

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1999)

Rubrik: Latin America and the Caribbean

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 24.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>



This nine-year-old boy was playing football when he was hit by gunfire during a guerrilla attack on his village. ICRC medical and limb-fitting programmes around the world help the war-wounded recover from their injuries and regain mobility.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

ICRC delegations:

Colombia, Mexico, Peru

ICRC regional delegations:

Brasilia, Buenos Aires,
Guatemala City

Staff

ICRC expatriates¹: 95

National Societies¹: 11

Local employees²: 314

Total expenditure: Sfr 48,134,588.56

Expenditure breakdown:

Protection: 9,069,646.46

Assistance: 17,946,162.81

Preventive action: 9,255,314.83

Cooperation with National Societies:
3,263,683.09

Overheads: 2,888,034.09

General: 5,711,747.37



⊕ ICRC regional delegation ⊕ ICRC delegation + ICRC mission

ICRC / AR 12 99

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1999.

During the year under review, most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean presented a picture of economic fragility and few of them experienced positive growth. Recession and rising unemployment rates in several countries resulted in unrest, reflecting the waning patience of the general public. Some positive steps were made towards peace, however; these included the resolution of the border dispute between Chile and Argentina and the implementation by Ecuador and Peru of a peace agreement concluded in 1998.

The protracted peace negotiations in Colombia had brought about no tangible solutions to the long-running conflict by the end of the year. The economy took a downturn, as did public morale, and the violence continued. The ICRC increased its presence in Colombia in 1999 to a total of 16 sub-delegations and offices in response to the plight of the countless civilians driven to seek refuge in safer areas. Clashes between opposing forces and the resulting hardship for civilians caught in the middle made ICRC action imperative. Relief work was stepped up and mobile health units were sent into remote areas, all part of a sweeping effort to alleviate the suffering of communities in conflict zones.

In Mexico, discussions between the government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army remained at a standstill. In Chiapas, the ICRC put the emphasis on providing effective humanitarian aid for civilians affected by the situation. It afforded various sectors of society, in particular academic and state institutions, the opportunity to become more familiar with the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights, at times in cooperation with other humanitarian agencies.

In Peru, the ICRC focused its efforts on people deprived of their freedom. Security detainees were seen in private, and health care facilities in places of detention were given considerable financial and technical support and assistance. It also attended to the needs of civilians affected by the violence, distributing food and non-food items in the emergency zones. It moved ahead with its dissemination work in the country, as the authorities gave their approval for training courses on humanitarian law and human rights for military and police instructors.

Ecuador was hit by a major economic crisis in 1999. The short-term effects were visible in the form of strikes and public protests, and a situation of political insecurity prevailed. In this context, the ICRC concentrated on spreading knowledge of humanitarian law and principles among those called on to apply them.

The activities of the regional delegation in Guatemala were oriented towards dissemination and humanitarian diplomacy. Special attention was given to the incorporation of the law of armed conflict into the training programmes of the region's armed forces. The delegation's legal department continued to advise government officials and lawyers on matters related to the implementation of humanitarian law and to regional cooperation with the OAS.* In Haiti, detainees and their basic rights and conditions of detention were the focus of ICRC action.

The ICRC's perseverance in disseminating humanitarian law paid off with the "train the trainers" project for military police in Brazil, whereby humanitarian principles and basic human rights became an integral part of police teaching.

The national committees for implementation of humanitarian law established in most Latin American countries remained high on the list of ICRC priorities as the cor-

* OAS: Organization of American States

nerstone of its plan to create a favourable environment in each country for national implementation of and respect for humanitarian law.

Partly as a result of these efforts, Panama declared its recognition of the competence of the International Fact-Finding Commission, Nicaragua became party to the Protocols additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and Cuba ratified Additional Protocol II. Trinidad and Tobago became the first Latin American or Caribbean State to ratify the Statute for an International Criminal Court adopted in Rome in 1998.

The Ottawa treaty banning the use of landmines entered into force in March 1999, and delegations in Latin America continued to push for its ratification and for acceptance of an OAS idea, put forward in 1998, to declare the Americas a mine-free hemisphere. Ten Latin American and Caribbean States ratified the treaty in 1999, bringing to 25 the total number to have done so.

The ICRC Spanish-language Web site, managed by the regional delegation in Buenos Aires, continued to serve as a valuable reference centre for the Spanish-speaking Latin American public. The site was modified in 1999 to prepare it for the vital role it will play in the new regional communication support centre for Latin America, due to be launched in January 2000.

The 50th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent provided delegations throughout the region with countless opportunities to spread awareness of current humanitarian issues and to present the ICRC message, with the support of the media, to a wide audience.

COLOMBIA

PROTECTION

5,613,208

ASSISTANCE

12,361,282

PREVENTIVE ACTION

3,021,696

COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

786,463

OVERHEADS

1,548,339

GENERAL

2,377,992

TOTAL EXPENDITURE Sfr 25,708,980



Efforts towards peace were maintained throughout the year by the parties to the conflict and culminated in formal negotiations between the government and the FARC.* The zone from which the Colombian government had withdrawn its military forces held fast in spite of several setbacks.

In spite of these efforts, the two main armed opposition groups, the FARC and the ELN,* stepped up their attacks on government forces. "Autodefensas", or self-defence groups, united under the AUC,* continued their offensive for territorial control. In many cases, civilians were the first victims of the violence. Bolívar and Córdoba departments experienced the worst fighting and growing tension throughout the year. Mass displacements of civilians occurred, increasing the demand for protection and assistance and prompting the ICRC to extend the period of aid, especially in emergency situations.

