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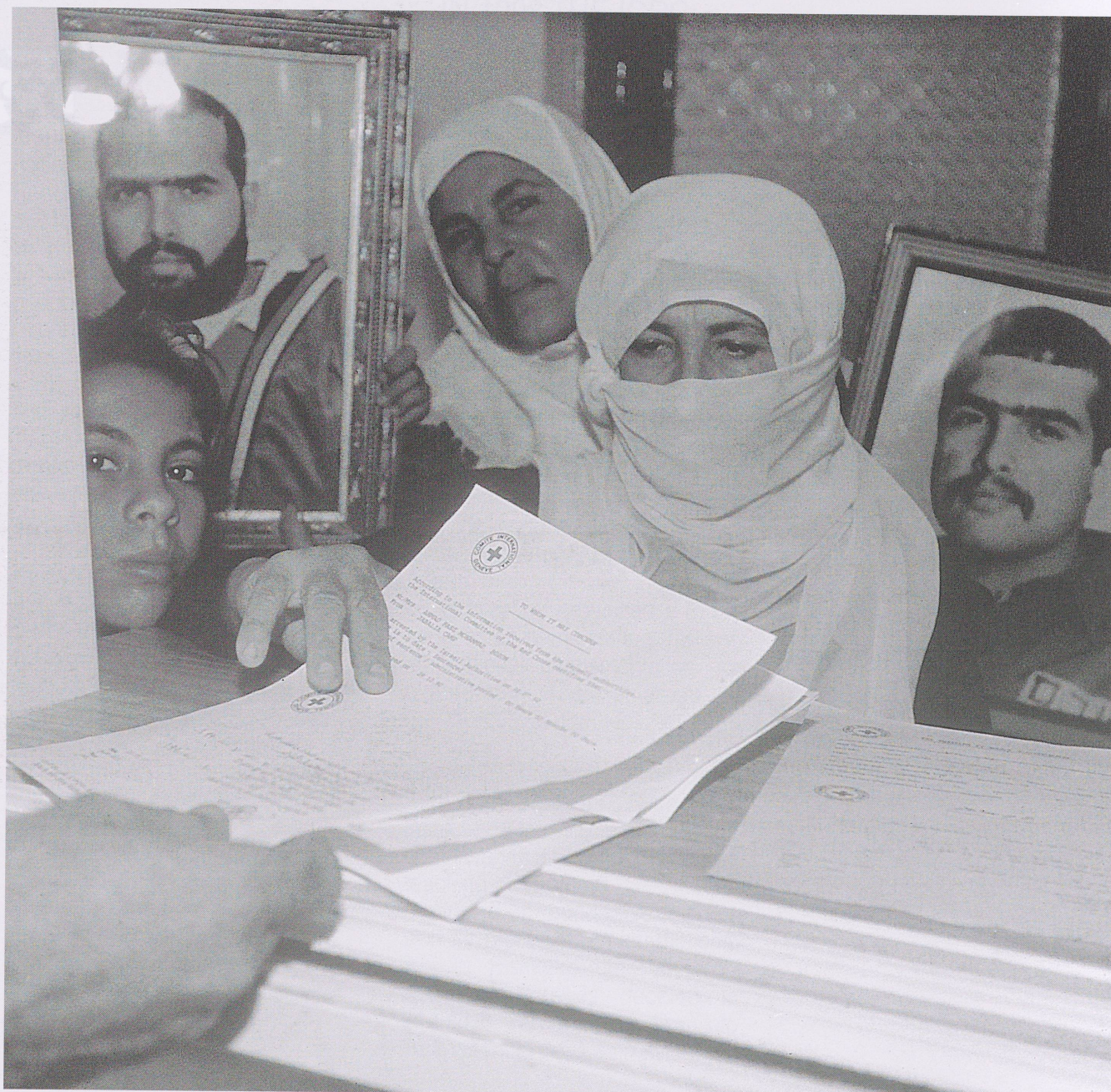
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In 1998, the ICRC collected 307,403 Red Cross messages from and distributed 295,605 to detainees, displaced people and countless others who could not otherwise keep in touch with their families. The ICRC also received 14,799 requests from families anxious to hear from relatives missing in times of conflict or other disturbances.

ICRC/T. Gassmann

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 expatriates: ¹ 83

National Societies: ¹ 4

Local employees: ² 405

Total expenditure **Sfr**
35,358,707

Expenditure breakdown

Protection/tracing: 19,323,307

Relief: 207,737

Health activities: 6,763,952

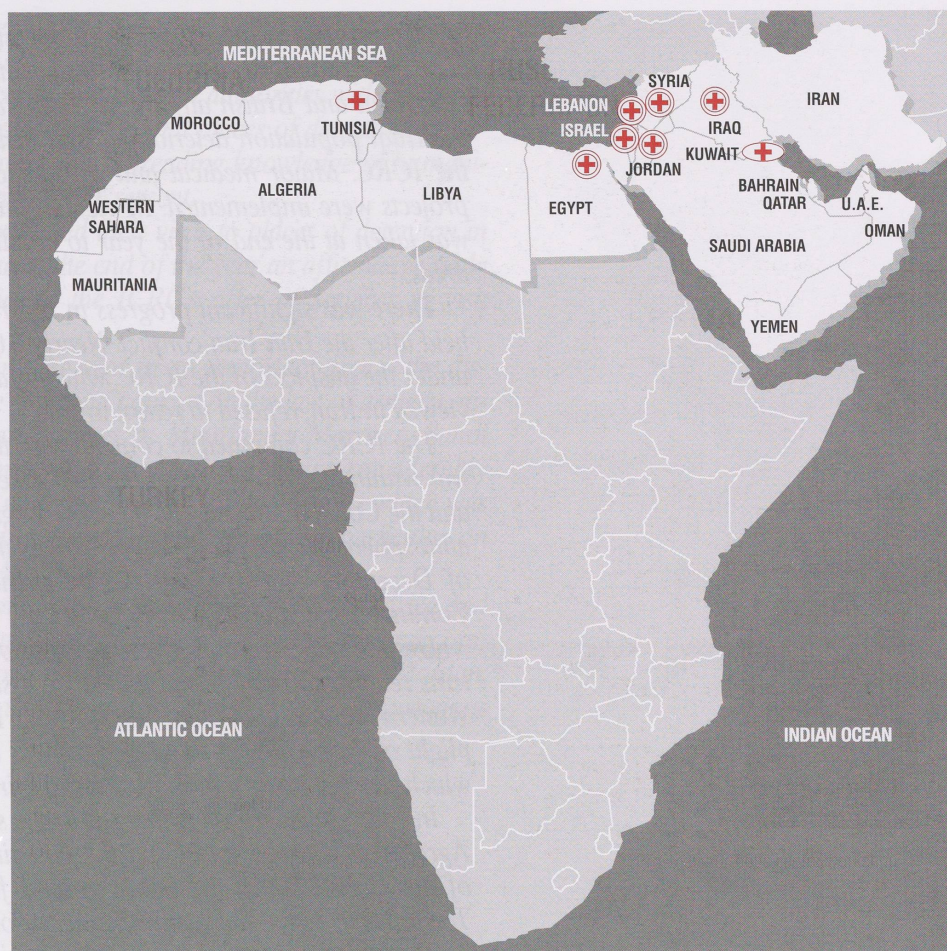
Cooperation with

National Societies: 2,100,818

Promotion/dissemination: 2,113,711

Operational support: 2,727,694

Overheads: 2,121,488



⛶ ICRC regional delegation ⛶ ICRC delegation

ICRC / AR 12.98

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1998.

One of the most serious developments in the Middle East during the year was the mounting tension in Iraq, which came to a head in December with American and British air strikes. As the dispute escalated, the living conditions of the Iraqi population deteriorated still further and remained a priority concern for the ICRC. Major medical and prosthetic/orthotic programmes and water-supply projects were implemented. In view of the extent of the country's needs a decision was taken at the end of the year to conduct a comprehensive assessment in those areas.

There was significant progress in regard to the some 9,000 prisoners of war still held after the Iran-Iraq conflict. Nearly 6,000 were released by Iran and repatriated under the auspices of the ICRC, whereas about 3,500 others, whom the ICRC interviewed in Iran, refused to return to Iraq.

The ICRC continued to contend with the humanitarian implications of the Gulf war within the framework of the Tripartite Commission, which brings together Iraq and the Coalition States. The three meetings held in 1998 took place in a constructive atmosphere, but following the air strikes the Iraqi delegation announced at the end of December that it would not be attending the meeting of the Technical Sub-Committee scheduled for early 1999.

Despite intensive diplomatic negotiations, no solution was found for the problems relating to implementation of the Oslo Agreement in the Near East or for the Western Sahara situation in North Africa. In Algeria extreme violence persisted. The plight of the victims in those regions was a source of grave concern for the ICRC, which stepped up its representations to bring about a humanitarian settlement.

In spite of the efforts which led to the signing in October of the Wye Plantation Agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, under the active auspices of the United States, the peace process failed to make any substantial progress. Towards the end of the year implementation of the agreement was deadlocked.

The ICRC continued its activities in aid of the Arab populations in the Israeli-occupied territories. The treatment of prisoners and the consequences in humanitarian terms of the settlements were issues of major concern. In the ICRC's view, Israel remains bound by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 until a final peace agreement consistent with international law is concluded on the status of the occupied territories.

Representations were made at a very high level in an attempt to find a solution to the problem of the Moroccan prisoners held by the Polisario Front, most of whom have been in detention for over 20 years. The ICRC, which visits almost all of them, considers that a comprehensive repatriation of prisoners (as provided for in the United Nations Settlement Plan) should take place irrespective of the status of the Sahrawis. The ICRC's efforts centred on the urgent need to reunite with their families 84 prisoners released by the Polisario Front back in April 1997. At the end of the year the ICRC decided to step up the medical assistance it provides for the prisoners.

pending a general repatriation. It also remained concerned about the fate of people still unaccounted for in this context.

The ICRC repeated its offer of services to the Algerian authorities with a view to visiting, in accordance with its customary procedures, all places of detention, assisting the victims of the violence in the country and spreading knowledge of humanitarian law, in cooperation with the Algerian Red Crescent.

Throughout 1998 ICRC delegates continued their visits to places of detention in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Yemen, and at the end of the year an affirmative reply was received from the Qatar authorities to the ICRC's offer of services to visit detainees.

