

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

**Rubrik:** Middle East and North Africa

### **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**

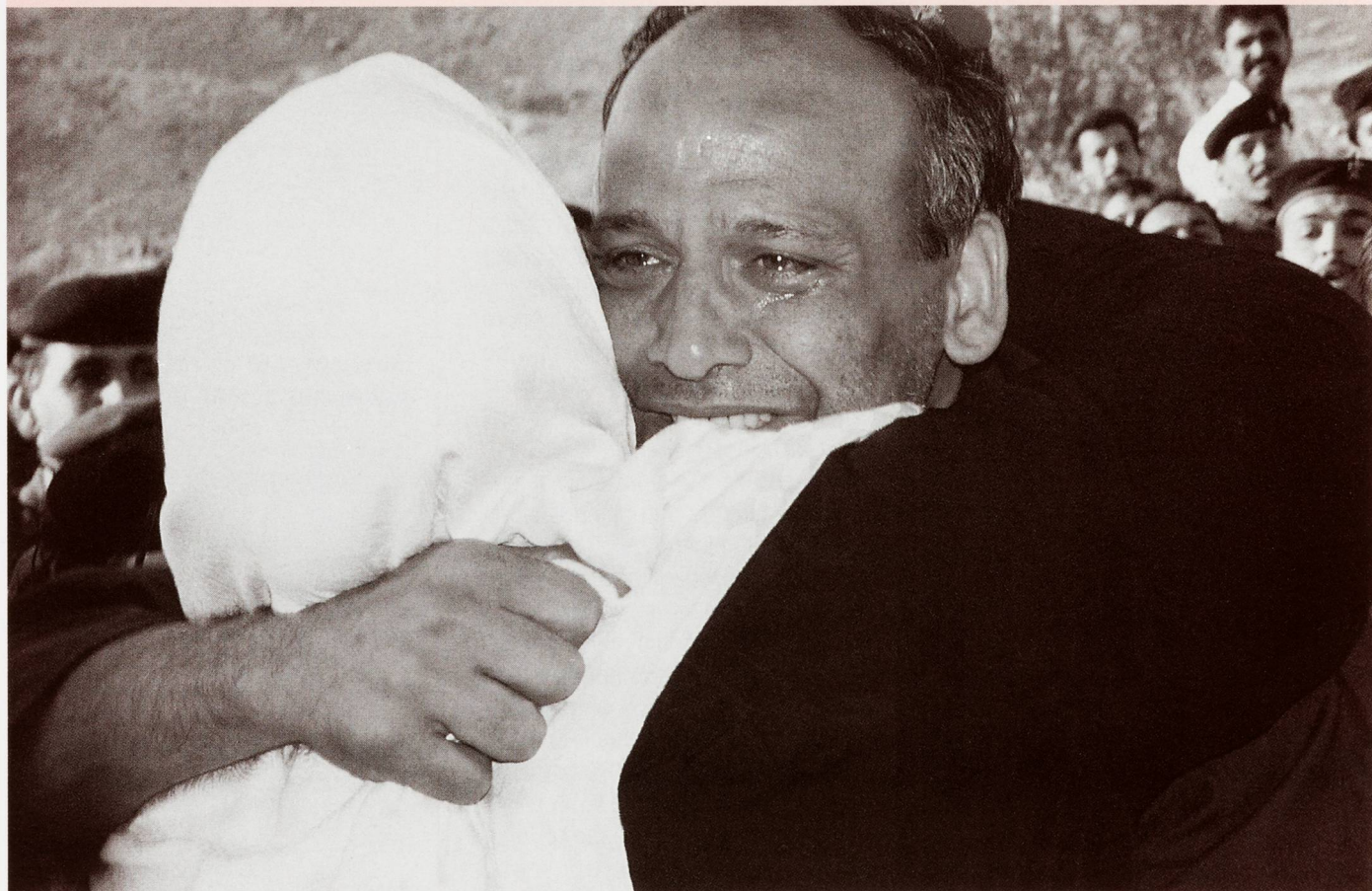
L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées 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:** 25.04.2026

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



*Eleven years after the end of the Iran-Iraq conflict, this man is finally reunited with his sister. Negotiating the repatriation of prisoners of war can take years of humanitarian diplomacy. In 1999, the ICRC supervised the repatriation of 715 Iraqi POWs held in Iran.*

# MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

## The Near East

### ICRC delegations:

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

## The Gulf

### ICRC delegations:

Iraq, Yemen

### ICRC regional delegation:

Kuwait

## North Africa

### ICRC delegation:

Egypt

### ICRC regional delegation:

Tunisia

## Staff

ICRC expatriates<sup>1</sup>: 80

National Societies<sup>1</sup>: 5

Local employees<sup>2</sup>: 478

**Total expenditure: Sfr 41,974,936.16**

### Expenditure breakdown:

Protection: 12,323,745.09

Assistance: 14,432,606.36

Preventive action: 5,145,204.65

Cooperation with National Societies:

3,320,107.26

Overheads: 2,525,312.00

General: 4,227,960.80



⊕ ICRC regional delegation

⊕ ICRC delegation

ICRC / AR 12 99

<sup>1</sup> Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

<sup>2</sup> Under ICRC contract, as at December 1999.

Several countries in the Middle East and North Africa underwent significant transformations in 1999. In Morocco and Jordan, Hassan II and Hussein were succeeded on the throne by their sons; Algeria elected a new president, and Israel, Lebanon and Bahrain new governments. These transitions prompted a renewal of efforts to revitalize relations between countries and to relaunch political processes. This was most notably the case for the Arab-Israeli peace process, which had been stalled since 1997. Implementation of the 1998 Wye Plantation Agreement started in September 1999, after the signing of a supplementary agreement in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Direct talks also resumed between Syria and Israel in December.

The ICRC maintained its activities in aid of the Arab populations in the Israeli-occupied territories. The treatment of prisoners and the consequences in humanitarian terms of Israeli settlements were issues of major concern. In the ICRC's view, Israel remains bound by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of August 1949, until a final peace agreement consistent with international law is concluded on the status of the occupied territories. In the autonomous territories, the ICRC again regularly visited detainees at the invitation of the Palestinian Authority.

The year under review also saw the continuation of military operations of an international character in Iraq and in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict in southern Lebanon; although low-intensity and not in the public eye, these operations continued to take their toll of human lives and to cause regular damage to infrastructure. The ICRC provided emergency assistance to civilian victims when necessary and reminded the parties of their obligation to take all necessary precautions to spare civilians and the objects essential to their survival.

In Iraq, the year was characterized by growing international awareness of the prevailing humanitarian situation and needs, but no progress was made at the diplomatic level in breaking the deadlock. The ICRC, for its part, stepped up its efforts to alleviate the plight of the civilian population, which had been living under international trade sanctions for almost a decade. The run-down state of much of the country's infrastructure and public services, in particular health care and water and sewage treatment, presented a growing health risk and prompted the ICRC to launch broad-ranging programmes in these fields.

In Algeria, the ICRC was able to resume visits in accordance with its customary procedures to all detainees in places of detention under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. This had been one of the organization's priority objectives since 1992, when visits were suspended. Acting on its longstanding and deep concern at the plight of the victims of the violence, the ICRC worked with the Algerian Red Crescent in setting up new, large-scale programmes to provide psychological assistance for traumatized women and children. It also helped the National Society to reinforce its capacity to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and to build up a national first-aid network.

Besides these new and highly visible activities, the ICRC spared no effort in its search for solutions to entrenched dilemmas long since passed over by the media spotlight, such as the issue of prisoners from past conflicts. The year witnessed little progress, for example, with regard to the Western Sahara. As in the past, the ICRC repeatedly expressed its concern about the plight of the over 1,800 Moroccan

prisoners still detained by the Polisario Front nearly a decade after the end of active hostilities, and stepped up its representations to the parties with a view to a general repatriation of all prisoners, starting with the most vulnerable. At the end of 1999, it repatriated five Moroccan prisoners freed on humanitarian grounds.

