouraged to ensure proper maintenance. Although the programme did not meet all needs in terms of rehabilitating the water treatment infrastructure throughout the

⁵ See *Aftermath of the Iran/Iraq war*, p. 250.

country, it nevertheless had significant preventive effects on the spread of waterborne diseases among the population.

In June/July the ICRC reassessed its water and sanitation programme in the light of the Iraqis' acceptance of Resolution 986. It concluded that the impact of the agreement would not be felt on water and sanitation facilities until at least 1998, owing to considerable delays in implementing the agreement, the length of time needed to import equipment and rehabilitate the facilities and the fact that priority was to be given to food and medicines. It therefore decided to continue the programme for the time being.

Under its programme for the war-disabled, the ICRC kept up its support for two government-run prosthetic/orthotic centres in Basra and Najaf, and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society's centre in Mosul. The latter's premises were extended in 1996 so that production could be stepped up. In addition, a new centre was opened in Arbil, northern Iraq, in August; the French Red Cross funded the construction and running costs and staff salaries. The ICRC components workshop in Baghdad was moved to larger premises to enable output to be expanded to supply all the centres.

The quality of prostheses manufactured by Iraqi technicians, while not yet optimal, was sufficiently high that the ICRC could be confident that once its economic situation allowed, Iraq would again be able to run such programmes alone.

The Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa visited Iraq, including northern Iraq, in May. He discussed issues of humanitarian concern with the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in particular prisoners taken in the Iran/Iraq war,⁶ people unaccounted for since the Gulf war⁷ and detention-related matters (civilians held in the Abu Ghraib detention centre in connection with the Gulf war and Iranian servicemen held in a camp in Ramadi). Authorization was subsequently granted for the ICRC to pay more regular visits to Ramadi. At the end of 1996 visits resumed to Abu Ghraib.

On 8 October a meeting was held between the ICRC and the newly appointed President of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, who expressed his wish to maintain and expand the cooperation between the two organizations. During the meeting, the ICRC presented an ambulance to the Red Crescent Society.

The cease-fire signed in August 1995 between the KDP* and the PUK* was more or less observed up to 16 August, when a new bout of hostilities erupted between the two parties. On 31 August Iraqi troops and KDP forces seized the PUK stronghold of Arbil. Ten days later, the PUK lost control of Sulaymaniyah. Some 60,000 civilians and combatants fled the city, some to take refuge

⁶ See *Aftermath of the Iran/Iraq war*, p. 250.

⁷ See *Aftermath of the Gulf war*, p. 251.

* KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party

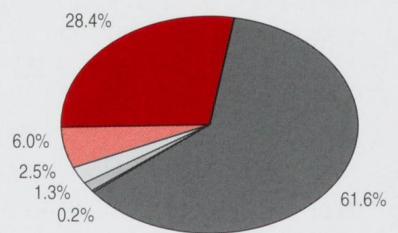
* PUK: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

and maintain

programmes
for war-disabled

IRAQ

Total expenditure in 1996:
Sfr 13,227,745



- Protection / tracing
- Health activities
- Cooperation with the National Society
- Dissemination / promotion
- Operational support
- Overheads

northern Iraq

on Iranian soil, others to return to Sulaymaniyah when the fighting died down. On 12 October, the PUK retook the governorate of Sulaymaniyah. Many NGOs which were assisting civilians in various domains pulled out of the region. A new cease-fire came into force on 23 October, but at the end of 1996 the situation remained tense and unpredictable.

Incursions by the Turkish army, while never reaching the same scale as the major military operations of April 1995, took place sporadically throughout the year. Shelling in the area near the Turkish border caused about 500 families to flee their villages. The livelihood of these people was in jeopardy, since it was too difficult and dangerous for them to return home to tend their crops.