Spectacular progress was made during the year in an important area – the dissemination of humanitarian law. For the first time, courses on the law of armed conflict were held for the armed and security forces in Mauritania, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. The ICRC's regional promotion office in Cairo considerably increased its production of information material for television and radio, which was designed to reach a vast Arabic-speaking audience and focused in particular on humanitarian law and the principles of Arab civilization and Islam.

Steps were taken to draw the attention of government circles in North Africa and the Middle East to the need to implement international humanitarian law and combat anti-personnel mines. In the latter context, three countries in the region (Jordan, Qatar and Yemen) ratified the Ottawa treaty prohibiting these deadly weapons in 1998.



meetings of experts convened by Switzerland

Near East

ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES

In June 1998 the State of Israel celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding. That event was perceived in very different ways by Israeli society and by the Palestinian population and prompted violent clashes in the occupied territories. For their part, the Israelis continued to express widely divergent views on the Israeli-Arab negotiations and the means of achieving peace. As a result the Oslo process remained deadlocked until the conclusion of the Wye Plantation Agreement.

That Agreement, which was signed on 23 October following intensive negotiations in which United States President Bill Clinton was personally involved, stipulates that Israel must hand over 13% of the occupied

territories on the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority for its part must take steps to guarantee the Jewish population a greater degree of security. Provision is also made, as part of the implementation of the Agreement, for the release of 750 detainees held by Israel.

On 20 November the Israeli authorities released 250 detainees. Demonstrations, some of them violent, ensued in all the towns of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to express the population's dissatisfaction at the number and category of prisoners who had been freed.

In December the President of the United States, who travelled to the Near East pursuant to the Wye Plantation Agreement, paid an official visit to Israel. He also went for the first time to the part of the Gaza Strip under autonomous Palestinian rule.

After an initial withdrawal from a small part of the of the occupied territories Israel again put a halt to implementation of the Agreement. At the same time the government of Benjamin Netanyahu was forced into a minority and early



elections were planned for 1999. Thus at the end of the year the process appeared to have reached deadlock once again.

In the territories occupied by Israel for 31 years, there were periods of relative calm punctuated by outbursts of violence.

The ICRC considers that until a final agreement consistent with international law is reached on the status of the occupied territories, Israel remains bound by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, in particular as regards the executive and administrative powers which that State actually exercises.

The importance of the ICRC's mandate to act as a neutral intermediary was demonstrated in 1998 by the operation in June to repatriate mortal remains and detainees released from Israeli prisons and from the Khiam detention centre in occupied southern Lebanon (see below, and under *Lebanon*).

For the ICRC, which has been working in the region since 1967, the treatment of prisoners and the humanitarian implications of the settlements were matters of profound concern. The ICRC repeatedly called upon the Israeli government to comply with international humanitarian law and to take the action necessary to put an end to violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In spite of its representations the ICRC observed no improvement in the humanitarian situation.

The ICRC's Director of Operations, accompanied by the Delegate-General for the Middle East and North Africa, was in Israel from 29 May to 2 June. There he met the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several of his colleagues. The talks centred on the activities of the ICRC and the problems it encounters.

During the year there were a number of bomb attacks against Israeli civilians. Such indiscriminate acts constitute a violation of international humanitarian law. The ICRC once again called for compliance with the most elementary rules of that body of law.

Pursuant to several resolutions³ adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1997 and 1998, the Swiss Confederation, the depositary State of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, convened a meeting of experts on the general problems that arose in implementing the Fourth Geneva Convention.⁴ The meeting was held in Geneva from 27 to 29 October 1998 and brought together representatives of 117 States Parties and 15 observers. The ICRC had drawn up a report on the subject at the request of the Swiss authorities. The participants reaffirmed that the Geneva Conventions provide valid protection for the civilian population in times of armed conflict.

ICRC's profound concern

meetings of experts convened by Switzerland

³ Resolutions ES-10/4 of 13 November 1997 and ES-10/5 of 17 March 1998 in particular.

⁴ See pp. 314-315.

*civilians in the
occupied territories*

Israeli and Palestinian representatives had met earlier in Geneva, from 9 to 11 June, under the auspices of the Swiss government and in the presence of the ICRC.

The civilian population protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention continued to be affected by major humanitarian problems in 1998. Difficulties of access to the labour market, restrictions imposed on trade and the sealing off of the territories had an adverse effect on economic activity, in both the short and the long term. The expansion of settlements, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, continued.

On the West Bank there were many clashes, leaving a number of people dead or wounded (in particular in March, May and at the end of the year) in the Hebron and Jerusalem areas. Thousands of people remained separated from their families. People were kept in detention outside the occupied territories, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. There were numerous cases of expropriation of land and demolition of houses, particularly in the areas entirely under the control of the Israeli authorities. Several dozen Bedouin families had to leave the areas where they were living; their tents were destroyed and their herds confiscated. Other measures, such as revocation of the right of abode (in East Jerusalem), confiscation of identity papers and forcible transfers, were also taken throughout the year against protected persons.

The ICRC did its utmost to improve the lot of civilians living in the occupied territories. Despite its representations to the Israeli government, it failed to bring about full compliance with humanitarian law. A very large number of cases of violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention were reported to the authorities.

visits to detainees in Israel

In 1998 the ICRC continued its visits to places of detention in Israel. As of July it carried out a complete series of visits to the country's 18 main places of detention and presented a periodic report to the authorities in August. ICRC delegates had regular access to around 3,600 detainees, 975 of whom were seen in private for the first time. Recommendations for improving treatment and conditions of detention were submitted to the prison authorities.

Particular attention was paid to the treatment of detainees under interrogation. The ICRC occasionally encountered obstacles in the way of its visits to that category of detainee within the time-limits laid down in the agreement on the matter signed with the authorities.

By the end of 1998 the ICRC had still not gained access to two Lebanese nationals held by Israel since 1989 and 1994 respectively. However, a third detainee of Lebanese origin was visited for the first time in May, two years after his arrest.

As in the past, the ICRC continued to fund and organize, in cooperation with the PRCS,* family visits to detainees held in Israeli prisons.

* PRCS: "Palestinian Red Crescent Society"

A 1997 judgement of the Israeli High Court was made public in 1998. According to that judgement, certain Lebanese detainees may continue to be held after their sentences have been completed to serve as bargaining chips. The ruling, which is tantamount to holding those prisoners hostage, constitutes a violation of the Geneva Conventions. The ICRC made repeated representations to the authorities to put an end to the practice, but in vain.

On 25 June the ICRC delegation in Israel took part, together with the delegation in Lebanon, in an operation to repatriate the mortal remains of an Israeli serviceman and 40 Lebanese fighters. The following day, ten people held in prisons in Israel and 50 detainees from the Khiam detention centre in occupied southern Lebanon were released and handed over to the ICRC.

The ICRC had been in contact with the Lebanese and Israeli authorities on this matter since September 1997 and, in its capacity as a neutral intermediary, had forwarded messages between the parties. It remained at the disposal of the parties to elucidate the fate of Israeli soldiers and Arab fighters reported missing in action in Lebanon and still unaccounted for.

Following the repatriation operation the ICRC was able to resume visits to the Khiam detention centre, to which the authorities had suspended access in September 1997.

In 1998 the ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary between Israel and countries with which it had no diplomatic relations or peace agreements.

The ICRC also acted as a neutral intermediary during the clashes in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank, facilitating emergency medical evacuations (see below under "*Palestinian Red Crescent*").

For some 30 years now the major problem for the Syrian population living on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights has been the separation of family members. Through its delegations in Israel and Syria the ICRC continued to provide assistance, in its capacity as a neutral intermediary, to civilians protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention. In particular, it facilitated the passage of people who had to cross the demarcation line for humanitarian reasons.

The ICRC repeated its representations with a view to ensuring that the Israeli forces and the SLA* militia fighting at their side in the occupied zone of southern Lebanon comply with humanitarian law, and that all the parties involved in the region abide by the rules on the conduct of hostilities.

At the request of the Palestinian Authority, the ICRC visits civilian and military places of detention in the autonomous territories. The visits are carried out in accordance with procedures set out in a Memorandum of Understanding signed

decision by the High Court

repatriation of released detainees and mortal remains

neutral intermediary

occupied Syrian Golan Heights

occupied southern Lebanon

detainees in the autonomous territories

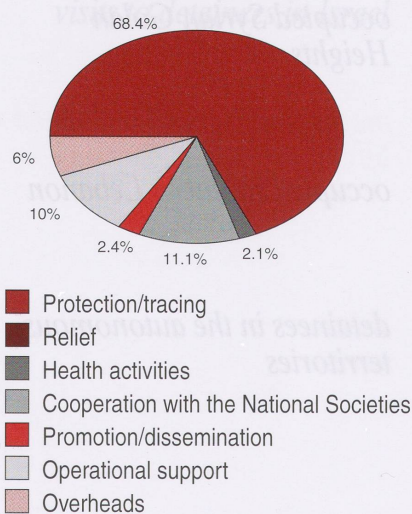
* SLA: South Lebanon Army

restoring family ties

*spreading the humanitarian
message*

ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES

Total expenditure in 1998:
Sfr 12,056,942



with the Palestinian Authority in 1996. In 1998 delegates visited 2,800 detainees in some 40 facilities in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank.

The ICRC offices in the occupied and the autonomous territories arranged for the exchange of Red Cross messages between dispersed family members, issued detention certificates required for administrative procedures and facilitated the movement of Palestinians for various reasons (visits to relations in detention, marriages, deaths, pilgrimages and study at Arab universities, for example).

In 1998 activities to increase awareness and understanding of humanitarian law and of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were considerably expanded in Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories.

In Israel an ICRC legal specialist held a course on humanitarian law at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Also at the Hebrew University, the ICRC was invited to explain to law students the ICRC's code of ethics concerning respect for human dignity in places of detention.

In June two talks on the law of armed conflict were given at the Tel Aviv Staff College by the Geneva-based head of dissemination for the armed forces. They were attended by around 50 Israeli military officers.

A round table on the ICRC's activities in the occupied and the autonomous territories brought together representatives of the Israeli civilian administration and ICRC delegates.

In the autonomous territories courses on humanitarian law were introduced into the programmes of seven Palestinian universities in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank, and members of the Palestinian Preventive Security Service received instruction in the rules of the law. A series of lectures on humanitarian law was also given for members of the Department of Planning and International Cooperation.

Under the 1997 Seville Agreement, the ICRC is responsible for coordinating the Movement's activities in the occupied and the autonomous territories.