The situation was exacerbated by the worst economic crisis to hit Colombia in 50 years. The government was confronted not only with the challenge of settling the

* FARC: "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia" (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces)

* ELN: "Ejército de Liberación Nacional" (National Liberation Army)

* AUC: "Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia" (United Self-defence Groups of Colombia)

*tense situation exacerbated
by economic crisis*

*assistance for internally
displaced people*

*protection of the civilian
population*

*activities for people deprived
of their freedom*

internal conflict, but also with the problem of easing the social unrest that accompanied the economic situation. Colombia's struggling economy suffered a further setback at the end of January when a severe earthquake struck four departments, causing widespread damage and numerous casualties.

Inevitably, Colombia's internal situation had a negative effect on its neighbours and on potential foreign investment. Foreign investors shunned a country suffering from political and economic instability. The influx into Venezuela of Colombian civilian refugees affected relations between the two countries, and early in the year Ecuador temporarily stepped up its military presence on the northern border with Colombia. Peru did the same and Panama was concerned by the spillover effects of the Colombian conflict into its own territory.

In 1999, the number of people displaced from conflict areas reached huge proportions. In some cases entire villages relocated to comparatively peaceful areas. The ICRC, together with other humanitarian organizations and government bodies, took action to provide these new communities with continuous protection and assistance as necessary. It did the same thing for individual displaced persons many of whom headed for towns, where they faced problems of acceptance by local residents and adaptation to a new way of life. The ICRC held discussions with the authorities and the armed opposition groups on the possibility of displaced persons returning to their homes.

As a result of these large-scale population movements, the ICRC decided to become more involved in providing relief aid in 1999 and to supplement the assistance provided by other humanitarian bodies.

In another development, when local authorities in Barranquilla helped plan an assistance project supported by the Catholic Church and the Colombian Red Cross, the ICRC established an implementation method for use in the framework of an integrated aid network. The aim was to transfer responsibility for the project to the local authorities. The success of the project prompted the ICRC to envisage similar initiatives in other areas.

Since civilians were still the primary victims of the assassinations, massacres and bomb attacks in public places that had become commonplace in Colombia, the ICRC continued to place special emphasis on their protection. It nurtured and maintained the contacts previously established with all parties to the conflict with the aim of promoting respect for humanitarian law and the fundamental rights of the civilian population. Kidnapping remained a major problem throughout Colombia in 1999. Consequently, the ICRC made every effort to ensure that the fundamental rights of hostages were respected and that they were given the possibility of using the Red Cross message service to stay in contact with their families.

Prison riots and acts of violence among detainees were widespread in 1999 and often resulted in fatalities. The ICRC played a crucial role as an intermediary in such instances.

In 1999, Colombia had a prison population of about 48,000 detainees. Places of detention became increasingly overcrowded, and as a result conditions of detention deteriorated over the year. The ICRC monitored those conditions closely and submitted reports to the authorities. Since government funding for places of detention was limited, the ICRC not only visited detainees, it also provided financial support to

*medical assistance
and mobile health units*

*a wide range
of dissemination activities*

Colombian Red Cross Society

acting as a neutral intermediary

*cooperation with
other organizations*

the prison health services for the purchase of medicines and medical equipment and helped finance medical and surgical treatment for detainees.

About 500 members of the police and armed forces were still being held by the armed opposition groups. In spite of its repeated efforts to visit these detainees, the ICRC was refused access to them and had to limit its activities on their behalf to the sporadic exchange of Red Cross messages.

Colombian law provides for free medical treatment for displaced persons and those wounded in the conflict. Government funds are limited, however, and some hospitals had to close in 1999 for financial reasons. The ICRC provided financial assistance to displaced persons in need of medical care and to those wounded in the conflict, and supplied material to medical centres in areas of tension.

In response to a growing demand for medical care from communities in remote areas and conflict zones, the ICRC maintained its medical assistance network of mobile health units. The units were run by an ICRC health delegate, local staff and personnel from the Ministry of Health. Medical assistance projects of this kind were also delegated to the National Societies of Norway, Germany and Sweden for implementation in Urabá, Caguán and Putumayo, respectively.

A large-scale media campaign carried out during the year highlighted the security of and respect for health personnel carrying out medical missions in conflict situations. The aim was to encourage all arms carriers to respect medical missions so that health care could be provided without constraints. The ICRC also ran a general programme to promote humanitarian law throughout the country, particularly in military and police academies. Dissemination sessions on humanitarian law and the ICRC mandate were organized for armed opposition groups and contact was established or maintained with administrative authorities to discuss the ICRC mandate and its specific role in Colombia, and the incorporation of humanitarian law in domestic legislation.

The ICRC continued to cooperate closely with the Colombian Red Cross Society, placing the emphasis on reinforcing the Society's capacity to provide training courses and carry out other dissemination activities, especially in conflict zones. It supported the National Society in disseminating humanitarian law, especially through innovative ways of spreading knowledge of Red Cross principles among young people. Presentations were adapted for use in schools and contacts were developed with the media and academic circles. The ICRC also cooperated with the National Society in providing relief assistance to civilians in need.

The ICRC continued to play its unique role as a neutral intermediary in meetings between armed opposition groups, local authorities and civilians, and also as an adviser to the government and the armed opposition groups on all aspects of humanitarian law which were gradually being incorporated into political negotiations. This position of trust constitutes a solid building block for future discussions with the warring factions at all levels.