The ICRC's protection activities were the most important aspect of its work in northern Iraq. Delegates stepped up their contacts with KDP and PUK

IRAQ



- carried out 3 visits to 64 Iranian servicemen captured in 1991 and 1992 and detained in Ramadi camp;
- carried out 208 visits to 3,412 detainees held in 55 places of detention in the northern governorates for security reasons or as a result of fighting between the PUK and the KDP or other hostilities; of these, 3,157 were registered for the first time;
- in March, visited 9 Turkish soldiers held by the PKK,* two of whom were later freed and accompanied by the ICRC to the Turkish border;
- handled 14,691 Red Cross messages between detainees in Ramadi camp and their relatives;
- issued 165 certificates of detention.



- when people were displaced near the Turkish border as a result of incursions and shelling by the Turkish army, distributed blankets, tents, cooking utensils and other items in cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, particularly in readiness for the winter.



- during the hostilities in northern Iraq, provided the six main hospitals in the Arbil and Sulaymaniyah regions with emergency medical supplies to treat the several thousand casualties and handed out dressing sets to displaced people heading for the Iranian border;
- in September, launched an information programme on the ICRC and war

surgery techniques in the main hospitals in northern Iraq.



- opened a new prosthetic/orthotic centre in Arbil, northern Iraq, and continued to support two government-run centres in Basra and Najaf by providing them with materials and polypropylene components manufactured in its Baghdad workshop and by training technicians;
- supported the government's school for Iraqi technicians by helping with training and supplying imported materials;
- fitted 1,203 amputees with 1,258 prostheses and 133 orthoses at the ICRC-supported prosthetic/orthotic centres in Arbil, Basra, Mosul (see below) and Najaf.

leaders, and paid regular visits to places of detention run by both parties. When the fighting between the two parties resumed in August, the ICRC called on them to observe the basic humanitarian rules in combat and raised the issue of summary executions reportedly carried out by both sides. It stressed the need for the ICRC to have access to all those detained in connection with the conflict to ensure that their moral and physical integrity was respected.

In order to back up these protection activities, considerable effort was invested in spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law, respect for the red cross and red crescent emblem and the civilian population. The ICRC became much better known among the public in northern Iraq, and particularly its services to restore contact between relatives separated by the conflict. These services came to be requested regularly.



– worked with the Iraqi water authorities to improve the quantity and quality of drinking water and to ensure adequate disposal of waste water by rehabilitating a total of 60 water treatment plants throughout the country.



– in cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent provided ad hoc material assistance to people displaced internally as a result of fighting in northern Iraq; in all, assisted some 20,000 people, including some 4,000 at the Iranian border;

– assisted the Iraqi Red Crescent in carrying out dissemination activities (a total of 17,818 people attended 282 information sessions in schools and universities in 9 governorates), took part in camps for young people, provided

financial and technical assistance towards the production of a monthly periodical on the National Society's activities and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and prepared for a joint campaign on the dangers of landmines;

– helped to develop the National Society's activities to restore and maintain family links;

– supported the Iraqi Red Crescent prosthetic/orthotic centre in Mosul by providing materials and components and by training technicians.

– in November held a seminar on the law of war, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, for 17 senior officers responsible for instruction in international humanitarian law within the Iraqi armed forces;

– handed over 1.5 million school exercise books bearing a humanitarian message and illustration for distribution in schools and universities in 8 governorates, including those in northern Iraq;

– held 26 sessions for 955 staff members in 21 places of detention in northern Iraq on basic humanitarian principles and on its detention-related work;

– gave 2 lectures on international humanitarian law for 350 students and professors at the University of Arbil, for the first time;

– held information sessions on the rules of humanitarian law for 581 members of the KDP and PUK *peshmerga* forces;

– provided local radio stations with "spots", which were broadcast regularly, on the rules of combat to be observed during hostilities.

* PKK: Kurdish Workers' Party

AFTERMATH OF THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR

northern Iraq

The ICRC remained seriously concerned about the fact that thousands of Iraqi POWs were still held under the responsibility of the Iranian authorities. Two-thirds of them had been visited and registered by the ICRC some years previously, including 1,442 most recently in 1993, and one-third of them were known to it on the basis of Red Cross messages. In the past, the ICRC had also gathered information on hundreds of Iranian soldiers, and remained equally concerned about their fate.