As in the previous year, various National Societies ran bilateral projects under ICRC auspices in the occupied territories. The Australian Red Cross drew up an assessment report on the Women's Development Project, launched in Gaza in 1996, in order to determine the direction it should take over the next three years. The Netherlands Red Cross provided financial support⁵ and material and medical assistance for the seven hospitals and clinics run by the PRCS on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. It also supported the Society's primary health care programmes (in particular staff training and management techniques).

⁵ This programme is funded by ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Office).

On 17 February the ICRC and the PRCS signed an agreement establishing the framework and procedures for cooperation in 1998. The ICRC continued to provide support for the Society's ambulance service (operating and equipment costs).

A special effort was made to set up an emergency medical service at the Gaza branch of the PRCS. Staff were recruited and trained at a newly established centre and the Gaza ambulance service was taken over by the PRCS. Seven ambulances⁶ were fully equipped. Communication systems were improved so as to install a genuine "evacuation chain" for people injured during clashes from the moment they are picked up to the time they are admitted to hospital.

The ICRC also supported the PRCS documentation centre. Courses on communication techniques were held for local branches, and the Society organized a campaign to promote respect for the emblem on the occasion of World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on 8 May.

As previously, the ICRC supplied the MDA* with medical equipment for its blood bank. On 4 November ICRC representatives were invited to the official opening of the blood transfusion centre on the occasion of the MDA's 50th anniversary.

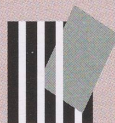
Efforts to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the PRCS and the MDA continued in 1998. In that connection the ICRC organized courses on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip for the staff of the two organizations.

*cooperation with the
"Palestinian Red Crescent"*

*cooperation with Magen
David Adom*

⁶ Two vehicles were funded by ECHO, one by the Düsseldorf *Staatskanzlei* and four by the ICRC.

* MDA: Magen David Adom



- carried out 216 visits to 32 places of detention run by the Israeli authorities, during which it regularly saw 3,600 individuals protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention, talking to 975 of them without witnesses for the first time;
- took part, on 25 and 26 June, in the repatriation of the mortal remains of an Israeli soldier and 40 Lebanese fighters and in the release and return home of 10 detainees freed from Israeli prisons and of 50 detainees freed from the Khiam detention centre in occupied southern Lebanon;
- in cooperation with the "Palestinian Red Crescent", organized 113,629 family visits to detainees;
- issued, authenticated or copied 15,151 detention certificates;
- restored and maintained contact between detainees held in Israeli facilities and their families by forwarding 5,294 Red Cross messages;
- provided detainees with educational and recreational items;



- restored and maintained contact between inhabitants of Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories and

IN 1998 THE ICRC:

- their families resident in countries having no diplomatic relations with Israel;
- processed 40 tracing requests;
- organized transfers between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights⁷ and Syria;



- made representations to the relevant authorities to remind them of their obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention as regards civilians in occupied territories;



- provided 84 tents for people whose houses had been demolished by Israeli security forces in the occupied territories;



- supplied equipment for the *Magen David Adom* blood bank;
- took part in a seminar organized by the MDA for its senior staff;
- in order to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the PRCS and the MDA, organized courses for the staff of the two organizations on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip;



- held a course on humanitarian law at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem;
- gave presentations on the law of armed conflict to around 50 officers of the Israeli armed forces at the Tel Aviv Staff College;
- organized a round table on the ICRC's activities in the occupied and the autonomous territories which brought together representatives of the Israeli civilian administration and ICRC delegates.

⁷ See pp. 280-281.

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- carried out 256 visits to 39 places of detention run by the Palestinian security services, during which it visited around 2,800 detainees, seeing 1,731 of them in private;
- provided detainees with educational and recreational items;



- supported PRCS programmes relating to care for the wounded (support for the ambulance service and staff training);
- contributed to the setting-up of a PRCS emergency service (evacuation and treatment of casualties) in Gaza, in particular by fitting out 7 ambulances, improving communication systems and training specialized staff;
- to mark 8 May, organized a drawing competition in cooperation with the PRCS multi-purpose community centre in Khan Yunis, in which 400 children took part.

JORDAN

In Jordan, 1998 was marked by the prolonged absence of King Hussein who was in hospital in the United States from June to December. The King died in Amman on 7 February 1999.

As in previous years, the ICRC's activities in Jordan covered the following areas: visits to places of detention, restoration and maintenance of family ties in the Israeli-occupied territories, dissemination of humanitarian law, and cooperation with the Jordan National Red Crescent Society.

The delegation in the Jordanian capital again served as the logistic base for the ICRC's relief activities in Iraq. This role was particularly important in December following the air strikes launched against Iraq.

visits to detainees

On 13 October 1997 the ICRC suspended its visits to the GID* because its delegates were refused access to the detainees held there. Representations were made immediately at the highest level, and were repeated at the beginning of 1998. The ICRC was able to resume its regular visits to the GID on 11 February, apart from a hiatus from 11 May to 16 June.

ICRC delegates continued to pay regular visits to seven other places of detention under the responsibility of the Public Security Directorate and the Military Intelligence Directorate. In August they visited Jafer prison in the south of the country following its reopening.

restoring family ties

The ICRC continued its activities in aid of Jordanian and Palestinian families with relatives held in Israel and the occupied territories, or in Kuwait as a result of the Gulf war.

Red Cross messages and official documents were forwarded during the year. In cooperation with the Jordan Red Crescent, the ICRC organized ambulance transfers of urgent medical cases across the river Jordan. In coordination with UNHCR, the ICRC issued travel documents for refugees without identity papers who were leaving for host countries.

disseminating international humanitarian law

The cooperation established with the Jordan Red Crescent and the Ministry of Education was consolidated in 1998 by the introduction of texts on humanitarian law for the final year of secondary school. Furthermore, an 11-page chapter dealing with the history of the Red Cross since its inception in 1863⁸ was incorporated in the history textbooks of candidates for the *tawjihi*, the equivalent of the secondary school leaving certificate.

Several courses and briefing sessions on the law of armed conflict were organized in May and November for members of the armed forces and the police.

⁸ The Red Crescent was officially recognized in 1929.

* GID: General Intelligence Directorate

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- carried out 42 visits to 454 security detainees at 8 places of detention and registered 357 of them for the first time;
- arranged for the exchange of 543 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families;
- organized, in May, a visit to Kuwait for families (25 people) with relatives detained in that country;
- repatriated, on 7 May, 5 Jordanian detainees released by the Kuwaiti authorities;
- organized, in October, a visit for 12 families (21 people) to relatives detained in Israel;



- restored and maintained contacts between families living in Jordan and their relatives held in Israel and Kuwait by forwarding 951 Red Cross messages;
- restored and maintained contacts between Jordanian families split up as a result of various conflicts by exchanging 67 Red Cross messages;
- arranged for the delivery of 37 official documents for families separated from relatives residing in the Israeli-occupied territories or the autonomous territories;
- issued travel documents for 357 people, most of them Iraqi nationals;

- issued 261 detention certificates in respect of detainees in Israel and in connection with the aftermath of the Gulf war;



- organized, on 15 and 16 April, a training workshop for 77 members of Jordan Red Crescent headquarters and branches and 26 officials of the Ministry of Education;



- formalized the incorporation of texts on humanitarian law in textbooks used in the final year of secondary school and, for candidates for the *tawjihi* (secondary school leaving examination), of texts on the history of the Red Cross;
- held, in May and November, courses on the law of armed conflict for 144 and 30 cadets respectively of the Amman Staff College and cadets from 12 other countries;
- organized an information day on the same subject for 28 female recruits from the Zarka Military Academy;
- gave a presentation on the ICRC and the Movement to 110 police officers in November;



- attended, in Amman in July, a conference on problems relating to landmine survivors organized by the NGO Landmine Survivors Network, in cooperation with the Jordan Red Crescent.

*conference on
landmine survivors*

The ICRC delegation in Amman was invited by the Institute of Diplomacy to give a talk on humanitarian law and peace-keeping forces to officers of various units of the armed forces.

On 11 and 12 June the President of the ICRC took part in a conference organized in Amman by the non-governmental organization Landmine Survivors Network on the problems of anti-personnel landmine survivors. The meeting was held under the auspices of Queen Noor and organized in cooperation with the Jordan Red Crescent and the Hashemite Charity Society. The aim of the meeting, the first of its kind in the Middle East, was to mobilize the States of the region on the issue of aid for mine victims and to promote the Ottawa treaty banning landmines. On 13 November Jordan ratified the Ottawa treaty.

*cooperation with
the National Society*

The 28th Conference of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies took place on 22 and 23 September. The ICRC's permanent Vice-President and the Delegate-General for the Middle East and North Africa, accompanied by the heads of delegations in the region, represented the ICRC at the event. On 24 September the ICRC President travelled to Amman for the official celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the Jordan Red Crescent.

In the autumn the ICRC took part in the first regional seminar organized by the Jordan Red Crescent and the University of Wisconsin on disaster preparedness, which brought together 25 participants from various Arab and Asian countries.

LEBANON

In 1998 the internal political situation in Lebanon was returning to normal. In June municipal elections were held for the first time in 35 years and in November General Emile Lahoud was elected President of the Republic to succeed Elias Hrawi. At the end of November Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri resigned. He was succeeded on 2 December by Selim Hoss.

With regard to UN resolution 425, which calls for Israel's unconditional withdrawal from southern Lebanon, the Israeli government announced in April that it was willing to comply with that demand. However, it stated that such a move would have to be made outside the framework of a formal peace treaty and in return for security guarantees in respect of Israel's northern border. The Lebanese government rejected that proposal, arguing that resolution 425 stipulated an unconditional withdrawal.

Military operations in southern Lebanon intensified during the first half of the year. The presence on the ground of the Monitoring Group,⁹ set up pursuant to the Understanding reached on 26 April 1996 following Operation Grapes of Wrath¹⁰ to urge the parties to the conflict to abide more strictly by the rules of the law of war, acted as a moderating factor in the fighting. The number of civilian casualties was considerably lower than in the previous year.

In August, for the first time since the April 1996 agreement, rockets were launched against northern Israel from southern Lebanon, wounding 12 people. At the end of the year the situation in southern Lebanon remained tense.