The ICRC and UNHCR reviewed their activities in the country to ensure that they did not duplicate each other's efforts. The ICRC and the Colombian Red Cross Society cooperated with NGOs and with the "Red de Solidaridad Social", a governmental entity legally responsible for displaced persons, in the enormous task of providing assistance.

IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- visited 2,496 detainees, 1,063 of them for the first time, in 147 places of detention and submitted reports on conditions of detention to all the parties involved;
- supplied detainees with clothing and medical, dental and recreational material;
- financed medical or surgical treatment for 308 detainees;
- enabled 441 family members to visit detained relatives;
- financed the return to their homes of 295 people on their release from captivity;
- provided physiotherapy and rehabilitation material to 4 prisons in Bogotá and Cali;
- organized the exchange of Red Cross messages between families and hostages, detainees, displaced persons and members of the armed forces in the hands of armed opposition groups;
- monitored the release of 7 members of the armed forces who had been held by armed opposition groups;



- monitored the release of 138 civilians who had been held captive by armed groups and freed under ICRC auspices;
- submitted reports to the authorities and to the armed opposition groups on 959 cases of alleged violations of humanitarian law involving 1,960 individuals;
- enabled over 2,000 individuals whose lives were in danger to relocate to safer areas;



- jointly with the Colombian Red Cross Society, distributed food parcels, hygiene kits and mattresses to over 120,000 civilians in need of assistance;
- on the Pacific coast started distributions of farm implements and fishing equipment to enable 3,000 people to regain a degree of self-sufficiency;
- increased the six-week period of assistance to displaced individuals to three months;



- through projects delegated to the National Societies of Norway, Germany and Sweden, extended the medical assistance network by increasing the number of mobile health units capable of operating in remote or conflict areas in the regions of Magdalena Medio, Urabá, Caguán and Putumayo;
- financed medical and surgical treatment for people wounded as a result of the conflict and for displaced persons, and supplied medical equipment and material to hospitals;



- with the help of the Colombian Red Cross, carried out numerous dissemination sessions;
- under a cooperation agreement concluded in 1998, worked closely with the National Society on staff training, dissemination among the armed forces, security during field operations, communication, fundraising and reinforcing the National Society's administration;



- carried out dissemination sessions for members of armed opposition groups;
- conducted a large-scale media campaign with the aim of reinforcing the security of medical missions in conflict situations;
- developed a training programme on human rights and humanitarian law for military instructors for implementation with battalions in the field;
- set up a programme with a "train the trainers" component for formal human rights instruction in police academies.

MEXICO

PROTECTION

391,123

ASSISTANCE

3,249,155

PREVENTIVE ACTION

620,753

COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

940,417

OVERHEADS

382,810

GENERAL

761,556

TOTAL EXPENDITURE Sfr 6,345,814

assistance for civilians in Chiapas



ICRC delegation

ICRC sub-delegation

In 1999, campaigning for the mid-2000 presidential election got underway in Mexico, and dialogue between the government and the EZLN* stagnated. The situation in Chiapas remained generally stable.

The ICRC made the premises of its sub-delegation in San Cristóbal de las Casas available to groups of different opinions in order to facilitate discussion of humanitarian issues on neutral ground, a successful initiative that resulted in dialogue between the various communities in the Los Altos region.

Heavy rainfall in Chiapas and central Mexico at the end of the year resulted in a 50% loss in the maize and coffee harvest and caused serious setbacks to ICRC agricultural projects. Together with the German, Spanish and Mexican National Societies, the ICRC provided regular assistance to civilians affected by the situation in Chiapas. It also organized courses on improving crop yields, planted and maintained demonstration plots and supplied maize seeds to families in Chiapas. Several projects to provide safe drinking water and monitor water supplies were carried out in the same area for vulnerable communities.

* EZLN: "Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional" (Zapatista National Liberation Army)

a cooperative dissemination effort

The ICRC backed Mexican Red Cross activities to provide far-reaching medical and food assistance in Chiapas for displaced persons and residents. It also gave the National Society financial assistance to purchase medicines and medical material, train human resources and maintain its fleet of vehicles. ICRC medical staff ran workshops for health care workers on basic health, hygiene and environmental issues, and accompanied medical "Secretaría de Salud"* personnel, enabling them to reach communities which usually refused government-run health care.

Dissemination occupied an important place in ICRC activities in Mexico during the year, and projects run jointly by the ICRC, UNHCR and the CNDH* continued to promote humanitarian law, human rights and refugee rights in universities. Seminars run in cooperation with the CNDH in several military zones focused on humanitarian law, human rights and the role of the ICRC.

The delegation sponsored a seminar on humanitarian law and the ethics of police conduct in cooperation with the Human Rights Training Section at the Office of the Attorney General for the Republic. The seminar, which took place in October, was attended by about 30 officers from the Attorney General's office, police officers, public officials and instructors from the police academy.

At the end of the year, the Mexico-Central America Regional Seminar for human rights teachers was held in Mexico City, organized jointly by the delegation, the UNESCO representative at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and the American University. Professors from Central America and the coordinator for UNESCO in Mexico spoke about their experiences in establishing teaching programmes on human rights at university level, while the delegation spoke about the importance of incorporating humanitarian law into educational programmes on human rights. The seminar was attended by about 30 professors and NGO representatives from Mexico, Central America and South America.

In the framework of a university project run jointly by the delegation, the CNDH and UNHCR, a regional seminar was held on international protection of the individual in Monterrey in November for 30 professors from the Technological Institute and from law faculties.