Following the considerable progress made in 1998 towards resolving the issue of POWs from the Iran-Iraq war, in 1999 the ICRC pursued its interviews with Iraqi POWs in Iran with a view to repatriating those wishing to return to Iraq, and intensified its discussions with the authorities concerned. It repatriated 715 Iraqi POWs and 53 Iranian civilian detainees during the year.

The ICRC also pursued its efforts to shed light on the fate of persons who were still unaccounted for as a result of the Gulf war (1990-1991). Throughout the year, Iraq upheld its decision not to attend, in its current composition, the ICRC-chaired Tripartite Commission bringing together Iraq and the Coalition States. In the absence of a consensus, the ICRC continued to consult and meet regularly with the parties concerned.

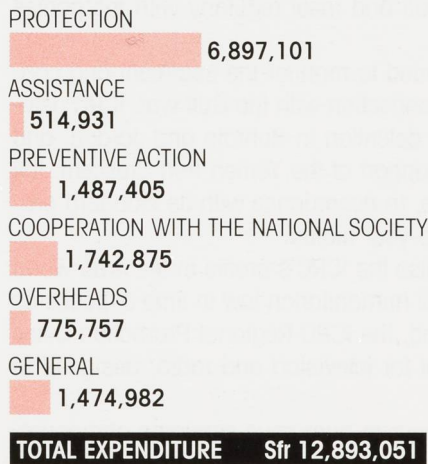
In both Iraq and Kuwait, the ICRC continued to monitor the treatment and conditions of detention of people being held in connection with the Gulf war. ICRC delegates also continued their visits to places of detention in Bahrain and Jordan, and began visiting detainees in Qatar. With the support of the Yemen Red Crescent, the ICRC successfully negotiated renewed access, in accordance with its standard procedures, to all detainees in Yemen after a two-year hiatus.

As in the past, efforts were pursued to raise the ICRC's profile in the Arab world and to promote acceptance of the principles of humanitarian law in time of peace as much as in time of armed conflict. To that end, the ICRC Regional Promotion Office in Cairo produced a broad range of material for television and radio, designed to reach a vast Arabic-speaking audience.

The ICRC also took part throughout the year in numerous seminars and courses on humanitarian law, with the aim not just of teaching and promoting this body of law, but also of encouraging governments to introduce national measures for the implementation of their treaty obligations.

As in the past, cooperation with the region's National Societies comprised support and training to bolster their operational capacity in the areas of tracing, dissemination and relief. The organization continued its support for the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" emergency medical services. In Yemen, Egypt and Iraq, closer collaboration was achieved in the fields of dissemination and tracing.

## ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES



⊕ ICRC delegation   ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation   ⊕ ICRC mission   ⊕ ICRC office

*resumption of talks with Syria*

In May 1999, Israelis elected a new Prime Minister and Knesset. On 4 September, an agreement supplementing the Wye Plantation Agreement of October 1998 was signed in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The new accord calls for further Israeli troop withdrawals from the West Bank and the release of hundreds of detainees. Implementation began with the release by Israel of 376 prisoners between September and the end of the year, and the opening of a safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in October.

Following the appointment of the respective negotiation leaders, talks started in November on a final settlement to resolve issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the character of the Palestinian entity and its borders, Palestinian refugees and Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. However, a further Israeli redeployment in the West Bank did not take place as scheduled.

Another major development in the Middle East peace process was the resumption of direct talks between Israel and Syria, which had been at a standstill since 1996. On 15 and 16 December, the Israeli Prime Minister met with the Syrian Foreign Minister in Washington under the auspices of the President of the United

*applicability  
of the Fourth Geneva Convention*

States. They agreed on a number of procedural issues and scheduled a further round of talks for January 2000.

Notwithstanding interim agreements concluded as part of the peace process, 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 Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the 1949 Geneva Conventions on measures to enforce the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied territories, convened by the United Nations General Assembly, took place in Geneva on 15 July. The Conference was adjourned after the reading by the representative of the Swiss government of a joint statement by all participating High Contracting Parties, reaffirming the applicability of the Convention.

For the ICRC, which has been working in the region since 1967, the treatment of detainees held outside the occupied territories, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the humanitarian implications of the Israeli settlements continued to be matters of deep concern. The ICRC repeatedly called upon the Israeli government to comply with international humanitarian law and to take all necessary measures to put an end to violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The civilian population protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention was again affected by serious humanitarian problems in 1999. Although on the whole there were fewer incidents between Palestinian civilians and Israeli forces or settlers than in previous years, the final months of 1999 saw a rise in tension. The expansion of existing colonies and the establishment of new ones, the construction of by-passes to isolated colonies and the confiscation of land continued, despite the removal of some of the settlements established after the signing of the Wye Plantation Agreement in 1998. The uprooting of olive trees and the forced transfer of Bedouin or seasonal farmers from the arid and semi-arid areas of the West Bank remained a source of deep concern.

In addition, the sealing off of the occupied territories, the occasional strict closures or curfews affecting certain localities, and restrictions on access to land and natural resources made life difficult for Palestinians. Obstacles placed in the way of access to the labour market and restrictions imposed on trade had an adverse effect on economic activity. Protected persons were also subjected throughout the year to other measures, such as the confiscation of identity papers and forcible transfers.

The ICRC did its utmost to improve the lot of civilians living in the occupied territories. Despite its representations to the Israeli government, it was unable to bring about full compliance with humanitarian law, and indeed reported a number of specific cases of violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the authorities.

In September 1999, the Israeli Supreme Court passed a landmark judgement prohibiting certain methods of interrogation used by the Israeli security agency and in the ICRC's view clearly contrary to the Geneva Conventions.

Throughout 1999, an average of 3,500 Palestinians were being held by the Israeli authorities at any one time; the rate of arrest remained unchanged at about 300 people per month, a quarter of them for security reasons. All Palestinian detainees were imprisoned in places of detention on Israeli territory, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

*civilians in the occupied territories*

*decision  
by the Israeli Supreme Court*

*visits to detainees in Israel*

The ICRC delegation pursued its traditional activities in favour of all detainees protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention. This included not just Palestinians, but also other persons detained by the Israeli authorities, among them Syrian nationals, including people from the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights, nationals of States that are at war with Israel or have no diplomatic relations with the country and persons detained in Khiam detention centre in occupied southern Lebanon.<sup>3</sup>

Over the year, the ICRC visited 25 different places of detention in Israel. It reported on its findings orally and in writing to the Israeli authorities, and made representations with a view to bringing about improvements in treatment and conditions of detention.

Particular attention continued to be paid to the treatment and conditions of detention of detainees under interrogation, who were visited on a regular basis. ICRC delegates closely monitored compliance by the Israeli security agency with the 6 September Supreme Court judgement that prohibited the use of certain methods of interrogation. In addition, a number of visits were organized to individual detainees with special humanitarian needs.

The ICRC noted a sharp decrease in the number of Palestinian detainees held in Israel for administrative reasons.

The ICRC was authorized for the first time in December to visit one of the two detained Lebanese nationals, who had been held by Israel since 1989. The ICRC was still denied access, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to the other detained Lebanese national, who had been held by Israel since 1994.

On 26 December 1999, five of the 21 Lebanese administrative detainees held in Israel as "bargaining chips" were released and repatriated to Lebanon. The fate of the 16 remaining detainees has been under review by the Supreme Court since the end of 1997. The ICRC considers this practice, which is tantamount to holding those detainees hostage, to be a violation of the Geneva Conventions and continued to make representations to the authorities with a view to having it stopped.

The ICRC continued to fund and organize, in cooperation with the "Palestine Red Crescent Society", family visits for Palestinian detainees held in Israeli prisons. The families, living in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, required assistance in obtaining authorization from the Israeli authorities to visit relatives being held on Israeli territory.

The ICRC also distributed parcels, provided by their families living in Lebanon, to Lebanese detainees and delivered handicrafts made by the Lebanese detainees to their families. At the end of November, the ICRC transmitted 19 video messages taped by Lebanese detainees held in Israel to their families in Lebanon.