In the western Bekaa valley the Israeli army carried out several air raids during the year against presumed Palestinian positions, causing losses among the civilian population. On 22 December a Palestinian woman and her six children were killed during an Israeli air attack which was described as a mistake by the Israeli authorities. The next day Hezbollah launched several rockets against the Israeli town of Kyriat Shmona, wounding 13 people. Tension mounted after these incidents. The ICRC approached the two parties to remind them of the need to spare civilians during military operations.

For over 20 years the inhabitants of southern Lebanon, part of which is occupied by Israel, has been directly affected by the conflict. They are exposed not only to the dangers stemming from the hostilities, but also to various violations of humanitarian law, such as arbitrary detention, deportation out of the occupied zone and demolition of houses. Furthermore, problems of access to agricultural

*renewed tension in
the Bekaa valley*

*protection of the civilian
population*

⁹ The group is made up of American, French, Israeli, Lebanese and Syrian representatives.

¹⁰ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 240-241.

land, which is often situated in dangerous areas, the temporary sealing off of certain villages and the difficulty of access to medical care have dire consequences for the population both in economic terms and in terms of health and safety.

The ICRC approached all the parties to the conflict to urge them to abide by the provisions of humanitarian law and to spare civilians and civilian property. As previously, delegates on the ground recorded allegations of violations of the Geneva Conventions. Where necessary, the ICRC negotiated security guarantees with the various parties to enable its delegates to gain access to villages cut off by the fighting. In addition to medical aid for the region's health facilities, family parcels, cooking utensils and blankets were distributed to the victims of clashes in areas close to the front line.

*repatriation of bodies
and release of detainees*

On 25 June the ICRC took part, in its capacity as a neutral intermediary, in the repatriation of the mortal remains of an Israeli soldier and 40 Lebanese fighters. The remains were transported on board an aircraft made available by the French authorities and then handed over by the ICRC to representatives of their respective countries.

The next day ten people held in prisons in Israel and 50 detainees from the Khiam detention centre were released into the care of the ICRC. All the detainees had been able to speak in private with ICRC delegates to indicate their choice of destination. The ICRC transferred 55 detainees to Kfar Falous, just north of the occupied zone, where they were handed over to the Lebanese authorities.

The ICRC had been in contact with the Israeli and Lebanese authorities since September 1997, when it was asked to act as a neutral intermediary in forwarding messages between the parties.¹¹

resumption of visits to Khiam

After a nine-month ban on visits the ICRC regained access on 7 July 1998 to the detainees protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention held at the Khiam detention centre in Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon. Family visits to relatives in detention and the exchange of Red Cross messages, which the Israeli authorities had also suspended for the same period, were authorized again as of 9 July. Between September 1997 and June 1998 only parcels could be handed over for the detainees.

On 19 January a Lebanese national released after ten years in detention in Israel was repatriated by the ICRC.

On 3 September the ICRC took a female detainee released from the Khiam detention centre back to Beirut.

restoring family ties

Many families remained split up in 1998 on account of the Israeli occupation of the south of the country. The ICRC's services as a neutral intermediary therefore continued to be necessary for the delivery of messages and family parcels –

¹¹ See pp. 267-270.

in particular those intended for Lebanese nationals held by Israel – and for the transfer and/or repatriation of civilians or released detainees across the front line.

In 1998, after more than half a century in exile, thousands of Palestinians were still living in precarious conditions in camps in Lebanon while awaiting a political solution.

The ICRC continued to provide support in the form of medicines and emergency supplies for the camps' medical facilities.

In view of the upsurge in fighting, medical assistance remained a priority along the front line and in the security zone. Through its nine mobile clinics the ICRC continued to provide considerable support for isolated villages whose inhabitants had no access to medical care. Two additional villages were served, bringing to ten the number of places visited regularly by ICRC teams.

Hospitals, dispensaries and first-aid posts on the front line, as well as hospitals and clinics in the Palestinian camps, received medical assistance from the ICRC. Following the increase in tension in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa valley, ad hoc distributions of emergency medical and surgical supplies were carried out in those two regions.

In October the ICRC was able to repair a water main at Kfar Falous, near Sidon, which had been damaged as a result of the fighting. However, it was not possible to complete work on the spring and the pipeline at Nabaa Tassi near Nabatiyeh despite lengthy negotiations with all the parties concerned to obtain the necessary security guarantees. The 46 villages that rely on the spring had to continue taking their drinking water from tanks.

In the areas affected by the conflict the ICRC kept up its support for the operational activities of the Lebanese Red Cross Society, concentrating on the National Society's first-aid services (training and equipment, for example), the maintenance of its ambulance network and the provision of medical assistance.

The ICRC took part in the regional Youth Leadership Training Course held near Beirut from 25 to 29 June. The event was organized by the Amman office of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in cooperation with the Lebanese Red Cross.

The ICRC held courses on the law of armed conflict for the Lebanese armed forces in February and August.

On 21 February the ICRC was invited to take part in a workshop on the "Development of cooperation for protection against the danger of mines in Lebanon", organized by the Balamand University in Ashrafiyeh near Beirut under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. It brought together around 150 participants from academic and military circles and representatives of international and non-governmental organizations.

In March a colonel in the Lebanese army attended a course in humanitarian law at the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy, and in

Palestinian refugees

medical assistance

sanitation

*cooperation with
the National Society*

*disseminating
humanitarian law*

August a professor of international law took part in a seminar on humanitarian law held by the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.

With regard to the media, the emphasis was on radio and television. Publicity spots were produced on children and war, prisoners of war and anti-personnel mines, and were broadcast by Lebanese television networks and radio stations throughout September.

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- carried out 20 visits to 202 detainees at the Khiam detention centre, 102 of whom were seen in private for the first time;
- transferred, in June, 10 persons previously held in Israel and 50 detainees released from the Khiam detention centre by the South Lebanon Army;
- repatriated the mortal remains of an Israeli soldier and of 40 Lebanese fighters to their respective countries;
- repatriated, in January, 1 Lebanese detainee released by the Israeli authorities;
- in July, returned to his home a shepherd who had been captured by Hezbollah after straying onto the boundary of the security zone in late June;
- returned to Beirut, in September, a detainee released from the Khiam detention centre;
- organized 487 family visits to the Khiam detention centre;
- issued 642 detention certificates;



- made representations to the parties to the conflict whenever necessary to remind them of the need to comply with humanitarian law in respect of civilians;



- exchanged 5,439 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families;



- provided ad hoc assistance for victims of the conflict, distributing a total of 4,158 family parcels and 6,195 blankets;



- provided medical assistance for 16 hospitals, 27 dispensaries and various first-aid posts in the Israeli-occupied security zone and along the front line and for around 20 other facilities elsewhere in the country, particularly in the Bekaa valley;
- by means of its 9 mobile clinics, gave consultations in 10 isolated villages on the front line;
- supplied assistance to 5 hospitals and 18 clinics in the Palestinian refugee camps;



- repaired, in October, a water main damaged by the fighting in Kfar Falous in southern Lebanon;



- maintained the operational capacity of the Lebanese Red Cross in areas affected by the conflict;

- took part, in June, in a training course for first-aiders which was organized by the Federation's office in Amman and brought together 26 participants from National Societies of the region and of the Gulf;
- set up, together with the National Society, a stand at the Sidon industrial fair;



- organized, from 10 to 16 February, a course on the law of armed conflict for 9 instructors from the Staff College of the Lebanese army;
- gave a presentation on the activities of the ICRC, the Movement and the emblem to 30 officers in August;
- produced spots on various subjects relating to humanitarian law and the danger of mines for radio stations and television networks;



- took part, in February, in a workshop on the "Development of co-operation for protection against the danger of mines in Lebanon", organized by the Balamand University in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

SYRIA

As in previous years, the ICRC's work in the Syrian Arab Republic during the year was mainly connected with the humanitarian implications of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the dissemination of humanitarian law.

The ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary for the Syrian inhabitants of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, who are protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention. The dialogue between Israel and Syria on the occupied Golan Heights had not been resumed by the end of the year.

On 25 November the UN Security Council voted unanimously to extend the mandate of UNDOF* until 31 May 1999.

For dispersed families, whether Syrian nationals or Palestinian refugees, the ICRC forwarded family messages to relatives in third countries or the Israeli-occupied territories. It repatriated prisoners released by Israel and arranged for the passage of civilians across the demarcation line. It also issued travel documents for refugees accepted for resettlement in third countries.

Throughout the year the ICRC delegation in Damascus maintained regular contact with the Syrian authorities. It also remained in contact with representatives of various Palestinian groups in the capital.

repatriations Four Syrian nationals held in Israel were released in 1998. The ICRC arranged for the repatriation of three of them in February and the fourth in May. Those operations were carried out with the logistic support of UNDOF and UNTSO.*

As previously, the ICRC cooperated with UNHCR in providing travel documents for Iraqi refugees accepted for resettlement in third countries. An ICRC delegate went to the Al-Houl refugee camp in the north-east of the country for this purpose.

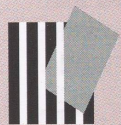
physical rehabilitation The prosthetic/orthotic centre run by the "Palestinian Red Crescent" (PRCS) in Damascus was able to increase production thanks to a hydraulic press donated by the ICRC's Special Fund for the Disabled in 1997. Orthopaedic components and parts for elbow crutches were produced using polypropylene, a light and low-cost material.

Under an agreement concluded with the PRCS and the ICRC, the German Red Cross covered the running costs of the prosthetic/orthotic centre in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus.

* UNDOF: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

* UNTSO: United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



– organized, with logistic support from UNDOF, the repatriation of 4 Syrian detainees released by Israel (3 in February and 1 in May);



- organized 404 transfers of students and pilgrims between Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights;
- exchanged 554 Red Cross messages between separated family members;
- issued travel documents for 376 refugees, most of them Iraqi nationals, who had been accepted in third countries;
- issued 19 detention certificates;



– provided support in the form of technical and material assistance for the prosthetic/orthotic centre of the "Palestinian Red Crescent" in Damascus, funded by the German Red Cross;



– funded the publication of 2 brochures, 1 on the basics of first aid and the principal rules of humanitarian law and the other on the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society; funded the Red Crescent stand at the Damascus Book Fair; supplied the National Society with

documents on the dangers of landmines;

- provided training for National Society staff, in particular in methods of restoring family ties; held, in September, a course on humanitarian law for 96 young volunteers of the Damascus branch of the Syrian Red Crescent.