* "Secretaría de Salud", government health service

* CNDH: "Comisión nacional de derechos humanos" (National Human Rights Commission)

IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- visited 216 detainees coming under the ICRC mandate, including 130 for the first time in Chiapas;
- enabled detainees to communicate with their families by means of Red Cross messages;



- visited municipalities in Chiapas in order to develop contacts with the local authorities, discuss access to displaced persons and assess the latter's needs;



- provided regular supplies of food rations and hygiene items to 9,500 beneficiaries, most of them internally displaced persons, in Chiapas;
- provided seeds to 1,000 farming families and followed up 29 demonstration plots to increase maize yields in 16 locations for victims of the heavy rainfall in Chiapas;



- continued to provide basic health care services to 16,000 beneficiaries in Chiapas;
- accompanied the National Society's medical teams on regular visits to 60 remote villages in Chiapas whose residents had no easy access to or refused government health services ;
- gave 46,000 medical consultations in health care facilities and remote villages;
- accompanied National Society or government health service staff on vaccination campaigns for 2,300 children in 60 remote villages;
- ran 12 workshops in Chiapas to train over 150 health care workers in basic health, hygiene and environmental issues;



- implemented 16 water projects in Chiapas, supplying a total of 10,000 displaced persons and residents with safe drinking water; the communities concerned participated in the projects, thereby increasing the likelihood that they would maintain the projects in the future;



- continued to provide the Mexican Red Cross Society with financial and material assistance for 6 basic health care facilities in Chiapas and for food aid to communities there;



- together with the Mexican Red Cross, organized an information session in December for representatives of state and federal authorities, aimed at improving their understanding of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

PERU



ICRC delegation
 ICRC sub-delegation
 ICRC office or other presence

As in previous years, the ICRC centred its activities in Peru on people deprived of their freedom and civilians affected by the internal violence. Unexploded landmines, laid during the border dispute with Ecuador, remained a security problem for the government. Emergency laws were lifted around Lima for the first time in 13 years in June, but clashes continued to occur from time to time between the armed forces and opposition groups, especially in San Martín, Ayacucho, Huánuco, Junín and Cusco departments. In May, heavy flooding devastated Coronel Portillo province in the department of Ucayali, further undermining the already unstable agricultural situation.

The ICRC was generally well accepted throughout the country by all sectors of society. It provided food, clothing and subsistence items to civilians affected by violence or natural disaster in the emergency zones, in which it had been present for ten years. Five ICRC delegates posted to Tingo María, Huanacayo and Ayacucho made regular visits to communities in those regions. Civilian populations in areas affected by the violence were given medical assistance. The ICRC also financed supplies for State-run hospitals, and paid for medical treatment for victims of the unrest.

ICRC presence in the field

*activities for people deprived
of their freedom*

The ICRC made regular visits to people being held for investigation by DINCOTE* and to security detainees held in temporary or permanent places of detention under the authority of the Ministry of Justice. The conditions of detention were monitored with respect to the detainees' rights to basic judicial guarantees, humane treatment and medical care. Health care and AIDS information campaigns were carried out in the prisons. The ICRC financed family visits to hospitalized detainees and covered their medical costs. It also funded seminars on drug administration and management and the use of natural medicines for health staff in places of detention in the Lima region.

The ICRC maintained regular contact with the relevant authorities in Peru. It held discussions with the Ministry of Justice and other high-level authorities on the adoption of national measures for the implementation of humanitarian law.

*spreading awareness
of humanitarian law*

The ICRC focused its 1999 dissemination activities on the armed and police forces, where knowledge of humanitarian law and human rights had yet to be officially recognized. An ICRC training course on humanitarian law was given to military instructors, a group of whom was subsequently sent, at times accompanied by ICRC delegates, to the emergency zones to instruct army units posted in those areas. In addition, the ICRC was formally requested by the armed forces to provide training courses for senior army and navy officers.

Another priority target group for dissemination was the younger generation, especially in the emergency zones. Surrounded by violence, young people had little opportunity to learn about humanitarian principles and rules. Over the years, puppet shows have proved to be an effective way of making these principles relevant to this sector of society. Visits to secondary schools and universities were carried out with the aim of promoting ICRC activities and its scope of action. Universities were helped to incorporate humanitarian law into their curricula.

*cooperation
with the National Society*

The ICRC gave financial support to the Peruvian Red Cross Society to enable it to continue its "train the trainers" courses and other dissemination activities.

* DINCOTE: "Dirección Nacional contra el Terrorismo", anti-terrorist unit

IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- carried out regular visits to 58 security detainees being held for investigation by DINCOTE;
- visited 3,353 detainees held in connection with the conflict in 187 places of detention, 509 for the first time;
- visited 8 institutions for minors;
- issued 23,973 transport vouchers for family visits to detainees;
- financed medical treatment for 104 hospitalized detainees and 1,159 consultations for inmates on an outpatient basis;
- purchased 275 dental prostheses and 711 pairs of eyeglasses for detainees;
- enabled security detainees in remote places of detention to maintain contact with their families through the exchange of 851 Red Cross messages;
- gave medical assistance to 5 security detainees on their release from prison;



- made trips to the field and monitored conditions in communities in the emergency zones, delivering messages from relatives and providing assistance where necessary;
- financed construction work at the centre for women and child victims of violence in Ayacucho;



- provided 3,816 vulnerable people, including widows and orphans and relatives of those wounded in the violence, with clothing, food and subsistence items;
- together with the National Society, supplied food and hygiene items to 4,788 families in the department of Ucayali following the flooding in May;



- ran 9 health care campaigns in various places of detention, including information sessions on tuberculosis and AIDS;
- made 40 deliveries of medical equipment and medicines to dispensaries in places of detention;
- supplied complete dental equipment and paid dentists' salaries in 3 places of detention;
- made 1,031 visits to State-run health facilities;
- financed medical treatment for 289 victims of the violence, including 3 mine victims;