At the request of the Palestinian Authority, the ICRC visited civilian and military places of detention in the autonomous territories.<sup>4</sup> An average of 1,200 Palestinians were detained by the Palestinian Authority and held in various detention centres in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In 1999, the ICRC expanded its visits to detainees both in Gaza and the West Bank to cover a total of 51 places of detention under the authority of the Police and the Security Services respectively. ICRC delegates

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 309-310.

<sup>4</sup> Visits are carried out in accordance with procedures set out in a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Palestinian Authority in 1996, following the Oslo accord of 1993. See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 235.

*family visits programme*

*detainees held  
by the Palestinian Authority*

regularly visited these places of detention in order to assess the detainees' material and psychological conditions of detention.

The ICRC submitted recommendations orally and in writing to the Palestinian Authority and made representations with a view to bringing about improvements in the treatment of detainees and the conditions of detention.

At the beginning of September, the ICRC transmitted a report to the Palestinian authorities on the issue of basic judicial guarantees during arrest, in places of detention and in court proceedings.

*medical activities  
on behalf of detainees*

An ICRC physician took part in four visits to Israeli interrogation centres, one visit to a high-security Israeli prison, three visits to the central hospital of the Israeli Prison Authority and 28 visits to places of detention under the Palestinian Authority. He observed developments in the hunger strike of 44 Palestinian administrative detainees in the northern part of the West Bank from January.

The ICRC worked with the Military Medical Service, which is responsible for health care in places of detention in Gaza and the West Bank, to organize three seminars on health care and medical ethics in relation to detainees for the Service's staff and representatives of the Palestinian security forces.

*restoring family ties*

The ICRC kept up its extensive activities to restore and maintain family links for those affected by the consequences of the Arab-Israeli conflict, using its network of local offices throughout the occupied and the autonomous territories. It 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 and the Syrian population of the Golan Heights for various reasons.

*occupied Syrian Golan Heights*

For some thirty years, the major problem for the 13,000 or so Syrian nationals living on the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights has been separation from other 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.

*neutral intermediary*

In 1999, the ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary between Israel and countries with which it had no diplomatic relations or peace agreements.

*occupied southern Lebanon*

The situation in southern Lebanon remained volatile in 1999. Hostilities came to a head in May and June with rocket attacks on northern Israel and air raids over Lebanon. As a result of these incidents, eight people were killed and more than 20 wounded in Lebanon, and two people died and a number were wounded in northern Israel. Considerable damage was inflicted on civilian infrastructure in Lebanon, including bridges and power plants. In Israel, civilian homes were damaged.

The ICRC repeated its representations with a view to ensuring that the Lebanese armed groups, the Israeli forces, and the SLA\* militia complied with humanitarian law and abided by the rules on the conduct of hostilities.

*repatriation  
of detainees to Lebanon*

The ICRC oversaw the repatriation of three Lebanese detainees, after having ascertained in interviews in private that they did indeed wish to return to Lebanon.

In December, the ICRC, in its capacity as a neutral intermediary and at the request of all the parties concerned, organized the repatriation from southern

\* SLA: South Lebanon Army

*retrieval and repatriation  
of mortal remains*

*enhancing awareness  
of humanitarian law*

*"People on War" project*

*humanitarian law teaching project*

*cooperation within the Movement*

Lebanon of the mortal remains of seven members of Lebanese armed groups, during a general cease-fire agreed upon for that purpose, so that they could be returned to their families.

In March, the ICRC held its first-ever dissemination session on humanitarian law for 30 junior officers and cadets from the School of Liaison and Coordination of the Israeli Armed Forces. These officers carried out their duties in the occupied territories and were therefore in direct contact with the Palestinian civilian population. Over the year, the ICRC also gave a number of presentations to senior staff from the Israeli Civil Administration (Matak).

One of the contexts chosen for the "People on War" project to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions was Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories. In June, the ICRC, the "Magen David Adom" and the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" interviewed one thousand Israelis and Palestinians, randomly selected from different sectors of society, about their experience and opinions in terms of the limits in war.<sup>5</sup>

The ICRC set up a teaching project on humanitarian law and principles, intended for the emerging institutions of the Palestinian Authority, the local authorities, prison authorities, universities and the "Palestine Red Crescent Society".

The Israeli and Palestinian Education Boards confirmed their interest in participating and cooperating in the research and development phase of the "Exploring Humanitarian Law" project. Focus group discussions with Israeli students took place in November.

The ICRC continued to assume the role of lead agency for the Movement's activities in the occupied and the autonomous territories, pursuant to the Seville Agreement of 1997. It consulted regularly with its partners in the Movement working in the area, namely the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the German, Netherlands and Australian Red Cross Societies.

In particular, the ICRC provided the logistical back-up for bilateral programmes run by the National Societies, such as the Netherlands Red Cross programme to provide medical assistance and training in seven hospitals and clinics run by the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the Australian Red Cross Women's Development Project in Gaza. Efforts to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" and the "Magen David Adom" continued in 1999.

The ICRC maintained its financial, technical, material and training support for the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" Emergency Medical Services (EMS), which serve all sick and wounded in the autonomous and the occupied territories, and for the development of the Society's dissemination activities, as set forth in an agreement signed between the two components of the Movement on 21 March.

In order to strengthen the emergency response capacity of EMS-performing branches, the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" received three fully-equipped ambulances and one intensive care unit vehicle.<sup>6</sup> An ambulance sub-station was opened in Yafa to cover the area south of Hebron, and an intensive information campaign was launched in Gaza to promote awareness of the service and, in particular, of the standard emergency telephone number.

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 348-350.

<sup>6</sup> The three ambulances were funded by ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Office), and the intensive care unit by Volkswagen.

## *"Palestine Red Crescent Society"*

In consultation and close cooperation with the "Palestine Red Crescent Society", the Federation and the Netherlands Red Cross, the ICRC completed a survey of emergency rooms in all hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza, with a view to developing project proposals. The results were presented to the Palestinian Minister of Health and to the Deputy Minister of Planning and International Cooperation.

The ICRC also provided support for the activities of the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" dissemination department, which coordinated the efforts of the 18 Red Crescent branches to spread knowledge of humanitarian law. The delegation organized a number of workshops on communication and humanitarian law for regional dissemination coordinators and youth volunteers in Gaza and in Ramallah. It backed projects such as the "safety-at-home campaign", which had been put together in close cooperation with the Society's primary health care department.

Regular contact was maintained with the "Magen David Adom". The ICRC supplied it with emergency medical equipment after the June rocket attacks on northern Israel.

## *"Magen David Adom"*

In October, a doctor from the "Magen David Adom" carried out an assessment of the blood transfusion system in Kosovo on behalf of the ICRC. Discussions were then held with the Society regarding the measures needed to improve the system, including concrete contributions by the "Magen David Adom" in the form of training courses.

ISRAEL AND  
THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



**IN 1999 THE ICRC:**

- carried out 232 visits to 25 places of detention run by the Israeli authorities, during which it regularly saw 3,889 individuals protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention, talking to 772 of them in private for the first time;
- supervised the repatriation of three Lebanese detainees released by the Israeli authorities, after establishing in private interviews that they were returning of their own free will;
- issued, authenticated or copied 18,279 detention certificates;
- in cooperation with the "Palestine Red Crescent", organized 107,729 family visits to detainees;
- restored and maintained contact between detainees held in Israeli facilities and their families by forwarding 5,439 Red Cross messages;
- provided detainees with educational and recreational items; distributed 67 parcels with winter clothes to foreign detainees held in Israeli prisons;
- provided medical assistance, such as orthopaedic shoes and belts, and dental treatment for detainees;



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



- forwarded 566 Red Cross messages exchanged between residents of the occupied and the autonomous territories and their relatives abroad;
- supervised 8 handover operations, enabling 491 people to cross over from the Syrian Golan Heights to Syria; altogether, 16 handover operations enabling 980 people to cross the demarcation line to/from the Golan Heights were organized, in conjunction with the ICRC delegation in Syria;
- opened 12 new tracing requests;



- distributed material assistance (tents, stoves, blankets) to Bedouin families and home-owners whose dwellings had been destroyed;



- provided emergency medical equipment for the "Magen David Adom" in June;



- carried out the consultation phase of the "People on War" project, in active cooperation with the "Magen David Adom" and the "Palestine Red Crescent Society";
- distributed over 700 information kits to its contacts and the media, and organized a press conference in Gaza, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions;
- held humanitarian law dissemination sessions for members of the Israeli armed forces.

## THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES



### IN 1999 THE ICRC:

- visited 1,791 persons detained by the Palestinian security services, 719 of them for the first time, in 60 places of detention;
- provided the detainees with medical assistance and educational and recreational items;



- provided medical equipment (partly funded by ECHO) for "Palestine Red Crescent Society" ambulances and delivered tents, blankets and mattresses donated by the German Red Cross to EMS-performing branches; provided materials for EMS technical schools in the West Bank and Gaza;
- carried out four courses on child-to-child training for rehabilitation workers and "Palestine Red Crescent" youth volunteers, as a means of using children's creativity to spread knowledge of the Movement and its principles;
- organized two workshops on communication and one on humanitarian law for 40 "Palestine Red Crescent" dissemination coordinators in Gaza and in Ramallah respectively, and held training sessions in dissemination, interpersonal communication skills and presentation techniques for 20 youth volunteers;
- supported the "Palestine Red Crescent" dissemination department in developing and printing children's comic strips illustrating the Society's activities and how they reflect the Movement's Fundamental Principles.



- took part in two workshops in the West Bank and Gaza, organized by the Palestinian Board of Higher Education, and provided reference material on humanitarian law;
- held humanitarian law dissemination sessions for members of the Palestinian security services and military medical staff.

The Hashemite Kingdom was marked in early 1999 by the death of King Hussein and the accession of his son Abdullah to the throne. The year also saw improved relations between Jordan and the Gulf States, and the re-establishment of diplomatic ties with Kuwait. At home, Jordanians continued to suffer the consequences of chronic water shortages, high unemployment and the region's various crises. Over the last decades Jordan has absorbed large numbers of refugees, in particular Palestinians. Syria, meanwhile, donated 8 million cubic metres of water to Jordan to help it overcome the effects of drought.

As in the past, the ICRC's activities in the Kingdom covered the following areas: visits to places of detention, restoration and maintenance of family ties between families in Jordan and their relatives living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, dissemination of humanitarian law, and cooperation with the Jordan National Red Crescent Society.

The delegation in the Jordanian capital continued to act as the logistics base for the ICRC's activities in Iraq.

For the past twenty years the ICRC has monitored the conditions of detention and treatment of detainees under interrogation and those held in Jordanian civilian and military places of detention. In late December 1998, it had suspended its fortnightly visits to security detainees held for interrogation by the General Intelligence Directorate. It subsequently received confirmation that the visits could take place in accordance with ICRC standard procedures, and the visits resumed on 8 May.

Regular visits were also carried out to places of detention under the responsibility of the Public Security Directorate, barring a hiatus from the end of September to the end of October. On 24 October, after high-level discussions with the Jordanian authorities, the ICRC was once again allowed to hold private interviews with detainees held in these facilities. In addition, special visits were undertaken to women and juvenile detainees. A report was handed over to the authorities summarizing the ICRC's observations and recommendations regarding the situation of women in detention. ICRC delegates also regularly visited the correction and rehabilitation centre run by the Military Intelligence Directorate.

The ICRC continued its activities in aid of Palestinian and some Jordanian families with relatives held in Israel. It forwarded official personal documents and urgent messages between Palestinians in the occupied and the autonomous territories and their families in Jordan. In cooperation with the Jordanian Red Crescent, it facilitated ambulance transfers of urgent medical cases between the West Bank and Jordan. Administrative assistance was also provided to families needing to cross the river Jordan urgently for family reasons (for instance, because of the critical health or death of a relative).

In coordination with UNHCR, the ICRC issued travel documents for refugees without identity papers who were leaving for host countries pursuant to arrangements made by UNHCR and the embassies concerned.

The ICRC in Jordan remained a focal point for families who were unable, for example in the absence of diplomatic relations, to contact the authorities of another country for information about a detained relative, for authorization for a family visit or with a tracing request.

*visits to detainees*

*restoring family ties*

*dissemination of humanitarian  
law and principles*

*providing information  
to members of civil society*

*cooperation  
with the National Society*

Up to February 1999, the ICRC also ensured links between families living in Jordan and their relatives detained in Kuwait in connection with the Gulf war. Following the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in February, the last Jordanian detainees registered by the ICRC and detained in Kuwait were released.

Since 1994 the ICRC has pursued its dialogue with the Jordanian authorities with the dual goal of promoting humanitarian law and principles throughout Jordanian society and safeguarding its own capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies in Iraq. In 1999, the delegation intensified its contacts with the military and police authorities with a view to facilitating the incorporation of these principles into military training, providing the military authorities with the necessary technical support for such training, and selecting military personnel for "train-the-trainers" courses. This process was given a boost thanks to the support of a retired Jordanian Armed Forces Major General acting as a consultant in the matter.

The highlight of the year was a week-long series of training sessions on the law of armed conflict organized jointly with the Jordanian Armed Forces in November. Sessions included a two-day "train-the-trainers" course at the Staff and Command College for 120 company commanders, including majors and captains from the Jordanian Armed Forces and from the Gulf States, Mauritania, Pakistan and China. Further sessions were held at the Royal War College and the Martyr King Abdallah bin al Hussein Infantry School in Amman. The participants were briefed on the fundamental principles of the law of war, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the emblem, and humanitarian law as opposed to human rights law.

The delegation maintained regular contacts with local, Arab and foreign media representatives, with university students, research centres, academics and visitors seeking information on different humanitarian issues. Dissemination activities intensified in August around the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. A ceremony was held on 22 August under the patronage of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence; it was attended by high-ranking representatives from the military, police and civil authorities. Jordanian media prepared special features and private companies also contributed to the event. In one instance, a major shopping mall in Amman displayed ICRC and National Society posters, films and publications.

As in the past, the ICRC and the Jordanian National Red Crescent Society maintained a good level of cooperation. In addition to the joint activities mentioned above (ambulance transfers and tracing), the ICRC supported the National Society's endeavours to promote knowledge of humanitarian law and the Movement by providing training and financial assistance.

The Jordanian Red Crescent continued to assume a lead role in dissemination for schoolchildren, with regular sessions held at its headquarters and essay competitions organized over the year. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, texts on humanitarian law, the Fundamental Principles, the ICRC and the Jordanian Red Crescent were incorporated into Jordanian school curricula, for use in both public and UNWRA\* schools.

\* UNWRA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency

*mine-awareness*

The Jordanian Red Crescent was appointed secretary of the National Committee for the Implementation of Humanitarian Law in Jordan, the first meeting of which was held at the beginning of August. The ICRC had invited the President of the National Society to a special meeting in Geneva in February for further briefing and discussions on the work of such national committees.

The ICRC delegation continued to provide material and information on anti-personnel landmines during dissemination sessions for schools and the general public, held in cooperation with the Jordanian Red Crescent.