- drew up, at the request of the Syrian Ministry of Defence, a plan for courses to train instructors in the law of armed conflict; gave presentations, during two conferences in August, on the law of war for around 30 senior UNDOF officers;
- arranged for a professor of international law at the University of Damascus to attend a seminar organized jointly by the Graduate Institute of International Studies and the ICRC in Geneva in August;
- provided the Al-Assad national library and university professors in Damascus with documentation on humanitarian law.

*disseminating
humanitarian law*

The Ministry of Defence approached the ICRC with a view to increasing knowledge of the law of armed conflict among the Syrian armed forces. To that end, on 3 November the ICRC delegate in Damascus met high-ranking officers to whom he submitted proposals for courses to train instructors who in turn would teach humanitarian law to the troops.

From 27 June to 3 July two representatives of the armed forces attended a seminar in Syracuse, Italy, on humanitarian law and weapons control in armed conflicts, organized by the International Institute of Higher Studies in Criminal Sciences.

The ICRC delegate in Damascus attended, together with a representative from Geneva headquarters, the 16th Conference of the Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation from 11 to 13 July. In its final communiqué the conference urged the parliamentarians to work for the adherence by their respective States to the Ottawa treaty prohibiting anti-personnel mines.

The ICRC provided the Al-Assad national library and professors of international law in Damascus with documentation on humanitarian law.

The Gulf IRAN

The resumption of negotiations between Iran and Iraq on issues still outstanding after the 1980-1988 war led to the repatriation, under ICRC auspices, of several thousand prisoners of war in April.¹²

Following the announcement by the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan of the discovery of the bodies of eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist killed during the fighting in August in Mazar-i-Sharif, the Iranian government and the Taliban asked the ICRC to act as a neutral intermediary in the repatriation of the remains.

The repatriation operations were carried out on 14 September and 11 October by means of an aircraft chartered by the ICRC. The ICRC informed the parties that it remained at their disposal should its services be required again.

In October 36 Iranian nationals held at Kandahar prison were released by the Taliban forces and repatriated in two groups under the auspices of the ICRC.

On 26 May two senior members of the Iranian Red Crescent Society were received at ICRC headquarters in Geneva. The talks focused on cooperation projects.

Some 15 people from the National Society came to ICRC headquarters on 2 November for working meetings with various ICRC staff. The delegation was paying a visit to the Federation.

*repatriation of mortal remains
from Afghanistan*

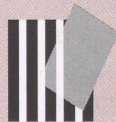
release of Iranian detainees

*cooperation with
the National Society*

¹² See pp. 289-290.

IRAN

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



– repatriated in October 36 Iranians held in Kandahar, Afghanistan, and released by the Taliban authorities;

– repatriated the mortal remains of 8 Iranian diplomats and a journalist killed during fighting in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan;



– received at headquarters 2 senior members and a delegation of 15 people from the Iranian Red Crescent for working meetings in May and November respectively.

IRAQ

The situation in Iraq deteriorated steadily in 1998. Already at the beginning of the year the United States threatened to resort to force, but the visit to Baghdad from 20 to 23 February by the UN Secretary-General made it possible to reach an agreement. In April the Security Council renewed the sanctions in effect since 1991. In spite of the extension of "oil for food" resolution 986, the humanitarian problems stemming from the sanctions worsened. In August the Iraqi authorities declared that they were no longer willing to cooperate with the international experts. The crisis intensified in October and November and all UN personnel were evacuated. On 5 November the Security Council adopted a new resolution and the UNSCOM* inspections resumed. A fresh crisis erupted following the report by the Chairman of UNSCOM. On 15 December UNSCOM personnel were evacuated once again and during the night of 16/17 December the United States and the



United Kingdom launched a four-day campaign of air strikes dubbed "Operation Desert Fox".

The authorities in Baghdad stated that they would not allow UNSCOM to return and refused to comply with the air exclusion zones in the south and north of Iraq which had been in force since the Gulf war. The final days of 1998 were marked by incidents involving American aircraft and Iraqi air defence systems, and the year ended on a very tense note.

Operation Desert Fox

As soon as the air strikes began, the ICRC sent a diplomatic note to the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and Iraq reminding them of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Under that body of law, belligerents must take all necessary precautions to spare civilians and civilian property, to treat persons captured humanely, to ensure

* UNSCOM: United Nations Special Commission responsible for disarmament in Iraq

that the wounded and sick are collected and cared for, to protect medical establishments, personnel and means of transport, and to ensure respect for the red cross/red crescent emblem.

In Iraq itself the ICRC set up an emergency programme. Medical sets to treat the war-wounded, sheets and blankets were distributed with the cooperation of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society to Baghdad's four major hospitals and to the main medical facilities in 14 other governorates.

In Tikrit, 200 kilometres to the north of Baghdad, a 400-bed hospital suffered blast damage when three missiles landed close by. The ICRC immediately started work to put the hospital back into operation as rapidly as possible. Repair work is set to continue in 1999.

The situation at six water treatment plants around the capital and those in Basra, Nasiriyah and Mosul was checked. Fortunately, no damage was found.

The decline in the living conditions of the Iraqi population, due in particular to the embargo that has remained in force for over eight years, continued to cause concern for the ICRC in 1998.

Despite implementation of "oil for food" resolution 986, the situation remained very difficult for the Iraqi population throughout the year. Oil production did not reach the level authorized by the Sanctions Committee, mainly because of the poor state of the installations, so Iraq was unable to import the necessary quantities of medicines, food and other essentials to make up for shortages. The medical infrastructure, water treatment and electricity generating plants and communication systems, which had been out of action or disused since the beginning of the embargo in 1991, were also in a very precarious state. Water and sanitation programmes (see below) therefore remained a priority.

Although the implementation of resolution 986 enabled Iraq's water boards to obtain materials for the maintenance and repair of installations, the problems resulting from several years' interruption in the operation of certain facilities continued to cause a great deal of concern. As in previous years, the ICRC devoted a large part of its budget for Iraq to water treatment and sanitation work. However, in view of the general state of the country's water-supply systems, this went only a short way towards meeting needs.

The seven ICRC teams (two expatriates and some 30 Iraqi engineers and technicians) completed some 50 projects throughout the country to repair or maintain drinking water and waste water treatment plants and sewage systems. Overall, several million people benefited from these programmes.

The ICRC supplied the chemicals and other materials necessary to operate and maintain water treatment and production plants. It supervised renovation work and, wherever possible, gave priority to the use of local personnel and resources (purchases or production on the spot).

assistance for the civilian population in Iraq

water and sanitation

programmes for amputees

In 1998 the ICRC and the Iraqi authorities signed several agreements relating to ongoing prosthetic/orthotic programmes for the war-disabled, mainly amputees from the Iran-Iraq conflict, casualties of the fighting in northern Iraq and people injured by landmines. On 28 March an agreement was concluded with the Ministry of Education concerning cooperation between the ICRC and the Institute of Medical Technology in Baghdad (assistance for an outpatient clinic at the Institute and training for specialist staff). In July the ICRC held a one-week seminar on the production of lower-limb prostheses using polypropylene. Eight technicians from the Ministries of Health and of Defence, the Institute and the Iraqi Red Crescent took part in the seminar, which resulted in the publication of a technical handbook in Arabic.

February saw the opening of the Ibn Al-Kuff centre. The centre, which depends on the Ministry of Defence, produced around 60 prostheses a month from the time it was opened. The ICRC had funded and supervised rehabilitation work on the premises under an agreement signed in December 1997.

The cooperation agreement on the ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic activities in northern Iraq was also renewed in 1998.

Throughout the year the ICRC continued to run its component workshop in Baghdad. It also provided technical and financial support for four Ministry of Health limb-fitting centres in Baghdad, Basra and Najaf and for a Iraqi Red Crescent centre in Mosul.

The ICRC launched an information campaign on activities relating to amputees with the support of the Iraqi Red Crescent and the Ministry of Health. Awareness-raising tours were organized and documentation was distributed.

The ICRC also stepped up its efforts to familiarize the Iraqi population with its activities. It signed an agreement with the Ministry of Information and Culture to spread knowledge of the ICRC's activities and mandate among schoolchildren by means of a magazine. In addition, a news bulletin was published in Arabic, Kurdish and English for the general public and the national and international organizations working in the country.

Under an agreement with the Iraqi National Olympic Committee, 650,000 lottery tickets were printed with inserts describing the ICRC's activities in Iraq. This was supplemented by a promotional spot shown daily on television.

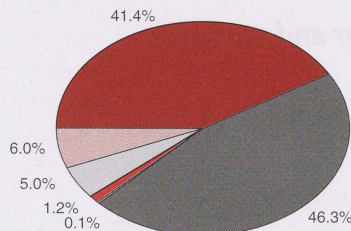
Cooperation between the ICRC and the Iraqi Red Crescent essentially involved assistance programmes – provision of medical and surgical supplies to the country's health facilities, support for the Iraqi Red Crescent's prosthetic/orthotic workshop in Mosul, and non-food aid for displaced persons in northern Iraq.

Efforts were also made in the area of preparing National Societies for emergency and conflict situations in order to optimize operational capacity.