Ever since hostilities came to an end in 1988, and in particular after the repatriation of Iranian and Iraqi POWs in August and September 1990, the ICRC has pursued its efforts to obtain an overall solution to this serious humanitarian issue. To this end, the ICRC President raised the issue on several occasions, notably in May with the ambassadors of the 15 member States of the UN Security Council and with the Iranian and Iraqi ambassadors in New York and Geneva. For his part, during his missions to the region, the Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa repeatedly reminded the States visited of their obligations under the Geneva Conventions.

In the ICRC's view another important outstanding humanitarian issue was that of missing soldiers and the return of mortal remains. Under agreements concluded between Iran and Iraq in September 1995, the mortal remains of 600 Iraqis and 209 Iranians were repatriated in June and August.

The ICRC viewed the liberation of 724 Iraqi POWs and the repatriation under its auspices of 722 of them in December as an important step towards an overall solution. It called on both parties to cooperate in resolving the situation, and stood ready to offer its services.

AFTERMATH OF THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR



— was present on 26 October when 150 Iraqi POWs were handed over by the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Iraqi authorities;

IN 1996 THE ICRC:

- supervised the repatriation of 722 Iraqi POWs on 28 December after having private talks with them to ascertain that they were being repatriated of their own free will;
- carried out 4 visits to an Iranian POW held in Iraq, conveyed Red Cross messages to and from his next-of-kin and urged the authorities to allow his repatriation;
- handled 281 tracing requests and issued 302 certificates of detention.

AFTERMATH OF THE GULF WAR

In an effort to settle the humanitarian issues still unresolved after the Gulf war, representatives from Iraq and the Coalition States (France, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States) attended three meetings of the Tripartite Commission chaired by the ICRC, which also chaired and provided technical support for ten Technical Sub-Committee sessions held in the demilitarized zone on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. The objective was to help ascertain the whereabouts and fate of Kuwaitis, Saudis, Iraqis and other nationals reported missing in connection with the hostilities.

The ICRC was very concerned at the lack of dialogue between the parties and the resultant poor quality of information being provided in response to the individual search files. At the 17th Tripartite Commission meeting, held on 16 October, the ICRC's Director of Operations therefore called on the parties to make every effort to facilitate the search process in order to achieve genuine progress leading to tangible results.

The issue was also raised during the year when the Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa met the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May, and when the ICRC's regional delegate met the Kuwaiti Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in June.

In Kuwait ICRC delegates monitored the conditions of detention and treatment of people whose detention was linked to the Gulf war and who had been without diplomatic representation since then. Visits were thus made to Iraqi, Jordanian, Yemeni and Sudanese nationals, Palestinians with travel documents only, and stateless persons. The ICRC had access to prisoners in places of detention under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of the Interior, Defence and Social Affairs.

Delegates also paid regular visits to detainees under expulsion order. The aim of these visits, apart from monitoring conditions of detention, was to ensure that families were not separated and that detainees were not expelled to a country where they had reason to fear persecution. Delegates made sure that those facing expulsion were given the opportunity to settle their personal affairs and were allowed to take their belongings with them.



- in Iraq, for the first time since 1994, carried out 1 visit to 63 civilians from countries without diplomatic representation there and held in Abu Ghraib detention centre near Baghdad. Eighteen of them were registered for the first time;
- in Kuwait, visited 262 detainees in 8 places of detention, including 103 who were registered for the first time.



IN 1996 THE ICRC:

- restored and maintained contact between family members separated by the Gulf war by forwarding 18,786 Red Cross messages between people in Kuwait and their relatives in countries which do not have diplomatic relations with Kuwait;
- also issued 59 travel documents at the request of embassies and UNHCR for people who were unable to obtain passports and who wished to leave for another country, and 203 certificates of detention;
- via the Safwan border crossing, supervised the repatriation of 11 Saudis from Iraq and 3 Iraqis from Kuwait;
- within the framework of the Tripartite Commission, organized a family reunification on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border for a Kuwaiti national and her subsequent return to Kuwait;
- arranged for the mortal remains of an Iraqi pilot whose plane had crashed in April 1995 to be repatriated from Saudi Arabia.