- gave financial support to the Public Relations and Dissemination Department of the Peruvian Red Cross for 12 newsletters;
- provided funds for 4 instructor training courses for Red Cross volunteers on paramedic assistance and emergency medical care, first-aid techniques in natural disaster situations and the setting up of operational relief chains; the courses were held at the Peruvian Red Cross National School of Training;
- provided the Peruvian Red Cross with several vehicles, and the Juanjuí branch with equipment and furniture for its canteen for orphans;



- assisted the Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staff in organizing an instructors course on humanitarian law for military and police personnel, including practical exercises in the emergency zones;
- addressed to 1,159 military personnel in 7 military academies on humanitarian law;
- gave presentations to 1,150 police officers on humanitarian law and ICRC activities;
- organized courses on humanitarian law attended by 369 civil servants, 27,884 civilians and 1,478 lawyers;
- together with "Defensoría del pueblo" (the ombudsman's office), ran 2 courses in Lima for 48 police instructors on human rights and the basic rules of humanitarian law to be applied by the police force;
- gave presentations on humanitarian law and the ICRC mandate and activities to 3,604 military personnel in the emergency zones and in military bases; the presentations were made by ICRC personnel and ICRC-trained military instructors;
- conducted 2 training courses for 48 members of the armed and police forces on humanitarian law and human rights and the law of armed conflict;
- helped 3 universities in Lima to incorporate humanitarian law into their curricula;
- organized 103 puppet shows for 74 secondary schools in the emergency zones.

BRASILIA

Regional delegation

(Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela)

a year of economic crisis

*training the trainers
in Brazil and Ecuador*

In January 1999, the re-elected president of Brazil was confronted with one of the worst economic crises the country had ever known. In spite of the government's efforts to control the financial crisis, the devaluation of the local currency and the flight of foreign capital caused serious economic problems.

The dismal financial climate exacerbated social tensions. The rural population became more militant, especially in the state of Paraná. Urban violence also spread, in particular in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, resulting in injuries to civilians and members of the police force.

Ecuador was also plagued by economic problems in 1999, namely the continuing deflation of its currency, high rates of inflation and unemployment, and a heavy external debt. A government curb on spending led to protests by a population weary of the crisis. Strikes paralysed the country in March and July. In early December, the government declared a state of emergency in Guayaquil and reinforced the presence of the national police force and the army there following a marked increase in insecurity in the region. In addition to the social problems generated by the state of the economy, tension escalated on the border with Colombia. Landmines laid during the conflict with Peru continued to take their toll.

In spite of Venezuela's wealth of natural resources, notably its oil fields, the majority of the population was living in difficult conditions. In addition, the country was hit by devastating floods in December.

In Brazil, the ICRC focused on making the authorities and general public aware of its mandate, principles and scope of action. In 1998 it ran its first courses on humanitarian law and human rights for military police instructors, providing training on techniques designed to minimize the use of force and ensure that when force is used it is not excessive. An important aspect of the course was to demonstrate how theory could be incorporated into police work and operations. The "train the trainers" approach, whereby the course participants go on to provide instruction in subsequent courses, was expanded in 1999 in response to the interest shown and the positive experiences of the past.

It is hoped that the Brazilian project will serve as a model for other Latin American countries. Ecuador embarked on a similar two-year programme of humanitarian law and human rights training courses for members of the national police force and the military police in November. The aim of the project, which is supervised by the ICRC, is to train a core of 15 instructors for each of the country's 22 provinces. The practical components of the courses, based on how to minimize the use of force and firearms, will be taught by two members of the Brazilian military police trained by the ICRC.

The ICRC also launched an evaluation of the military police project in Brazil, when it requested the University of São Paulo's Centre for Studies of Violence to assess how well the course contents were being conveyed and absorbed at all stages of the project and how they were being incorporated into the military police force training programme.

In Brazil, the regional delegation was invited to give presentations at several national and international meetings and seminars on the relevance of human rights issues to security forces. The authorities also asked the ICRC to help sponsor and organize a crisis management course for military police officers in ten states, and to train 4,000 new military police recruits in Rio de Janeiro.

Brazil ratifies the Ottawa treaty

*cooperation
with the National Society*

*survey of conditions on the
Venezuelan-Colombian border*

*visits to people deprived
of their freedom*

The delegation commissioned research on the extent to which each country's national legislation was in line with its obligations as a party to a number of international humanitarian law treaties. The results of the research will be communicated to the authorities in each country.

The ICRC advised the Brazilian government on its ratification in April of the Ottawa treaty banning the use of landmines.

The ICRC continued to support the Ecuadorean Red Cross, which is well-respected in the country for its efficiency. The ICRC attended a seminar for the armed forces on crisis management, explaining the role of the National Society in a situation of emergency. The delegation and the National Society also made a presentation to different branches of the armed forces on the application of humanitarian law in situations of internal conflict.

Tension mounted early in the year along the border between Venezuela and Colombia. The Venezuelan government subsequently requested the ICRC to assist in the voluntary repatriation of displaced people from Colombia. The ICRC was also authorized to carry out a survey of the conditions of civilians residing in the border zones and to establish to what extent the violence prevented them from having access to basic government services such as health and education. In the course of these activities, the ICRC took the opportunity to present its mandate to the local authorities.

For the first time under the present Venezuelan government, the ICRC was granted access to security detainees held in connection with the internal conflict in Colombia.