## IN 1999 THE ICRC:

- carried out 37 visits to 10 places of detention and registered 369 detainees for the first time;
- arranged for the exchange of 980 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families, and occasionally forwarded parcels and financial assistance to the detainees;
- issued 80 detention certificates for persons formerly detained in Jordan;
- issued over 100 detention certificates in respect of detainees in Israel and those held in connection with the aftermath of the Gulf war;
- restored and maintained contacts between members of separated Jordanian and Palestinian families;
- handled Red Cross messages and forwarded documents to and from the occupied and autonomous territories;
- issued 303 travel documents to expedite the resettlement of refugees, in particular Iraqis;



- facilitated medical transfers between the West and East Banks carried out by the Jordanian Red Crescent and the "Palestine Red Crescent Society";
- in cooperation with the Jordanian Red Crescent and the Ministry of Education, gave regular courses on humanitarian law and principles to schoolchildren, teachers and National Society members;
- supported the annual Jordanian Red Crescent "train-the-trainers" workshop, which was attended by 76 volunteers from the different branches and representatives of the Ministry of Education and covered Red Cross and Red Crescent issues;
- trained National Society staff in tracing techniques;
- provided support for the production of a new National Society brochure detailing its various activities on behalf of the local community, printed in both Arabic and English;
- facilitated participation by two Jordanian Red Crescent members at a "train-the-trainers" workshop on anti-personnel mines in Yemen in November, after which the National Society launched a child-to-child awareness-raising programme in mine-infested areas of Jordan;



- in cooperation with the Jordanian Armed Forces, organized a week-long series of training sessions on the law of armed conflict for high-ranking officers and military instructors from Jordan, the Gulf States and other countries, in November;
- enabled two retired generals to attend military and police courses in Geneva, and thus ultimately to contribute to the "train-the-trainers" courses agreed on with the Jordanian military authorities;
- held talks for women officers and NCOs at the Royal Military Academy in April, and for female recruits from different army corps, in particular the medical services, in November;
- held training sessions on humanitarian law for Jordanian military and police contingents being sent on UN peacekeeping missions;
- held a dissemination session for General Intelligence Directorate staff in November at which 17 officers were briefed on the ICRC's mandate, its customary visiting procedures, and its specificity;
- gave a presentation on the role of humanitarian law in conflict resolution, the ICRC and the Movement to 30 UNICEF field workers active in the region;
- negotiated the incorporation of texts on humanitarian law into a standard teacher's manual published in May and into school curricula in September;
- regularly provided universities and documentation centres with reference materials and publications on humanitarian issues and law;
- arranged for the showing in Jordan of an exhibition entitled "Art in the Service of Humanity", organized by the ICRC in Damascus, in which the works of 18 Syrian artists, produced specially for the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, were displayed for five days.

## LEBANON

*renewed tension  
in southern Lebanon*

*civilians living in  
Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon*

During the year under review, military operations and security incidents continued to take place in and around southern Lebanon, which is under Israeli occupation.<sup>7</sup> On the whole, the presence on the ground of the Monitoring Group, set up pursuant to the Understanding reached in April 1996 after Operation Grapes of Wrath to urge the parties to the conflict to abide more strictly by the rules of the law of war, continued to act as a moderating influence in the fighting. The number of civilian casualties decreased for the second year running.

The ICRC regularly offered its services as a neutral intermediary to all the parties to the conflict and urged them to comply with the provisions of humanitarian law and to spare civilian lives and property.

In February, the border village of Arnoun in southern Lebanon was sealed off from the rest of the country for 10 days, during which it was temporarily integrated into the Israeli-occupied zone before being returned to Lebanon. The ICRC conducted daily visits to the village during that period, distributing food parcels and medical supplies, and arranging for the transfer of villagers who had to leave or go to Arnoun for urgent reasons. It also transported dairy products on behalf of local producers to be sold in the closest market town, as a means of limiting their losses.

Tensions rose again in the south and in the Bekaa valley in early March, after a senior Israeli commanding officer and three other Israeli nationals were killed in a roadside bomb attack in southern Lebanon.

June saw an escalation of the violence between Israeli and Lebanese armed groups, with rocket attacks against northern Israel and Israeli air strikes against Lebanese infrastructure (power stations, roads and a bridge), including in the suburbs of Beirut. As a result of these incidents, eight people died and more than 20 were wounded in Lebanon, and two people were killed and a number wounded in northern Israel. The ICRC approached the two parties to remind them of their obligation to spare civilians during military operations.

On 1 June, following a number of security incidents, the SLA<sup>8</sup> militia withdrew from the Jezzine pocket, which it had controlled for the past 15 years. Israel's new Prime Minister announced that Israel would withdraw from southern Lebanon by July 2000, either in the framework of a treaty or unilaterally.

As in the past, the ICRC focused on improving the situation of civilians affected by the hostilities, in particular those living within the Israeli-occupied zone in southern Lebanon, who are protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the inhabitants of front-line villages.

The inhabitants of southern Lebanon have been directly affected by the conflict for over 20 years. In 1999 they continued to be exposed not only to the dangers stemming from the hostilities, but also to various violations of humanitarian law, such as arbitrary detention, deportation from the occupied zone and demolition of houses. Over the years, thousands have abandoned their homes, because of the hostilities or increased economic pressure, leaving some villages inhabited only by the elderly and the most vulnerable.

Furthermore, military activities carried out in close proximity to inhabited areas in the occupied zone prevented the local population from going about its daily

<sup>7</sup> The group is made up of American, French, Israeli, Lebanese and Syrian representatives.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 299.

*assistance to civilians living  
in the occupied zone  
and on the front line*

*medical assistance*

*cooperation  
with the National Society*

business. Problems of access to agricultural land, which is often situated in dangerous areas, the temporary sealing off of certain villages and the difficulty of gaining access to medical care had direct consequences for the population both in economic terms and in terms of health and safety.

The ICRC fulfilled its role of neutral intermediary between the parties to the conflict by enabling some exposed villages to harvest their fields in the conflict zone and to carry out necessary maintenance and repair work on electricity networks and water pipes. This was the case, for example, in the villages of Arnoun, Yohmor and Nabatieh on a number of occasions throughout the year.

As in the past, delegates on the ground recorded allegations of violations of the Geneva Conventions and made oral or written representations to the relevant authorities (i.e., the IDF,\* the SLA and Lebanese armed groups).

In December, the ICRC, at the request of all the parties concerned, organized an operation to evacuate the mortal remains from southern Lebanon of seven members of Lebanese armed groups during a general cease-fire agreed upon for that purpose, so that they could be returned to their families.

The ICRC, which had unlimited access to all villages in southern Lebanon and along the front line, responded to the needs of the inhabitants of exposed, remote or sealed-off villages by providing food parcels, bread, fruit and vegetables, as well as fodder for livestock that could not be taken to nearby fields.

The ICRC paid particular attention to those sectors of the population which did not benefit from State-run development programmes or from the services of other humanitarian organizations.

Medical assistance remained a priority along the front line and in the occupied zone. The proximity of the front line was still an obstacle to access to medical care, and even though there were numerous dispensaries offering their services for a reasonable price, they did not always have the means to help the most needy. The ICRC assisted front-line hospitals receiving irregular supplies which often did not have the necessary material and medicines to treat the wounded before they were transferred to private hospitals. Following the increased tension in the south and in the Bekaa valley in March, basic medicines and dressing material were supplied as a preventive measure to local health facilities.

Through its mobile clinics, the ICRC provided regular support for eight isolated villages whose inhabitants had no access to medical care.

In the areas affected by the conflict, the ICRC kept up its material, financial and technical support for the operational activities of the Lebanese Red Cross, concentrating on the National Society's first-aid services. This support proved particularly important in times of emergency, enabling the Lebanese Red Cross to fulfil its crucial role as the only paramedical and evacuation service which is able to operate freely in the occupied zone and on the front line.

The ICRC also provided financial support for a series of Lebanese Red Cross training courses for the heads of first-aid and ambulance teams.

Throughout 1999, the ICRC had weekly access to newly arrested persons protected by the Geneva Conventions and held in Khiam detention centre in the Israeli-occupied zone of southern Lebanon. In December, a team of delegates, including a

\* IDF: Israeli Defence Forces

*visits to Khiam*

medical doctor, carried out a complete visit to the detention centre in order to assess the conditions of detention and subsequently forwarded recommendations to the authorities in charge.

With the assistance of the ICRC, which ensured transport and safe passage, the detainees in Khiam received family visits every three months.

In coordination with the prison authorities, the ICRC arranged for an ophthalmologist and a dentist to provide assistance to the detainees. It donated books and handicraft material for the detainees.

Some 70 Lebanese detainees were freed from Khiam in 1999; for a number of them, the ICRC had requested an immediate release on humanitarian grounds. These persons were handed over in Khiam to the ICRC, which ensured their safe return home.

The ICRC also repatriated three Lebanese citizens who were being held in Israeli prisons by transferring them across the closed international border between Israel and Lebanon.