Cooperation relating to the restoration of family ties continued. The ICRC carried out an assessment at the various branches of the National Society with a view

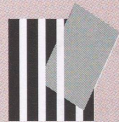
IRAQ

Total expenditure in 1998:
Sfr 11,865,164



- Protection/tracing
- Relief
- Health activities
- Cooperation with the National Society
- Promotion/dissemination
- Operational support
- Overheads

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



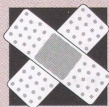
- repatriated to their respective countries, in February, 6 people who had entered Iraq illegally;
- visited, at the Abu Ghraib centre, 78 nationals of countries without diplomatic representation;
- carried out, in northern Iraq, 98 visits to 35 places of detention where it saw 1,516 people detained for security reasons or in connection with the fighting between the various Kurdish factions;
- provided ad hoc aid for detainees visited in northern Iraq;



- issued 968 travel documents for refugees;



- supplied ad hoc material assistance to the most needy groups of people displaced by the fighting since 1994 in the northern governorates (8,000 families in total);
- provided emergency assistance for people displaced by recent fighting in the same region (600 families);



- during the Desert Fox air strikes, provided 4 hospitals in Baghdad and a dozen others elsewhere in the country with emergency medical and surgical supplies sufficient to treat 500 war-wounded;

- rehabilitated a hospital in Tikrit damaged by the air attacks;
- continued throughout the year to furnish medical supplies for hospitals across Iraq;
- supplied some 20 health facilities in northern Iraq with surgical material sufficient to treat around 2,000 war-wounded during the year;



- continued to provide support for 4 government prosthetic/orthotic centres (in Baghdad, Basra and Najaf), the Iraqi Red Crescent centre in Mosul and its own centre in Arbil (northern Iraq);
- produced, in its workshop in Baghdad, 3,096 prostheses (1,699 of them for victims of anti-personnel mines), 2,733 orthoses and 136 pairs of elbow crutches;
- contributed to the training of technicians from all over the country, and held a course at the Institute of Medical Technology in Baghdad on the production of polypropylene prostheses under an agreement signed with the Ministry of Education;



- completed about 50 projects involving water treatment and distribution plants across the country and provided the equipment and products necessary for maintenance and construction work on the installations, carried out in cooperation with the Iraqi water boards;



- continued to support the 3 branches of the National Society in northern Iraq, in particular in providing emergency aid for displaced families;
- gave support to the Iraqi Red Crescent limb-fitting centre in Mosul;
- signed an agreement with the Iraqi Red Crescent on the dissemination of humanitarian principles whereby volunteers will be trained in this area as of 1999;
- carried out an assessment of the National Society's activities to restore family ties, so as to upgrade on-the-job training of specialized staff, and in the area of preparedness for emergency and conflict situations;
- presented the ICRC's activities and mandate to schoolchildren in a magazine designed especially for them;
- printed descriptions of the ICRC's activities in Iraq on 650,000 lottery tickets, and produced complementary spots shown daily on Iraqi television;
- published a news bulletin for the general public in Arabic, Kurdish and English.

to setting up a plan of action in 1999. An agreement on the dissemination of humanitarian principles was signed at the end of the year.

The new President of the Iraqi Red Crescent was received at ICRC headquarters in October.

Matters relating to the aftermath of the Iran/Iraq conflict and the Gulf war are dealt with in separate sections.¹³

northern Iraq

The beginning of the year was relatively calm in northern Iraq because of the dialogue initiated by the PUK* and the KDP* with a view to reconciliation between the two factions. Towards the end of May the Turkish armed forces, which back the KDP, carried out military operations against the PKK.* Sporadic clashes continued up to November, when full-scale fighting resumed. The military operations took place mainly to the north of Arbil in relatively sparsely populated areas, and thus had a limited effect on the civilian population. Nevertheless, around 600 families were forced to flee the combat zones and had to be given emergency assistance (see below).

On 17 September the KDP and the PUK signed an agreement in Washington for the establishment of a joint provisional government in advance of fresh elections. The agreement also provided for the withdrawal of the PKK from Iraqi soil, the release of detainees arrested for political reasons and the return of displaced persons to their places of origin.

*representations to
the authorities*

Throughout the year the ICRC made recommendations to its contacts concerning respect for the civilian population on the part of fighters of all the parties involved.

visits to detainees

Delegates continued to visit civilian and military detainees in many places of detention in northern Iraq. The number of detainees dropped sharply following several releases in early 1998, and conditions of detention improved as a result. The ICRC provided the detainees visited with ad hoc assistance.

medical and non-food aid

Following the clashes between Kurdish factions, surgical material sufficient to treat around 2,000 war-wounded was handed over to some 20 health facilities in the region.

Although the clashes occurred in sparsely populated areas, they forced hundreds of civilians to seek refuge further south. With the cooperation of volunteers from local branches of the Iraqi Red Crescent, the ICRC distributed emergency supplies to displaced persons who had received no aid from the authorities or other humanitarian organizations.

¹³ See pp. 289-292.

* PUK: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

* KDP: Kurdish Democratic Party

* PKK: Kurdish Workers' Party

AFTERMATH OF THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR

At the beginning of 1998, ten years after the end of the conflict between Iran and Iraq, several thousand Iraqi prisoners of war were still under the responsibility of the Iranian authorities.

The ICRC, which visited some of them in previous years, has constantly called upon the parties since 1988 to abide by the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention of 1949 and hence to repatriate these men. The resumption of dialogue between Iran and Iraq on the POW question and the issue of missing persons resulted in very significant progress in 1998.

A major repatriation operation took place between 2 and 7 April, when 5,584 Iraqi POWs held in Iran and three Iranian POWs and another 316 Iranian detainees were repatriated under ICRC auspices. ICRC delegates were able to check the identity of the prisoners and to interview each of them in private so as to ensure that they were returning to their respective countries of their own free will.

With a view to finding a humanitarian solution to the problem of the remaining prisoners, the ICRC informed the parties that its delegates would have to be granted authorization to interview the men in private in order to ascertain whether or not they wished to be repatriated.

At the request of the Iranian authorities, a team of six delegates was based in Iran in August to conduct such interviews and oversee the repatriations. It remained on the spot until the end of the year. By 9 December the delegates had spoken in private to 3,497 POWs. The majority decided not to return to Iraq.

On 16 December the ICRC repatriated to Iraq 196 Iraqi POWs and 16 nationals of other countries. It also repatriated the mortal remains of an Iraqi POW who died at the end of 1998. The ICRC had had no access to most of these prisoners during their captivity. Further repatriation operations were planned for 1999.

In 1998 some progress was made in ascertaining the fate of those unaccounted for since the conflict between Iran and Iraq. Bilateral discussions between the two countries revealed a willingness to resolve this issue, which affects tens of thousands of families without news of their relatives. The ICRC did not take part in these discussions. According to reports in the Iranian press, around 27,000 exhumations were carried out in Iran in 1998 for identification purposes. The two countries organized several operations to repatriate remains without the involvement of the ICRC.

repatriation of POWs

the problem of missing persons



– repatriated, between 2 and 7 April, 5,584 Iraqi POWs from Iran and 3 Iraqi POWs and another 316 Iranian detainees from Iraq, after having checked their identity and ascertained that they were returning to their respective countries of their own free will;

IN 1998 THE ICRC:

– repatriated, on 16 December, 196 Iraqi POWs and the mortal remains of 1 Iraqi POW, and 16 nationals of other countries, in accordance with the same procedures;

– interviewed in private, between August and the end of December, another 3,497 Iraqi POWs still in Iran to determine whether or not they wished to be repatriated;

– processed 157 tracing requests and issued 195 detention certificates.

AFTERMATH OF THE GULF WAR

In October 1998 the UN Security Council extended the mandate of UNIKOM* until 7 April 1999.

The Tripartite Commission,¹⁴ chaired by the ICRC, held three meetings in Geneva in 1998 with a view to resolving the matter of persons unaccounted for since the occupation of Kuwait and the 1991 hostilities. Nine meetings of the Technical Sub-Committee, also chaired by the ICRC, were held in the demilitarized zone on the Iraq-Kuwait border.

In the same context a Swiss expert appointed by the ICRC at the request of the parties went to Iraq to carry out a fact-finding mission in the area where an aircraft believed to belong to the Saudi armed forces crashed during the Gulf war. The expert found that the aircraft did in fact belong to the Saudi armed forces. A team is to travel to the spot in early 1999 to identify the pilot's remains.

In both Iraq and Kuwait the ICRC continued to monitor the treatment and conditions of detention of persons detained in connection with the Gulf war.

In Kuwait it visited detainees having no diplomatic protection, mainly Jordanians, Sudanese, Yemenites, Palestinians without travel documents and stateless persons. ICRC delegates visited people subject to expulsion orders and staying in transit camps, making sure that their departure for countries of resettlement took place under proper conditions (that is, that they were permitted to leave with their families and having had the opportunity to settle their personal affairs). The ICRC ensured that such people were not expelled to countries where they had reason to fear persecution. The Talha transit camp was closed in July.

Following representations by the ICRC delegation in Jordan, a family visit was organized in May for the relatives of Jordanian detainees held in Kuwait. Five Jordanian detainees were released by the Kuwaiti authorities and were repatriated when their relatives returned to Jordan.

The ICRC intervened on behalf of an Iraqi seaman detained in Kuwait after the inspection in March – on account of the embargo – of the Romanian freighter on which he was working.

In Iraq the ICRC also visited people without diplomatic protection held at the Abu Ghraib detention centre near Baghdad.

Two Saudi nationals and two Kuwaitis detained for entering Iraq illegally were released and repatriated, in February and March respectively, under ICRC auspices via the Safwan border crossing point between Iraq and Kuwait.

Tripartite Commission

inquiry into a 1991 air crash

*visits to detainees in
Iraq and Kuwait*

repatriations

¹⁴ The Tripartite Commission is made up of representatives of Iraq, France, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

* UNIKOM: United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission

The ICRC continued to arrange for the exchange of Red Cross messages between members of families separated since the Gulf war. It also issued travel documents for people who had been accepted by host countries but had no identity papers.

AFTERMATH
OF THE GULF
WAR



- in Iraq, visited 78 civilian nationals of countries not represented in Iraq since the Gulf war and held at the Abu Ghraib detention centre near Baghdad;
- in Kuwait, visited 232 detainees in 7 places of detention;
- organized, in May, a visit for 25 members of Jordanian families to their relatives held in Kuwait and repatriated 5 detainees released on that occasion;
- repatriated via the Safwan border crossing point, in February and March respectively, 2 Kuwaitis and 2 Saudis who had been held for illegally entering Iraq;



IN 1998 THE ICRC:

- chaired 3 meetings of the Tripartite Commission and 9 meetings of the Technical Subcommittee to ascertain the fate of people unaccounted for since the occupation of Kuwait and the Gulf war;
- forwarded 10,744 Red Cross messages in one direction and 9,189 in the other between families in Kuwait and relatives from whom they were separated as a result of the Gulf war;
- exchanged 22,000 Red Cross messages between families in Iraq and their relatives abroad, in connection with the Gulf war;
- issued 20 travel documents for people leaving to resettle in host countries, and 112 detention certificates.

KUWAIT

Regional delegation

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

In 1998 the regional delegation gave priority to efforts to resolve the humanitarian problems arising from the Gulf war,¹⁵ and in particular to ascertain the fate of persons still unaccounted for. The ICRC maintained contact with the Kuwaiti authorities, especially the National Committee for Missing and POW Affairs, on these matters.

The ICRC continued to visit places of detention under the responsibility of the Ministries of the Interior, Defence and Social Affairs.

The ICRC made sustained efforts to promote humanitarian principles and rules in the region. Two sessions of a course on humanitarian law were attended by about 80 law students from the University of Kuwait City.