IN 1999 THE ICRC:

- carried out visits to 52 security detainees being held in Venezuela in connection with the internal conflict in Colombia;



- in Venezuela, monitored the voluntary repatriation in June of 2,000 displaced people from Colombia;



- supported the National Society in Ecuador by conducting courses on humanitarian law for the army and navy and the national police force;



- ran a two-week refresher course for the first group of Brazilian military police core instructors, from 19 states, trained in 1998;
- oversaw 21 one- to two-week refresher courses for the second group of 328 core instructors from all states in Brazil, trained in 1998 by the first group;
- ran a three-week training course for a third group of 307 military police instructors, instruction being provided by members of the above two groups;
- initiated instructors' training programmes in Ecuador in November for 15 members of the national police force and 20 members of the military police;
- gave briefings in Ecuador in early December on human rights and humanitarian law to 15 newly trained instructors of the national police force and the members of the armed forces stationed in Guayaquil for the purpose of maintaining order;
- ran four-day courses in Venezuela and Brazil in March on the law of armed conflict for 27 senior army and air force officers.

BUENOS AIRES

Regional delegation

(Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay)

*ensuring implementation
of humanitarian law*

*visits to people deprived
of their freedom*

*responding to the growing interest
in humanitarian affairs*

In 1999 the countries covered by the regional delegation remained relatively peaceful. Chile and Argentina reached an agreement over their border dispute and mid-year Argentina, Chile and Uruguay embarked on electoral campaigns. Argentina experienced social unrest following the installation of a new government in December and unpopular economic measures brought into force to improve the country's financial climate.

In other developments, in September Argentina ratified the Ottawa treaty banning landmines, bringing to three the number of countries in the region to have done so, and public interest in human rights issues remained high as General Augusto Pinochet continued to be held in custody in London.

By the end of 1999 each country in the region had set up an interministerial committee for the implementation of humanitarian law. The ICRC attended meetings of the Bolivian committee on issues of penal code reform, protection of the red cross emblem and cultural property, and ratification of treaties. In Argentina, the regional delegation met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September to finalize a government project to amend the penal code with a view to incorporating measures on non-compliance with the Ottawa treaty and other arms limitation pacts. In Uruguay, it re-established contact with the chairperson of the interministerial committee and with military lawyers from the Military Justice Institute so as to take part in the committee's work.

ICRC delegates visited security detainees in Chile and held talks with the prison authorities on issues relating to conditions of detention. In Bolivia, they interviewed security prisoners in private and monitored their conditions of detention. Assistance was provided where necessary.

In response to the growing interest shown by the armed forces and academic circles in humanitarian law, the ICRC expanded its regional dissemination activities in 1999, giving priority to the establishment of a communication network with the media. The Buenos Aires-based Web site played an essential role in this task.

In preparation for the launch in 2000 of the regional communication support centre for Latin America, which will be based in Buenos Aires, the regional delegate visited the ICRC delegations in Colombia and Venezuela to set up coordination mechanisms. The scope of the Web site in Buenos Aires was increased as part of the preparations for the support centre.

In Argentina, the regional delegation focused its efforts to promote humanitarian law on the armed forces. A joint seminar on the international responsibilities of commanders in military operations, held under the watchword "Even wars have limits", was organized by the delegation and the Argentine Joint Chiefs-of-Staff. The seminar was attended by high-ranking officers from all three branches of the armed forces and military attachés from several countries.

The ICRC ran a refresher course in Chile for senior officers from the Army Superior War College. Participants also included specialized lecturers from military and university circles.

Together with the Uruguayan Ministry of Defence, the ICRC ran a seminar on "Globalization and Sovereignty" during which it presented its position regarding the International Criminal Court. The seminar was attended by members of the armed forces, diplomats and academics from several countries.

50th anniversary activities

cooperation with National Societies

In Paraguay, talks were held with the Minister of Defence, the heads of the armed forces and several contacts at military academies, in order to promote dissemination and training activities in the country.

Universities in the region were encouraged to include humanitarian law and the role of humanitarian organizations in their curricula. The ICRC ran seminars on humanitarian law in universities in Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay for professors, students and military experts. Its refresher courses on international humanitarian law for university professors regularly brought about 90 university professors in the region up to date on developments in humanitarian law and related legal issues. The delegation also undertook a survey whereby detailed information was gathered and analysed on the level of humanitarian law teaching in the region's universities and other post-secondary education centres.

The regional delegation organized numerous activities in the region to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, and military personnel took part in most of them. In December, the regional delegate attended a special session held by the Bolivian Supreme Court to mark the 50th anniversary. In his statement, the regional delegate stressed the special responsibility of national and international courts in implementing humanitarian law.

The regional delegation also produced a travelling photo exhibition, "Man in a War-torn World", which was displayed in several countries in the region.

The ICRC continued to support the region's National Societies, notably in Chile and Paraguay, where activities were restructured to cope more effectively with demands for assistance from vulnerable groups. It worked in cooperation with the Chilean Red Cross on a youth education project regarding humanitarian law. In Bolivia and Argentina, cooperation activities carried out with the National Societies were centred on the promotion of basic Red Cross principles and humanitarian law.

IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- visited 57 and 22 security detainees respectively in Chile and Bolivia, providing assistance where necessary;
- financed family visits for detainees in Bolivia and Chile and enabled the detainees to stay in touch with their families via Red Cross messages;



- expanded dissemination activities throughout the region with the support of the National Societies, focusing on the armed forces, academic institutions, youth groups and remote communities; the press and media were involved in this programme and encouraged to broaden their coverage of Red Cross activities;
- increased the number of its instructors' training courses, seminars and lectures for members of the armed forces;
- advised universities in the region on the incorporation of humanitarian law into their curricula;
- continued to extend the scope of the Spanish-language ICRC Web site based in Buenos Aires, making the visual presentation more attractive and putting a greater number of publications on-line;
- organized and partially financed the first national training seminar in Canelo de Nós, Chile, for approximately 300 relief workers.