KUWAIT

Regional delegation

(Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen)

The Kuwait regional delegation concentrated on activities connected with the aftermath of the Gulf war.⁸ In addition, it carried out information and dissemination activities intended to heighten awareness of issues of humanitarian concern — such as respect for civilians and the problem of landmines — and the ICRC's activities. Delegates also promoted instruction in international humanitarian law for the armed forces; particular emphasis was placed on the United Arab Emirates, with a view to integrating such courses into the military training programme, and on Kuwait, where the authorities agreed that the ICRC should hold a course and a workshop for military instructors in 1997.

On 28 October the ICRC — represented by the Deputy Director of Operations — and the Bahraini authorities signed a Memorandum of Understanding authorizing it to make visits, in accordance with standard ICRC procedures, to prisoners arrested and detained for security reasons. This agreement was the first of its type to be concluded with a country in the region, and visits began on 9 November. Prior to this, the Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa had carried out a mission to Bahrain in August, during which he met the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the Interior.

In Yemen, the ICRC continued its visits to places of detention under the jurisdiction of the Minister of the Interior and Political Security Administration. In order to follow up on the major sanitation programme carried out in 1995 in the country's central prisons, an ICRC water and sanitation engineer conducted a survey in the three main prisons of Sana'a, Hodeida and Taiz. The ICRC recommended to the Ministry of the Interior that the authorities should allocate funds for repairs and renovation work on the country's five main prisons and on several smaller ones.

The psychiatric care project launched in 1995 in the Sana'a central prison, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health and the Yemen Red Crescent Society, considerably improved conditions for mentally ill detainees, particularly as regards hygiene, food and medical care. The patients were housed in their own section of the prison and could move around freely

⁸ See *Aftermath of the Gulf war*, p. 251.

there. A representative from the Swiss Red Cross, who was based in Yemen, followed the project's progress, which was also monitored by an ICRC psychiatrist during periodic visits from Geneva. In August the project was delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross. It was extended to Taiz as from November and to Ibb as from January 1997.

The ICRC maintained and built up contact with the OIC* based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in accordance with the cooperation agreement between the two organizations.

* OIC: Organization of Islamic Conference

KUWAIT
Regional delegation



- in Bahrain, registered 1,429 detainees in 27 places of detention;
- in Yemen, carried out 5 visits to 5 places of detention and saw 5,927 detainees;
- in Yemen, ensured adequate sanitary conditions for detainees by visiting places of detention and encouraging the authorities to take responsibility in this regard; gave technical support to prison sanitation engineers.
 - in Yemen, handled 3,654 Red Cross messages, essentially between Somali refugees living in Yemen and their families abroad.



- cooperated with the Yemen Red Crescent Society on assistance to mentally ill detainees and dissemination of humanitarian law and principles to the civilian population;
- in Yemen, followed up the psychiatric care project recently delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross by facilitating cooperation between the various partners and ensuring that the relevant authorities continued their efforts to improve conditions for mentally ill detainees.



- in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, ran 5 courses for 104 officers of the armed forces;
- held a seminar in Sana'a for high-level government and non-government officials, in cooperation with the Yemen Red Crescent Society, on the incorporation of humanitarian law into the national legislation of States.

North Africa

EGYPT

The ICRC delegation in Cairo stepped up its main activity, namely to support the promotion of understanding and acceptance of international humanitarian law and the ICRC's mandate in the Arab world. It did so by designing and producing a range of dissemination material which was specially adapted to Arab audiences, and ensured that it was widely distributed or broadcast. Important contacts were made with the major radio networks which broadcast programmes in Arabic (the BBC and Radio Monte Carlo), for which the ICRC produced four radio series using Arab actors. The success of these series was demonstrated by the fact that they were subsequently broadcast by several national radio stations in the region. Working contacts were also built up with the Egyptian TV networks and other TV stations covering the Middle East and North Africa.