The ICRC had access for the first time in 1999 to four members of the SLA detained by Hezbollah and was able to interview them in private about their conditions of detention and treatment in May/June and again in October. It also organized six family visits for them.

After over fifty years 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 hospitals and dispensaries in the five major Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon.

After a ship carrying 72 illegal immigrants was seized by the Israeli navy off the southern Lebanese coast in October, the ICRC delegation in Beirut provided these people, who were protected under the Fourth Geneva Convention, with food, blankets and medical assistance while initiating contacts with the relevant organizations and governments in order to find a solution to their situation.

The ICRC again worked to increase awareness of and respect for humanitarian law and the Movement's principles by maintaining contacts with representatives of the Lebanese armed forces.

The ICRC made a substantial contribution to a regional conference on the threat of landmines in Arab countries, held in Beirut by the National Demining Bureau of the Lebanese army and the Landmines Resource Centre of Balamand University from 11 to 12 February. The conference brought together several hundred participants, around half of whom were military officers from Arab armies, as well as foreign ministry officials, medical personnel, academics and NGOs. Throughout the year, the ICRC was in direct contact with the National Demining Bureau and provided it with publications and videos on the ICRC's landmine-related activities.

As part of the campaign to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, an international conference entitled "International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights: towards a new approach" was organized by the Human Rights Institute of the Bar Association in Beirut, in cooperation with the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross. The conference, held under the auspices of the Minister of Justice from 3 to 4 December, provided an opportunity for some 300 high-ranking representatives of the judiciary, the legislature, and the executive, as well as

*assistance for Palestinian refugees*

*illegal immigrants*

*disseminating humanitarian law*

*the threat of landmines*

*50th anniversary  
of the Geneva Conventions*

## *contacts with the media*

diplomats, academics and lawyers, to debate the relationship between these two branches of law.

Also in the framework of the 50th anniversary, the ICRC delegation in Lebanon took part in the "People on War" project,<sup>9</sup> asking 1,000 people to share their experiences and opinions on the limits in war. The Lebanese Red Cross played an active part in the project.

Contacts with the media were maintained throughout the 50th anniversary campaign and nine half-hour broadcasts were shown on Future satellite and national television channels from June to August. The broadcasts focused on topics such as the role of the media in promoting humanitarian law, prisoners of war and detainees, women and children in war, water in armed conflicts, and the Movement.

<sup>9</sup> See pp. 348-350.

## IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- visited 235 detainees during its weekly visits to Khiam detention centre and provided them with medical assistance;
- arranged for 1,134 family members from within and outside the occupied zone to visit their detained relatives in Khiam detention centre and Beirut;
- assisted families whose breadwinner was in detention by providing over 900 food parcels;
- collected and distributed 7,134 Red Cross messages for Lebanese detainees both in Khiam and those detained in Israel;
- issued 624 detention certificates to persons who had been detained in connection with the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Gulf war;
- visited on two occasions four SLA members detained by Hezbollah and organized family visits to them;
- repatriated three detainees who were being held in Israeli prisons by transferring them across the closed international border between Israel and Lebanon;



- in February, arranged for the transfer of five villagers who needed to leave or go to Arnoun for urgent reasons;



- handled a total of 7,584 Red Cross messages for Lebanese detainees, civilians and their families;



- provided over 3,200 food parcels and other material assistance to exposed or remote villages in southern Lebanon;



- provided medical assistance to six hospitals and 19 dispensaries in nine Palestinian camps in Lebanon, and to 14 hospitals and 45 dispensaries along the front line in southern Lebanon;
- provided 34 Palestinian refugees with prostheses;
- in cooperation with the Lebanese Red Cross, carried out over 3,000 consultations in mobile clinics in and near the occupied zone;
- together with the Ministry of Health, organized a two-day seminar on war surgery in May for over 40 surgeons from southern Lebanon who were directly involved in assisting the war-wounded;



- provided 13 Lebanese Red Cross dispensaries and two mobile clinics in the occupied zone and along the front line with basic medicines and dressing materials and other support;
- provided financial and material support to 14 Lebanese Red Cross first-aid centres active in the conflict zone to cover the centres' running costs and the maintenance of the ambulances;
- financed a training course for the heads of first-aid and ambulance teams, involving a total of 12 seminars and seven camps held in Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon;
- supported the organization of a national workshop for the Lebanese Red Cross communication department in March, attended by 30 volunteers from different parts of Lebanon, with a view to creating a communication network in Lebanon;



- for the third year running, participated in the International Arab Book Fair in Beirut, displaying a wide range of publications and showing films on the ICRC's main activities;
- gave numerous presentations on humanitarian law and ICRC activities, for instance at the UN Association of Lebanon and at various universities;
- together with an international law professor, worked on preparing a humanitarian law course for the Lebanese University in Beirut at the beginning of the year;



- contributed to a major regional conference and workshops in Beirut on the threat of landmines in Arab countries, together with the Lebanese Red Cross;
- showed the Ottawa treaty exhibition in different towns across Lebanon;
- took part in workshops on mine-awareness organized by the Lebanese Red Cross in cooperation with the Landmines Resource Centre of Balamand University;
- gave presentations on the humanitarian consequences of landmines and the Ottawa treaty, for instance at events organized by the Lebanese Army's National Demining Bureau and at a seminar hosted by the Human Rights Institute of the Lebanese Bar Association in Beirut.

## SYRIA

*protection  
of the civilian population*

*transferring family messages  
and documents*

*providing travel documents  
for refugees*

*repatriation  
of a Palestinian refugee*

*restoring family links for detainees*

As in previous years, the ICRC's work in the Syrian Arab Republic in 1999 was mainly connected with the humanitarian implications of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the dissemination of humanitarian law.

The election of a new Israeli government in May 1999 gave rise to optimism on both sides that the resumption of peace negotiations between Syria and Israel aiming at achieving a sustainable peace was imminent after a four-year stalemate. A first, tentative round of talks took place in mid-December, in Washington, in the presence of the American Secretary of State. During those talks, the two parties reaffirmed their interest in further negotiations and agreed on a framework for future talks, to start on 3 January 2000 in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

The ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary for the Syrian inhabitants of the Syrian Golan Heights occupied by Israel, who are protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention. These people were still not allowed to cross the demarcation line into Syria, where many of them had families they had not seen for over 30 years. The exceptions to the rule – pilgrims, students, and brides going to meet their husbands-to-be – crossed the line under ICRC auspices, with the cooperation and logistical support of UNDOF\*/UNTSO.\* The transfer of brides for their weddings presented one of the rare opportunities for separated families and friends from both sides of the demarcation line to meet up in the UNDOF-controlled "no-man's land" and spend a few minutes together.

As in other years, the ICRC restored and maintained links between family members separated as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict – both Syrian nationals and Palestinian refugees – by forwarding Red Cross messages to relatives in the Israeli-occupied territories or third countries. The Golanese population in the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights and in Syria also made use of the ICRC's services to send and receive official documents.

The ICRC continued to cooperate with UNHCR in issuing travel documents for refugees accepted for resettlement in third countries. The delegation carried out its yearly field mission to Al-Houl refugee camp in north-eastern Syria to provide travel documents, thus saving the refugees the time and expense of a long trip to Damascus for administrative purposes.

After several years of work by the ICRC delegations in Israel/occupied territories/autonomous territories and in Syria, collecting the necessary authorizations, a Palestinian refugee who had come to Syria in 1971 to study was finally allowed to return to Gaza with his wife and children and to be reunited with his relatives in February.

The ICRC again endeavoured to facilitate family contacts between Syrian nationals detained in Israel - who are protected under the Fourth Geneva Convention - and their relatives in Syria, by arranging the exchange of Red Cross messages. In the absence of family visits, this was the only way for the detainees to maintain regular contact with their relatives.

Fourteen Syrian detainees held in Israel were released following the Sharm el-Sheik agreement of 4 September. ICRC staff in Damascus, Gaza and Amman together organized the repatriation to Damascus of one of those detainees for urgent medical reasons.