GUATEMALA CITY

Regional delegation

(Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname and other countries in the Caribbean)

*promoting acceptance
of humanitarian treaties*

*bringing national legislation
in line with humanitarian law*

ICRC mission in Haiti

In a part of the world that has had to bear its share of conflict, 1999 saw the continuation of a period of relative stability. Mid-year the majority of voters in Guatemala rejected proposals for constitutional reform, an action that could have a negative effect on the peace process. Voters in Guatemala and Panama elected new presidents, and Panama officially took over management of the Panama Canal at the end of the year. In Haiti, the severe internal and institutional crisis persisted, provoking strong public reaction and arrests by the authorities.

In this context, the ICRC focused on promoting humanitarian law and humanitarian diplomacy in the region. It was able to expand its activities in the English-speaking Caribbean after it opened a sub-delegation halfway through the year in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. On the occasion of the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Geneva,³ the regional delegate took the opportunity to hold talks with government representatives and high-level members of National Societies from all countries in the region on issues of humanitarian concern.

The ICRC used its regular contacts with governments of the region to promote the ratification of humanitarian law treaties. As a result, Panama officially recognized the competence of the International Fact-Finding Commission, Nicaragua became party to the Protocols additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and Cuba ratified Additional Protocol II. Trinidad and Tobago became the first country in Latin America and the Caribbean to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In May a plan of action was prepared with the members of the Human Rights Commission of the Central American Parliament to familiarize the region's parliamentarians with humanitarian law.

The government of the Dominican Republic officially inaugurated its national Committee for the Implementation of Humanitarian Law in June. The Committee's first seminar, held in December, was attended by high-ranking government officials and representatives of the National Society. The national committees of El Salvador and Nicaragua continued to be active in 1999 and drew up plans of action for 2000.

Tension mounted during the year on the Panamanian border with Colombia. In mid-November, an armed group attacked the village of La Bonda, causing 35 of its inhabitants to seek refuge in Puerto Olbadia where they were assisted by the Panamanian Red Cross. A local branch of the National Society was set up at El Real with the financial support of the Norwegian Red Cross, so that immediate assistance could be on hand if required to assist displaced people and local communities suffering from the spillover effects of the conflict in Colombia.

The ICRC continued to visit detainees in Haiti's prisons. At the request of the Haitian prison authorities, the ICRC chaired monthly meetings of medical staff working in the prisons. These meetings gave the participants the opportunity to share professional information and experience, collect statistics and receive training. The ICRC supplied detention centres with medicines, medical material, and equipment for improving hygiene standards, and provided funds for the purchase of fresh and general foodstuffs for detainees. The relevant authorities in Port-au-Prince examined how to speed up the exceedingly long court procedures and enforce compliance with judges' orders to release prisoners. As a result, five security detainees who had been registered by the ICRC were freed.

³ See pp. 376-377.

*addressing humanitarian issues
in Guatemala*

*courses for armed
and police forces*

*spreading knowledge
among the general public*

In February the "Comisión para el esclarecimiento histórico"* presented its report to the government and to the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. It concluded that most of the violations committed against the population had been perpetrated by the army.

The Guatemalan armed forces finalized their new military doctrine, which contains references to international humanitarian law and human rights. The ICRC had recommended that humanitarian law be brought to the fore in the text so as to encourage its proper application by the armed forces.

In Guatemala, the first course on the law of armed conflict for air force instructors was held in August. Most of the countries in the region and the United States attended as either participants or observers.

The delegation conducted a course on the law of armed conflict at the School of the Americas in Georgia, United States. Half of the 55 instructors who participated came from Latin American countries.

In October, the delegation organized the first regional course on human rights and international humanitarian law for directors of police academies and heads of instruction in police forces in Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. The feedback from the participants was positive and concrete. The director of the police academy in Guatemala announced that teaching on human rights and humanitarian law would be incorporated into the academy's curriculum. The head of instruction at the Costa Rican police academy planned to run a national course on the same issues. Discussions were held with the Costa Rican authorities on plans to host a second regional course in 2000.

In each country in the region the law of armed conflict was the theme of numerous training programmes for the armed forces. In Nicaragua, ICRC delegates were present as observers in May when the armed forces ran their first independent training course on the subject for instructors, and members of Costa Rica's public security forces attended ICRC-organized training courses on the same topic. The ICRC organized the first regional course on the law of armed conflict for instructors of defence forces in Belize, Guyana and other countries in the English-speaking Caribbean, with the participation of training officers from seven countries in the region. Senior army officers representing Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador, responsible for incorporating the law of armed conflict into training courses for armed and security forces, attended the ICRC-organized yearly meeting on this subject held in El Salvador in September.

The delegation intensified its efforts in Guatemala to establish contact with the general public with the aim of increasing awareness of humanitarian law and the ICRC mandate. In the spirit of the Maya project,⁴ it organized radio broadcasts in Spanish and Mayan, exhibitions, newspaper articles, plays, workshops and seminars. The 50th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions presented an excellent opportunity for lectures, concerts and promotion by the media of humanitarian issues. The "People on War" mobile exhibition was presented in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama, attracting large audiences.

* Guatemalan Truth Commission

⁴ See the ICRC's 1998 Annual Report, p. 153.