As regards dissemination among the armed forces, a large number of seminars were organized in the Gulf region in 1998. In Kuwait an initial seminar on 18 March brought together 14 participants at the Al-Jiwan military camp. In September a second seminar was held at the Command and Staff College and was attended by 70 officers from Kuwait and other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Ten American and British officers also took part.

Particular attention was paid to the media, and a large number of articles were published in the regional press in English and in Arabic.

As previously, the regional delegation maintained regular contact with the OIC,* whose headquarters are in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in accordance with a cooperation agreement signed by the two organizations.

The ICRC's permanent Vice-President, accompanied by the regional delegate, visited Riyadh from 29 May to 1 June at the invitation of the Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs. He met a number of high-ranking dignitaries, including several members of the royal family, and the Chief of Staff of the armed forces.

During the talks held on that occasion the Vice-President raised matters of mutual interest, such as the problem of persons unaccounted for since the Gulf war and the need to increase awareness of humanitarian law in the region. The visit also provided the ICRC with an opportunity to express its wish to consolidate existing links and to broaden and diversify its funding by enlisting the support of other countries in the region.

visits to places of detention

spreading the humanitarian message

relations with the OIC

ICRC Vice-President in Saudi Arabia

¹⁵ See pp. 291-292.

* OIC: Organisation of the Islamic Conference

*restoring family ties**activities in Qatar*

The Vice-President also met the new President of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society.

For the first time since 1992, a course on the law of armed conflict was held at the Command and Staff College from 21 to 24 November. The event brought together around 20 officers, mainly from the Saudi air force and navy.

The Islamic Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held in Doha, the capital of Qatar, in March. The ICRC's permanent Vice-President and the regional delegate based in Kuwait attended the meeting, and the Vice-President had talks with the foreign ministers of several countries of the region.¹⁶

Following approaches made in July with a view to visiting security detainees in Qatar, the authorities agreed in principle to the request. Two rounds of talks were held in October and November to discuss procedures for the visits.

From 17 to 21 October, 30 officers of the Qatar armed forces attended a series of conferences and seminars on the law of armed conflict. A similar course was held for 120 cadets of the military academy on 19 October.

On 13 October Qatar ratified the Ottawa treaty prohibiting anti-personnel mines.

visits to detainees in Bahrain

In May/June and November the ICRC carried out two series of visits to places of detention in Bahrain. Discussions had been held in November 1997 after the previous series of visits and were due to be resumed at the end of 1998 on the follow-up to the ICRC's recommendations.

aid for prisons in Yemen

The aid programme for mentally ill detainees in three prisons in Yemen, launched in 1995, continued in 1998. The project was delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross, which provided an expatriate and funding, and was implemented with the cooperation of the Yemen Red Crescent Society and the support of the Ministries of the Interior and of Health. Under the programme local doctors and nurses gave medical and psychiatric care to inmates in the prisons in Ibb, Sana'a and Taiz.

Major work was carried out in places of detention in Aden, Ibb, Hodeida, Sana'a and Taiz to improve hygiene conditions and water supplies.

Yemen ratified the Ottawa treaty prohibiting anti-personnel landmines on 1 September.

¹⁶ In particular those of Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.



- in Bahrain, carried out two visits to 13 places of detention, seeing 1,327 detainees;
- in Kuwait, visited 232 detainees in 7 places of detention;
- in Yemen, carried out sanitation work at 5 prisons to ensure adequate water supplies and to improve hygiene conditions;



- continued to cooperate with the Yemen Red Crescent in providing assistance for detainees under the aid project for mentally ill inmates delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross;



IN 1998 THE ICRC:

- in Saudi Arabia, organized a seminar on the law of war for around 20 officers;
- in Kuwait, held courses for 14 cadets at a military camp and for 70 officers from Kuwait and other countries of the Gulf;
- gave several talks on humanitarian law for UNIKOM personnel;
- in Kuwait, held courses for around 80 university law students;
- in Qatar, conducted a series of lectures and seminars for 30 military officers and 120 cadets;
- gave a presentation on humanitarian law during a major television debate organized by the Qatar-based Jezirah Satellite Television station;
- in Yemen, maintained its support for National Society programmes aimed at spreading knowledge of humanitarian law and principles among the population.

North Africa

EGYPT

As in the previous year the ICRC delegation in Cairo maintained and extended its contacts with the Egyptian authorities, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the armed forces, and with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, university circles and the media. It explained the specific features of its treaty-based mandate and its right of initiative as laid down in the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, with a view to gaining better acceptance of its work in the event of internal disturbances.

*round table
on implementation
of humanitarian law*

In 1998 a special effort was made to promote the implementation of international humanitarian law. On 2 and 3 March a round table was held in Cairo under the auspices of the Egyptian Red Crescent and with the support of the ICRC. It brought together officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, the Interior, Health, Social Affairs and Information, and representatives of parliament, various universities and the media.

*dissemination on
the regional scale*

The ICRC's regional promotion office, staffed by an Arabic-speaking delegate and five Egyptian employees, worked throughout the year to produce teaching materials in Arabic and to provide support for the activities of the region's delegations to promote the humanitarian rules and principles. In 1998 the delegate travelled to Iraq, Israel and the occupied and autonomous territories, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. Contacts were also maintained with the Arabic-language media in London and Paris.

*dissemination for the armed
and security forces*

The ICRC's efforts to familiarize the region's military and police circles with the law of armed conflict continued. The delegate to the armed and security forces visited ten countries (Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Syria), where he organized a large number of seminars on the basics of humanitarian law and workshops to train instructors who in turn would give training in humanitarian law to their respective forces.

In Egypt a workshop was held for officers of the Nasser Academy in Cairo and teaching materials were produced.

*production of teaching
materials*

One of the radio serials produced by the ICRC won five gold medals at the Cairo Radio and Television Festival. Episodes were broadcast daily by the BBC* Arabic Service during the month of Ramadan. The serial is firmly rooted in the local social and cultural environment and was a great success among the public.

* BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- issued travel documents for 1,484 refugees (mainly Ethiopians, Somalis, and Sudanese) accepted by host countries;
- exchanged 692 Red Cross messages between the members of separated families;



- took part in a round table on the implementation of humanitarian law held under the auspices of the Egyptian Red Crescent in Cairo in March;
- took part in a basic training course on action in emergency situations held in Zeinhom, Cairo, from 31 May to 4 June for 20 National Society members from Cairo and 8 governorates;
- provided funds for an Egyptian Red Crescent doctor to attend the HELP* course in Geneva in May;



- organized, from 14 to 16 July, a seminar to train 20 members of the National Society youth section in Cairo and 9 governorates in the dissemination of humanitarian law and principles (for the first time, staff who had previously received such training helped with the teaching);
- produced a strip cartoon for young people highlighting the humanitarian implications of war, which was published in a magazine with a circulation of 100,000;
- produced a radio serial on the rules of humanitarian law which was broadcast on stations with large audiences, in particular the BBC Arabic Service and the Franco-Moroccan station Medi 1;*;
- produced a 5-minute video film on water and war;

- produced a series of 12 posters on the law of armed conflict for the armed forces;
- in Cairo in February/March, held a seminar followed by a workshop on the law of armed conflict for 29 officers and instructors of the Nasser Academy;
- held 2 conferences, in March and October, at the National Centre for Middle East Studies for around 20 participants from academic, government and diplomatic circles;
- gave a presentation on issues relating to humanitarian law in the Middle East during a training seminar organized by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies in July for students of economics and political science at the University of Cairo.

* Medi 1: *Radio Méditerranée internationale*

* HELP: Health Emergencies in Large Populations

restoring family ties

The Franco-Moroccan station Medi 1 also aired the radio serial at peak listening times. This station, which broadcasts in Arabic and French, is picked up throughout North Africa and southern Europe.

In 1998 a particularly large number of refugees – most of them Ethiopian, Somali and Sudanese – left Egypt to resettle in host countries (principally Australia, Canada and the United States). The ICRC provided travel documents for these people, the majority of whom had no identity papers. As previously, the delegation's work in this regard was carried out in close cooperation with UNHCR.

TUNIS

Regional delegation

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

The extreme violence which persisted in Algeria and the plight of prisoners captured during the conflict in the Western Sahara were the ICRC's principal concerns in 1998. The organization made repeated representations – some of them at a very high level – in an attempt to find a humanitarian solution for the victims of both situations.

As regards the implementation of humanitarian law in the region, the ICRC pursued its efforts to make governments aware of the need to take the relevant legislative measures.

Sustained efforts were made to promote knowledge of humanitarian law and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the countries of North Africa, in particular among the armed forces and in schools and universities.

Close contacts were maintained with the region's National Red Crescent Societies, in particular in the areas of dissemination of humanitarian law, the training of their members and volunteers and the development of their operational capacity.

In 1998 Algeria was once again the scene of extreme violence, which left thousands of civilians dead or wounded. This was a cause of grave concern for the ICRC, whose role is to protect and assist the victims of such situations.

On 23 February the ICRC sent the Algerian authorities a diplomatic note informing them of its readiness to take action in several domains (visits to detainees held in connection with the violence, dissemination of humanitarian law and support for the activities of the Algerian Red Crescent in aid of the victims). The note also proposed that the ICRC Director of Operations should visit Algiers for discussions.

On 18 March the ICRC President received the Algerian Minister for Foreign Affairs at the organization's headquarters in Geneva; he reiterated the ICRC's disquiet and its wish to be able to take action in accordance with its customary procedures. The ICRC regional delegate in Tunis travelled several times to Algiers for talks to pave the way for the arrival in the Algerian capital of the Director of Operations. In May the authorities agreed in principle to the visit.

Following the statements made to the United Nations Human Rights Committee by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Algeria, as

Algeria: representations

reported by various press agencies, the ICRC issued a press release¹⁷ on 21 July stating that the purpose of the visit by the Director of Operations would be to discuss the conditions and arrangements for the possible resumption of ICRC activities in Algeria, which were interrupted in June 1992.

The visit took place from 8 to 11 November. The Director of Operations had talks with the Director of Multilateral Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, the Director of Civil Liberties at the Ministry of Interior and several other high-ranking government officials, including the Director of Prison Administration at the Ministry of Justice. The discussions focused on ICRC access to people detained in connection with the violence. The regional delegate followed up the talks, travelling to Algiers in December for the purpose.

At the end of the year the ICRC was still awaiting a formal reply to its proposals from the authorities.