\* UNDOF: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

\* UNTSO: United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

*contact with the authorities*

*spreading  
the humanitarian message*

*distributing ICRC material  
via the media*

*cooperation  
with the Syrian Red Crescent*

*"Palestine Red Crescent"  
prosthetic/orthotic workshop*

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

A large part of the ICRC's work in Syria in 1999 was devoted to promoting knowledge of humanitarian law and the Movement. The ICRC continued to encourage the Syrian armed forces to incorporate humanitarian law into official training courses for instructors by pursuing contacts with training representatives from the armed forces and providing them with ICRC publications on the subject. It also maintained contacts with UNDOF and UNTSO, which monitor observance of the cease-fire agreement between Israel and Syria, and provided them with publications on humanitarian law.

Syrian civil society showed a growing interest in receiving information on humanitarian law and the activities of the Movement. The ICRC distributed recent publications, such as "The Arabian Epics", an illustrated booklet which uses popular Arab tales to demonstrate the principles of humanitarian law, and the new ICRC regional news bulletin, "Al Insani (The Humanitarian)", both produced by the Regional Promotion Office in Cairo, to a growing number of contacts. It also maintained contacts with a wide range of media, providing them with ICRC radio and television productions and articles.

With regard to the media, the year's signal event was the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. Information on the Geneva Conventions and humanitarian law in general, and documentation on the "People on War" project, were distributed widely to the local press. To mark the anniversary, the Damascus delegation organized an exhibition of the works of 18 well-known Syrian painters and sculptors, entitled "Even Wars Have Limits", which ran from October to November before moving on to Amman, Jordan.

Cooperation between the ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society in the field of information took off in 1999 with the setting up of a new dissemination department at National Society headquarters. The first joint ICRC-Syrian Red Crescent project was the production of a bi-monthly newsletter, the first issue of which appeared in July, covering the activities of all 14 National Society branches.

From 17 to 30 August, the National Society hosted an international camp for young volunteers, at which 120 people from 22 different National Societies were present. The ICRC directed one of the workshops, held in both English and Arabic, which focused on the Movement, humanitarian law and the challenges of the new millennium.

The ICRC worked to enhance the National Society's visibility by organizing a mass public campaign over the summer to help tackle the problem of water shortages in Syria. Over 250 specially-made posters, bearing the ICRC and Syrian Red Crescent logos, were displayed in public places.

The ICRC continued to provide technical and financial support for the prosthetic/orthotic workshop run by the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" in Damascus. Unfortunately, no National Society was found to take over financial support of the workshop's activities. However, thanks to cooperation between the ICRC and the "Palestine Red Crescent", Palestinian refugees and/or needy individuals living in the region were fitted with artificial limbs free of charge at the Damascus

workshop. In addition, the ICRC continued to finance the publication of four different leaflets and brochures presenting the services and activities provided by the "Palestine Red Crescent".

## IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- organized the repatriation, for urgent medical reasons, of one of the 14 Syrian detainees released by Israel in the wake of the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement;
- supervised eight handover operations, enabling 489 people to cross over from Syria to the the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights; altogether, 16 handover operations enabling 980 people to cross the demarcation line to/from the Golan Heights were organized, in conjunction with the ICRC delegation in Israel;



- restored and maintained contact between family members separated by conflict by forwarding 291 Red Cross messages on their behalf;
- issued travel documents to facilitate the resettlement of 477 refugees, mostly Iraqi nationals, in third countries;
- issued 23 detention certificates;
- arranged for a Palestinian refugee who had come to Syria to study in 1971 to return to Gaza and to be reunited with his relatives;



- supported the Syrian Arab Red Crescent's new bi-monthly newsletter, which aims to increase awareness of the National Society's mission and activities among the general public;
- organized a two-day seminar (3-4 July) for 18 disseminators from the 14 Syrian Red Crescent branches, focusing on the Movement, the basic principles of humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions;
- directed a workshop on the Movement, humanitarian law and the challenges of the new millennium at a camp for young volunteers organized by the National Society from 17 to 30 August, at which 22 different National Societies (120 people) were represented;
- continued to support the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" prosthetic/orthotic workshop in Damascus by providing technical and material assistance; in cooperation with the ICRC delegation in Jordan, arranged for Palestinian refugees and/or needy individuals from the region to be fitted with prostheses at the Damascus workshop;



- arranged for a Syrian international law professor to attend an expert meeting on customary norms of humanitarian law in Geneva from 4 to 8 January;
- put together an exhibition of works of art, entitled "Even Wars Have Limits", by 18 well-known Syrian painters and sculptors;
- provided Syrian media outlets with regular ICRC news in English and Arabic, including information about ICRC activities worldwide and the latest developments in the field of humanitarian law;
- in cooperation with the Cairo delegation, worked with Syrian producers to make three TV spots on the protection of the red cross/red crescent emblem.

## IRAN

*national committee  
for the implementation  
of humanitarian law*

*National Society*

*dissemination  
of humanitarian law*

The ICRC maintained an office in Tehran staffed by local employees. It stayed in contact with the Iranian authorities on the humanitarian issues remaining unresolved since the Iran-Iraq war via its headquarters in Geneva. In June, an expatriate was posted to Tehran for several months, in order to make progress on the POW issue. In 1999, the ICRC was able to pursue its interviews with Iraqi POWs in Iran with a view to repatriating those wishing to return to Iraq.<sup>10</sup>

In September 1999, the ICRC was informed by the Iranian Red Crescent Society that a national committee for the implementation of humanitarian law was being set up and would be chaired by the National Society. The ICRC was invited by the Iranian Red Crescent to assist the committee.

Since the closure of its delegation in Iran in 1992, the ICRC had had virtually no contact with the Iranian Red Crescent apart from tracing activities. In 1999, it worked to renew and develop contacts. On 17 August, the new President of the Iranian Red Crescent and the head of the International Affairs Department were received at ICRC headquarters in Geneva. This provided an opportunity to present the ICRC to the President and to explore possible areas of cooperation.

In 1999 the National Society finished constructing a prosthetic/orthotic centre to train Iranian and foreign technicians. It also set up a dissemination office, and expressed interest in cooperating with the ICRC in this field.

An ICRC legal adviser took part in a course on international public law organized by UNITAR\* and the UN Office for Legal Affairs held in Tehran from 20 November to 1 December. The course was attended by 25 high-ranking officials from 13 countries in the Middle East, Central Asia and Asia. The ICRC representative gave an introductory presentation on humanitarian law, the recent 27th International Conference and the "People on War" project. ICRC material was distributed and contacts established with the Iranian representatives.

<sup>10</sup> See p. 325.

\* UNITAR: United Nations Institute for Training and Research

### IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- supervised the repatriation of 715 Iraqi POWs held in Iran and 53 Iranian civilian detainees held in Iraq after ensuring that they were returning home of their own free will;



- gave a series of talks on humanitarian law, the 27th International Conference and the "People on War" project at the first-ever regional course on international public law organized by the UN in Tehran.

## IRAQ

### PROTECTION

2,283,438

### ASSISTANCE

11,823,390

### PREVENTIVE ACTION

390,961

### COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

370,121

### OVERHEADS

964,328

### GENERAL

639,236

**TOTAL EXPENDITURE Sfr 16,471,473**



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

In 1999, daily life for much of the Iraqi population continued to be dominated by the crippling effects of the international trade sanctions imposed in 1990. The "oil-for-food" programme, introduced by UN Security Council resolution 986 in 1995 and renewed for the seventh time in December 1999, did lead to increased availability of food and medicines, but public infrastructure, particularly in the health sector and in the field of water and sanitation, continued to deteriorate steadily owing to the lack of repairs and maintenance on buildings and technical equipment over the years. At the end of 1999, a number of public services were close to complete collapse. On 17 December, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1284 (China, France, Russia and Malaysia abstained) aimed at improving the situation for the civilian population. Iraq did not accept the resolution.