*reaching the young
in schools and universities*

*keeping journalists
and the authorities informed*

*cooperation
with National Societies*

At the end of the year, the delegation launched the first issue of its magazine, "Región", the aim of which was to spread awareness of ICRC activities among civil society and the general public.

The ICRC stepped up its efforts to spread the message of humanitarian law to young people in the region by giving courses to students and professors, offering guidance on how to include instruction on humanitarian law in curricula, and distributing publications.

In October a forum was held in Costa Rica to promote humanitarian law in academic circles. It was attended by participants from the "Escuela Libre de Derechos Humanos" and from the civil service. A proposal to make lessons on the Red Cross a part of basic education was presented to the Ministries of Education of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. School brigades made up of specialized youth dissemination officers gave instruction on basic Red Cross knowledge in schools. The ICRC organized conferences on the Ottawa treaty and humanitarian law at national universities in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama for more than 500 participants.

The first national seminar on women and armed conflict took place at El Salvador University in September and was attended by 30 university professors.

In Honduras and Nicaragua, ICRC seminars and workshops were held in August and September for media personnel and students of communication on the role of the media in wartime and the principles of humanitarian law. In December, the third seminar for journalists took place at the International Press Centre in Havana, Cuba, on the protection of children during wartime and in disasters.

Dissemination activities focusing on the authorities were extended. In Costa Rica, the regional delegation ran a seminar on humanitarian law for officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of the government and students from the regional diplomatic school. In Nicaragua, a seminar was held in November for 30 members of the National Assembly on national repression of violations of humanitarian law. The new Penal Code will take into account points concerning violations which were discussed during the seminar.

In all cooperation activities throughout the region, the ICRC stressed the importance of dissemination and training courses. Together with the Nicaraguan Red Cross, the ICRC participated in the first regional meeting on mine clearance organized in Central America by the OAS. It cooperated with the Cuban National Society in promoting the inclusion of humanitarian law in post-secondary education. The ICRC continued to support the Cuban Red Cross International Humanitarian Law Study Centre. Also in cooperation with the Cuban Red Cross and with CSUCA,* the ICRC organized the first regional course on humanitarian law for university teachers. The course, held at the end of the year in Havana, was attended by 30 professors and officials from the region's academic institutions.

The ICRC gave support to the National Societies of the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua in restructuring their dissemination and communication departments and in building up networks of active disseminators. It also gave courses to youth disseminators.

* CSUCA: "Consejo superior universitario centroamericano" (Central American Superior University Council)

IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- visited 17 detainees held in Grenada since the armed intervention of 1983 and coming under the ICRC mandate;
- continued to monitor the conditions of detention of 3,687 prisoners in Haiti, and followed up on the cases of 17 individual security detainees;
- gave financial support to Haiti's two most populated prisons to enable them to provide detainees with adequate rations of fresh foodstuffs;
- distributed recreational items and toiletries to 30 hospitalized detainees in the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince and to 137 women and children in Fort National prison, and provided education material to the latter;
- made regular visits to and monitored the conditions of 25 detainees requiring medical attention in Haiti;
- financed and ensured supervision of the construction of bathroom facilities, connections to drinking water pipelines, repairs to existing water and sewage systems and the installation of new systems in prisons in Hinche, Aquín and Port-de-Paix, Haiti;
- in October and December visited 5 security detainees held in Panama's El Renacer Rehabilitation Centre since the armed intervention of the United States in 1989;



- supported the National Societies of the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Costa Rica, Cuba and Guatemala in training 133 dissemination officers specializing in dissemination for young people;
- together with region's National Societies, organized courses and workshops on humanitarian law;
- following a deterioration in the situation on Panama's border with Colombia, cooperated with the Panamanian Red Cross to respond more efficiently should violence break out;



- supported the military authorities in Nicaragua in training an additional 25 instructors on the law of armed conflict, forming a core unit of 68 instructors;
- conducted a course on the law of armed conflict for 55 instructors at the School of the Americas, United States;
- supervised training courses on humanitarian law and human rights carried out in Jamaica by ICRC-trained regional police instructors for police officers and instructors from 12 Caribbean countries; these training courses were the result of an agreement between the ICRC and the Jamaican Ministry of National Security;
- gave national courses on humanitarian law for 135 university professors from various faculties in El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Nicaragua;
- organized a forum in Costa Rica for 35 professors from the "Escuela Libre de Derechos Humanos" and civil servants on the promotion of humanitarian law in academic circles;
- gave courses on humanitarian law at the El Salvador University, the School of International Relations in Panama and at two universities in Guatemala to a total of 115 students;
- supported the National Societies of the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica in providing their dissemination officers with special training courses focusing on dissemination for young people for the formation of school brigades;
- organized the fifth regional workshop on dissemination and communication in Trinidad and Tobago for the National Societies of CARICOM* member countries;
- ran a seminar in December for journalists at the International Press Centre in Havana, Cuba, on the protection of children during wartime and in disasters;
- ran seminars in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama on humanitarian law and the role of the media in wartime for over 200 journalists and communication students;
- organized a seminar in Guatemala on humanitarian law and the Mayan legal system and presented plays on the same theme for some 6,800 persons;
- participated in the fifth International Congress on Disasters in Cuba, presenting the ICRC mandate in general;
- promoted the Jean Pictet international humanitarian law competition throughout the region;



- continued to support the Nicaraguan Red Cross and its ambulances and first-aid teams in their work with the Nicaraguan army's mine-detection and mine-clearance personnel in the field.

* CARICOM: Caribbean Community