For the third consecutive year the ICRC funded the Algerian Red Crescent's programme to assist vulnerable people during the month of Ramadan (distribution of food baskets and soup to around 20,000 beneficiaries). In addition, the ICRC supported the National Society's project to help children traumatized by the violence, in particular the "beach for all" operation and the summer camp, which was attended by 1,800 children in 1998. The development of this programme was discussed during a visit to Algeria in August by a delegate based in Tunis, accompanied by an ICRC doctor. The Algerian Red Crescent proposed setting up a project for the psychological rehabilitation of traumatized children. At the end of the year the two organizations concluded an agreement in principle on the question.

The ICRC also discussed with the National Society the possibility of disseminating the rules of humanitarian law, in particular among the armed and security forces. The ICRC Director of Operations raised the matter during his visit to Algiers at the beginning of November.

With a view to possible cooperation, the ICRC maintained regular contact with the other components of the Movement concerned about the humanitarian implications of the situation in Algeria.

For over 20 years the repercussions of the conflict in the Western Sahara have been felt by tens of thousands of people, including around 1,800 Moroccan prisoners. The UN settlement plan had provided for the repatriation of all the captives after the registration of everyone eligible to vote in a referendum on self-determination for the people of the Western Sahara. The plan thus linked the issue of the prisoners to a political settlement. The referendum, which had been postponed several times since 1992, was set for 7 December 1998 by the UN

*cooperation with
the National Society*

*aftermath of the
Morocco/Western Sahara
conflict*

¹⁷ Press release No. 98/28 of 21 July 1998.

Secretary-General. Fresh disagreement arose between the parties, however, as to the identification of three tribes, and the Secretary-General deferred the referendum until December 1999.

Year after year the ICRC has reiterated that under the provisions of humanitarian law all prisoners must be repatriated as soon as active hostilities cease.

In 1998, apart from the some 1,800 Moroccan prisoners still held by the Polisario Front, 84 people released in April 1997¹⁸ were still awaiting repatriation because Morocco was opposed as a matter of principle to any repatriation which did not encompass all the detainees. The ICRC is extremely concerned about the plight of these men, most of whom were captured between 1978 and 1982. For them, and for their families, the long years of captivity without any prospect of a humanitarian solution are causing great distress, aggravated by the advanced age and poor health of many of the captives.

The ICRC, which visits the prisoners regularly, has spared no effort in recent years to secure the unconditional release and repatriation of the prisoners in accordance with humanitarian law. In 1998 the ICRC stepped up its representations to all the parties concerned in order to find a humanitarian solution as quickly as possible. It reminded them that it was available to supervise the repatriation of all the prisoners held in connection with the conflict in the Western Sahara.

In May the ICRC Delegate-General for the Middle East and North Africa travelled to Rabat for a series of high-level talks. In particular he met the ministerial delegate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Commandant of the Royal Gendarmerie.

In August the ICRC President wrote to King Hassan II of Morocco to draw his attention to the tragic situation of the Moroccan prisoners, especially the men released by the Polisario Front in April 1997 but still not repatriated.

Through its permanent Vice-President, the ICRC again expressed its serious concern to the Moroccan Minister for Foreign Affairs during talks in Durban, South Africa, on 3 September on the occasion of the 12th Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries.

On 24 November the Moroccan Prime Minister was received at headquarters in Geneva by the ICRC President. Mr Sommaruga once again emphasized the urgent need to find a humanitarian solution allowing for the repatriation of all prisoners held in connection with the conflict.

Talks were also held throughout the year with representatives of the Polisario Front in Algiers and Geneva and at the UN in New York.

offer of services in Mauritania

ICRC representations stepped up

discrimination in Tunisia

Morocco: implementation of humanitarian law

¹⁸ In April 1997, following a visit to Tindouf by a special UN envoy, 85 vulnerable (elderly and seriously ill) prisoners were released by the Polisario Front. One of them subsequently died.

In April/May and December a team of delegates, including a doctor, visited 1,783 Moroccans held by the Polisario Front, including the 84 former prisoners released in April 1997 and awaiting repatriation ever since.

The ICRC handed over medicines and medical supplies to treat the detainees, some of whom were suffering from chronic conditions. Leisure items were distributed to bring the detainees out of their isolation. In addition, each of them received a parcel containing hygiene products and clothing and was given the opportunity to write Red Cross messages to his family.

At the end of the year it was decided to increase medical assistance for the prisoners pending a general repatriation.

The ICRC also supplied a consignment of medicines for the Sahrawi refugee population, which was living in very precarious conditions.

Libya: cooperation

A health coordinator from Geneva and the information officer from the Tunis regional delegation were in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya from 1 to 6 November to attend the Sixth Medical Congress organized by the Libyan General Secretariat of Health and Social Security and the Libyan Red Crescent. The possibility of setting up a prosthetic/orthotic centre in Libya, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the National Society, was broached with the head of the medical equipment association, which is under the responsibility of the Social Security Secretariat.

On 3 November they took part in a round table that brought together around 30 relief officials from National Society branches and a representative of the Federation. The ICRC representatives gave a talk on war surgery. The ICRC also attended, together with representatives of the Federation and WHO,* another meeting on disaster preparedness and management. In addition, the delegates met the Dean of the Law Faculty at the University of Benghazi, with whom they discussed cooperation projects.

Morocco: implementation of humanitarian law

A round table entitled "Teaching and research on international humanitarian law – assessment and implementation" was organized by the ICRC, with the cooperation of the Moroccan Red Crescent, and the Moulay Ismail University in Meknès on 23 and 24 April. It was attended by about 30 people representing eight of the country's 11 law faculties. The participants proposed, through their recommendations, the introduction of courses on humanitarian law into the university programme, the setting-up of a commission responsible for implementation strategy and, for purposes of research, the establishment of an inter-university database.

* WHO: World Health Organization

In January the ICRC dissemination delegate based in Tunis travelled to Morocco to take part in a training session for human rights instructors organized by the Department of Human Rights, which is attached to the Prime Minister's office.

At the beginning of February there were demonstrations in Mauritania to protest against allegations of slavery and the arrest of human rights campaigners. They led to around ten arrests. On 9 March the ICRC sent a diplomatic note to the Mauritanian authorities with a view to visiting all persons detained in connection with those events, and an ICRC delegate based in Tunis was in Nouakchott from 24 March to 1 April to follow the matter up. However, the detainees were released under a presidential amnesty.

A delegate to the armed and security forces travelled to Nouakchott to hold a course on the law of armed conflict from 20 to 27 May for 31 officers of the National Guard. He also gave a presentation on humanitarian law to section heads and staff officers. The ICRC was involved in producing a handbook on humanitarian law for the Mauritanian armed forces and covered printing costs.

During the year the ICRC continued its cooperation with the Mauritanian Red Crescent. Together with representatives of two participating National Societies¹⁹ and of the Federation, it attended the Mauritanian Red Crescent's General Assembly, the first since 1983. The assembly took important decisions aimed at improving the way the National Society functions. The ICRC also took part in a course for senior National Society staff and two workshops on the dissemination of humanitarian law.

In Tunisia the regional delegation took part in several meetings, courses and seminars throughout the year on the dissemination of humanitarian law and to spread knowledge of the Movement.

One of the most important of these was the seminar organized by the Ministry of Higher Education and the Tunisian Red Crescent in Tunis in February, entitled "International humanitarian law and the teaching of peace and tolerance". It was attended by around 100 representatives of university circles, including the deans of Tunisia's four law faculties and a number of professors. On that occasion the Minister of Higher Education announced the establishment of a diploma in higher specialized studies in international humanitarian law at the country's law and medical faculties. In May a similar session brought together around 50 primary school inspectors.

offer of services in Mauritania

dissemination in Tunisia

¹⁹ The Finnish Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross.



- visited, in April/May and December, 1,783 Moroccan prisoners held by the Polisario Front, including 84 former prisoners released in April 1997 and still awaiting repatriation;
- restored and maintained contact between Moroccan prisoners and their families by forwarding 16,575 Red Cross messages and 262 family parcels via the Algerian Red Crescent;
- handed over 1,884 parcels of clothing and hygiene items to the Moroccan prisoners visited;
- provided medical assistance (in particular insulin) for the Moroccan prisoners and for the Sahrawi population;



- in Algeria, gave financial support for the programmes run by the National Society to assist vulnerable population groups (baskets of food during Ramadan and soup for 20,000 people), and to hold a summer camp for children traumatized by the violence;

IN 1998 THE ICRC:

- in Benghazi in November, attended the Sixth Medical Congress of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya at the invitation of the Libyan General Secretariat of Health and Social Security and the Libyan Red Crescent, and also a round table on relief organized by the National Society;
- arranged for the Director of Operations of the Libyan Red Crescent to come to Geneva in May to attend a HELP course;
- provided training, at ICRC headquarters in March, for two staff members of the Libyan Red Crescent in tracing procedures and the restoration of family ties;
- in Tataouine in January, attended a Tunisian Red Crescent seminar on the ICRC's principles and activities held for 60 members of youth sections;
- in Morocco in January, took part in a training session for human rights instructors organized by the Department of Human Rights attached to the Prime Minister's office, giving a presentation on the dissemination of humanitarian law and the problems involved in teaching;



- organized, in cooperation with the Moroccan Red Crescent and jointly with the Moulay Ismail University in Meknès, a round table in April on "Teaching and researching international humanitarian law - assessment and implementation" which brought together around 30 people representing 8 of the country's 11 law faculties;
- provided the documentation centre of the Moroccan Red Crescent with regular supplies of information material;
- in Nouadhibou, Mauritania, on 6 and 7 December, conducted 2 workshops on dissemination for around 60 secondary school pupils in their final year and 80 local and regional staff (civil servants, military personnel, gendarmes, nurses, etc.) and students;
- took part, in Mauritania from 11 to 17 June, in a workshop co-funded by the ICRC and the Faculty of Law and Economics of the University of Nouakchott on the teaching of humanitarian law for around 30 participants (students and professors, lawyers, journalists);

- held, in Mauritania at the end of May, a basic course on the law of armed conflict for 31 officers of the National Guard and gave a presentation to section heads and officers of the army general staff;
- in Tunis in February, attended a seminar organized by the Ministry of Higher Education and the Tunisian Red Crescent on "International humanitarian law and the teaching of peace and tolerance", which brought together about 100 representatives of university circles, including the deans of Tunisia's four law faculties and some professors; in May attended a similar session for around 50 primary school inspectors;
- in Tunisia in November, gave a talk on the ICRC and humanitarian law at a training session of the Arab Institute of Human Rights for representatives of NGOs of various Arab countries.