Particular stress was laid on reaching the younger generations of Arabs, the majority of whom may have little knowledge of humanitarian law or first-hand knowledge of the ICRC's work. The delegation produced a cartoon series, which was published free of charge by the biggest weekly magazine for young people in Egypt, *Alaa El Din*, during 17 weeks of the school holidays.

The delegation likewise produced a limited range of printed matter for specific, well-defined target audiences. It also lent technical support to the dissemination efforts of other ICRC delegations in the region aimed at specific contexts or countries.

To promote knowledge of the ICRC in Egypt itself, the delegation maintained contact, in particular, with representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs. Courses and lectures were held as usual for various military and academic target audiences and, for the first time, for members of the judiciary.

On several occasions the delegation met the Egyptian authorities and representatives of the League of Arab States to express the ICRC's concern about the fate of some 200 Palestinians stranded in a no-man's-land near Salloum, between the Egyptian and Libyan borders. The delegation was kept informed by *Médecins sans Frontières* of its activities in the camp and by UNHCR, which officially monitored the situation by means of contacts with both the Egyptian and the Libyan authorities.

A specialized delegate to the armed forces of the region was posted in Cairo and held successful sessions on international humanitarian law for the armed forces in Egypt and six other Arab countries, namely Iraq, Kuwait, Mauritania,

Morocco, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. The delegation maintained contact with the Arab League, whose Secretary General supported the ICRC's efforts to promote such training.

The activities of the delegation's tracing agency consisted mainly in issuing travel documents for nationals of the Horn of Africa countries and for those displaced by the southern Sudan conflict.

The delegation increased contacts with the Egyptian Red Crescent to inform its members more closely of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's and the ICRC's activities. The Red Crescent was actively involved in the ICRC's efforts, through its Legal Advisory Service, to create interministerial committees for the national implementation of humanitarian law.

EGYPT



– maintained and restored links between separated families in the region by handling 978 Red Cross messages, following up 58 tracing requests and issuing 253 travel documents.



– gave an explanatory account to an Egyptian Red Crescent youth rally in Cairo of humanitarian law and the ICRC.



– for the fifth year running, issued an illustrated calendar in Arabic using popular characters from traditional folk tales to demonstrate respect for humanitarian values; produced a cartoon series for young people on humanitarian values and the dangers of anti-personnel landmines;

– gave courses and lectures on humanitarian law and relevant ICRC activities for military, media, academic and cultural target audiences;

– in Egyptian judicial circles, held a series of lectures for the first time on the implementation of humanitarian law and the ICRC's mandates in international and internal armed conflicts and internal unrest for 100 chief and assistant prosecutors, 40 judges and for 40 presidents of courts of appeal.



– jointly with the Egyptian Nile TV, produced a film for use in the anti-landmines campaign in the Middle East.

TUNIS

Regional delegation (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco/Western Sahara, Tunisia)

The Tunis regional delegation continued to focus on the humanitarian issues arising from the aftermath of the Western Sahara conflict and the pursuit of attempts to resume protection activities in Algeria.

The delegation stepped up efforts to improve the operational capacity and visibility of the region's National Societies. In particular, it helped them to develop dissemination activities to improve understanding in the Maghreb region of the ICRC, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and humanitarian law. Regular contact was maintained with the region's media to promote coverage of the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and notable success was achieved in having information placed in the Moroccan and Tunisian press. The delegation gave special attention to promoting the ICRC's anti-landmine campaign.

A delegate from the regional delegation carried out ad hoc missions to Mauritania to maintain contact with the government and the Mauritanian Red Crescent on various dissemination matters. In addition, through various contacts, the delegate was briefed on the situation of refugees from northern Mali living in south-eastern Mauritania, with a view to supporting the ICRC's operation based in Bamako.⁹

Serious violence in Algeria again took its toll, mainly among civilians. The ICRC continued to seek consent for a resumption of its protection activities, which were suspended in 1992, and obtain the necessary security guarantees. The Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa visited Algiers in April and held talks with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the regional delegate carried out several further missions during the year, keeping up a substantive dialogue with the government. However, only very limited progress was achieved.

The ICRC helped to improve the Algerian Red Crescent's capacity to cope with urgent needs by providing financial assistance for its programmes for vulnerable sections of the population.

In August, four Algerians who had been held in Morocco for 12 years and visited by the ICRC since 1994 were released and repatriated under the auspices of the organization. In December, 49 Moroccans who had been held

*Serious violence
in Algeria*

⁹ See Dakar regional delegation, pp. 46-47.

*prisoners of the
Morocco/Western
Sahara conflict*

in Algeria for 11 to 17 years were released and repatriated under ICRC auspices. Four delegates, including a doctor, had visited them for the first time earlier that month.

Under the UN settlement plan accepted by the parties in 1988, the cease-fire in effect since September 1991 was to be followed by the registration of all those eligible to vote in a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara and the repatriation of all prisoners, but the referendum has repeatedly been delayed.

The ICRC, for its part, has persistently sought to obtain the release of all the prisoners held in connection with this never-ending conflict and thereby enable them to be reunited with their families. To this effect, at the request of the US and German governments, who negotiated their release, the ICRC supervised the transfer of 66 Sahrawi prisoners held by the Moroccan authorities in connection with the conflict, on 31 October. It had previously registered all these individuals during visits to the places where they were being held. The prisoners joined their families living in the Sahrawi refugee camps in the Tindouf area of southern Algeria, travelling there in a plane provided by the German authorities.

The ICRC welcomed this development, but expressed its utmost concern for those still in captivity, who should be released in conformity with humanitarian law. The issue was raised with the authorities concerned during the year. The Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa met leaders of the Polisario Front in April, and in June went to Morocco, where he met the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Commander in Chief of the *Gendarmerie Royale*.

In the meantime, delegates continued their regular visits to all prisoners, some of whom had been imprisoned for 20 years, and helped to restore and maintain family links.

IN 1996 THE ICRC:

- visited 1,356 Moroccan prisoners and registered 3 for the first time; within 12 months, i.e. between December 1995 and November 1996, most of the 1,900 Moroccans in the hands of the Polisario Front were seen in the course of 3 visits;
- carried out 2 visits to 66 Sahrawi prisoners in the hands of the Moroccan authorities; they were subsequently released and returned to their families, under ICRC auspices, in October;
- restored and maintained contact between Moroccan and Sahrawi prisoners and their families by exchanging 41,257 Red Cross messages and sent 1,330 family parcels to Moroccan prisoners via the Algerian Red Crescent;
- improved medical conditions for Moroccan prisoners and the Sahrawi population by providing ad hoc assistance to local medical facilities;
- supervised the repatriation of 4 Algerians held in Morocco and of 49 Moroccans held in Algeria.



- in Algeria, provided financial assistance towards the Red Crescent Society's programmes for vulnerable sections of the population: hot meals for several hundred families during Ramadan and school materials for thousands of children for the beginning of the school year;

- in Libya, provided articles for the Red Crescent Society's magazine; participated in its dissemination sessions for young people; cooperated with and provided training for its activities to restore and maintain family links;
- in Morocco, in cooperation with the Red Crescent Society, organized a seminar on medicine and humanitarian law in Tangiers and produced a brochure on a seminar held in 1995 on improving protection for women, which was well received;
- helped the National Societies of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Morocco to set up documentation centres on humanitarian law by supplying them with recent publications;
- worked closely with the Tunisian Red Crescent on its events to celebrate World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, and helped the youth branches set up first-aid and dissemination courses in medical schools throughout the country.



- organized 2 humanitarian law sessions for instructors to the armed forces in Mauritania and, for the first time, one in Morocco;
- in Morocco, participated in a round-table discussion on humanitarian law at Casablanca University;
- in Tunisia, attended a conference organized by the Tunisian Press Association and raised such issues as landmines, water and war, and the

protection of women and children during war; in cooperation with the Tunisian Institute for Press and Information, held a workshop entitled "Journalists and International Humanitarian Law" for 25 student journalists.



- made special efforts to follow up its campaign against landmines by providing information kits to the region's authorities, National Societies and media.