The ICRC continued to express its deep concern throughout the year about the consequences of the sanctions in humanitarian terms. It drew the attention of the international community to the gravity of the situation on a number of occasions, in particular through regular high-level contacts and in various publications. At the same time, it greatly stepped up its activities in Iraq, in an effort to alleviate the plight

*the effects of sanctions*

*assistance for the civilian  
population in Iraq*

*new medical programme for Iraq*

of the civilian population. The ICRC remained convinced, however, that exemptions to the sanctions and humanitarian aid, although essential in order to address urgent and specific needs, were only partial, stopgap measures, and no substitute for a country's entire economy. These views were, in particular, expressed in a public report issued in December entitled "Iraq: A Decade of Sanctions".

Throughout 1999, United States and British aircraft continued to bomb targets in the "no-fly zones" imposed by them in the north and south of the country.

In northern Iraq, the civilian population enjoyed relative peace following the signing of the Washington Agreement in September 1998 between the two main Kurdish parties (the KDP\* and the PUK\*). The truce was a fragile one, however, and the population was not entirely spared the effects of conflict. Sporadic fighting broke out between the KDP and the PKK,\* which continued to use the mountains of northern Iraq as rearguard positions. The Turkish army launched "hot pursuit attacks" in these areas. Talks continued between the KDP and the PUK with regard to the release of detainees and the return of displaced families to their places of origin, but with no tangible results.

In 1999, the ICRC focused on providing a rapid response to some of the needs not covered by the "oil-for-food programme". In view of the worsening situation, it drew up new health-care programmes and extended its existing water and sanitation programme, partly in response to the worst drought in decades. The ICRC's overriding goal was to keep the main existing infrastructure at least functional.

The ICRC carried out comprehensive surveys of 14 major Iraqi hospitals - focusing mainly on the surgical sections and on the condition of the buildings - and 18 primary health care centres. It found the hospitals in very poor condition and missing essential equipment; doctors lacked up-to-date knowledge for want of access to medical literature, and training needs were identified in several areas. This prompted the ICRC to draw up a new, three-pronged medical emergency programme comprising repairs to hospitals and health care buildings, deliveries of medical material, and a training programme for qualified medical personnel.

By the end of the year, work was under way in six major hospitals in Iraq: one in Basra, two in Baghdad, one in Mosul, one in Arbil and one in Sulaymaniyah. One of the ICRC's top priorities was the hospital water-supply and sewage-disposal systems.

Especially good progress was made on the renovation of 500-bed Basra Teaching Hospital. Extensive repair work on the roof was completed before the first rains, and the basement, which had been constantly flooded, was drained and cleaned. Six out of ten hospital elevators were repaired and working again by the end of the year. Work on Ibn Al-Khatib Infectious Diseases Hospital in Baghdad started with the repair and maintenance of the hospital generator.

The ICRC provided a one-year subscription to 29 different international medical journals for the central Ministry of Health library. The journals began arriving weekly from mid-October. A copy of nine major journals was also given to each governorate.

Although implementation of resolution 986 enabled Iraqi water boards to obtain materials for the maintenance and repair of installations, the problems resulting from

\* KDP: Kurdish Democratic Party  
\* PUK: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan  
\* PKK: Kurdish Workers' Party

## *water and sanitation*

## *drought-related projects*

## *programmes for amputees*

several years' interruption in the operation of certain facilities continued to cause much concern. In 1999 the water installations faced the additional challenge of the worst drought in decades.

The relationship of confidence built up with the authorities in the field of water and sanitation after years of cooperation enabled the ICRC to undertake numerous projects in 1999, including emergency projects to tackle the problems caused by the consequences of drought. The ICRC water and sanitation team completed 17 drought-related projects on water-treatment plants across the country – mainly through local contractors – for the benefit of 3.6 million people. One of the largest projects, completed in spring 1999, entailed the 70-metre extension of the river-intake structure of a purification plant on the Tigris river in Baghdad, and rehabilitation of much of the plant. Changes in the river bed, compounded by the lowest water levels since 1932, had brought the plant to a complete standstill. The plant resumed operation and satisfied the needs of 300,000 people (250 litres/person/day).

In Mosul, three months of work were required in early 1999 to extend seven huge suction pipes underwater and to construct two 60-metre submersible dams in order to redirect the flow towards the plant. Local dredging was also carried out around the intake to improve the flow conditions. After completion of the work, the plant produced 11,000 cubic metres an hour and served 700,000 people.

Only some of the drought-related problems could be solved by on-site intervention. To deal with the worsening quality of untreated water, the ICRC provided additional chemicals.

In parallel to the drought-related emergency projects, implementation of the 1999 water and sanitation programme continued as planned. Nineteen water-treatment plants, one sewage-treatment plant and five sewage-lifting stations, covering the needs of 4.94 million people, underwent major repairs. Teams of ICRC technicians carried out maintenance on 21 other water- or sewage-treatment plants.

The ICRC responded to the deteriorating electricity situation by repairing 46 generators in water and sewage plants; the result was a total back-up capacity of 18,600 kVA, thus enabling the plants to increase production considerably.

In 1999 the ICRC commissioned four new water-treatment plants, which were designed and built from scratch, to improve both the quantity and quality of water for some 30,000 inhabitants of remote and rural areas.

Concerned by the water shortages triggered by the drought and their effect on the living conditions of internally displaced persons accommodated in the town of Arbil, the ICRC improved the evacuation of wastewater in 10 buildings housing 3,000 internally displaced persons, thus reducing the risk of epidemics. It also arranged for tanker-trucks to empty the septic tanks of a further 120 buildings housing about 5,000 internally displaced in Arbil.

Iraq has a high number of military and civilian amputees, mainly war-disabled from the Iran-Iraq and Gulf conflicts, but also casualties of the fighting in northern Iraq and people injured by landmines. The quality of medical care for amputees in Iraq declined steadily after 1991, in part because Iraq was unable to import the materials needed to use the proper technology. In 1999, the ICRC continued to consolidate its prosthetic/orthotic programme, begun in 1994, which uses alternative technology with the goal of enabling Iraq to run its prosthetic service independently and at lower cost.

New gait-training areas were built at the Basra and Mosul centres, and additional material support was given to renovate technical facilities at the Ibn Al-Kuff centre, run by the Ministry of Defence in Baghdad. Training sessions were organized for the staff of the Medical Rehabilitation Centre, run by the Ministry of Health in Baghdad. In northern Iraq, the running of the ICRC limb-fitting centre in Arbil was delegated to the Norwegian Red Cross.

The ICRC continued to run its component workshop in Baghdad, employing around 20 Iraqi amputees.

In July and September, the ICRC held two week-long seminars on "Partial foot prosthetics" and "Physiotherapy, gait analysis and gait training", together with the Ministry of Health.

As in the past, the ICRC's cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society mainly involved the provision of medical and other supplies, support for the National Society prosthetic/orthotic workshop in Mosul, and non-food aid for displaced persons in northern Iraq.

In 1999, the ICRC worked to build up the National Society's capacity in the fields of dissemination, tracing and conflict- and disaster-preparedness (including community-based first aid). The Iraqi Red Crescent dissemination programme in northern Iraq was launched in April with a training workshop attended by representatives of the branches in the three northern governorates.

In central/southern Iraq, the ICRC organized training workshops for Iraqi Red Crescent tracing and dissemination staff from all 18 National Society branches. The Iraqi Red Crescent and the ICRC also cooperated to ensure respect for the red cross and red crescent emblems.

The ICRC pursued its efforts to make humanitarian law and its mandate better known in Iraq, in particular via the media. Eight short TV spots and a 20-minute documentary film were made in cooperation with local producers and an Iraqi satellite channel. The spots focused on water and sanitation activities, prosthetic/orthotic activities and tracing. An 18-minute film was made during the repatriation of prisoners of war in March.<sup>11</sup> A promotional spot on ICRC activities and the emblem was broadcast on the main Iraqi TV channel.

In order to familiarize Iraqi children with humanitarian principles and the Movement, the ICRC financed and co-produced with the Ministry of Culture and Information the first three issues of a free children's magazine called "Sindbad of Baghdad".

In northern Iraq, the ICRC and the Iraqi Red Crescent gave lectures on humanitarian law and the Movement to representatives of the authorities, academic circles, members of local NGOs, students, and ICRC and National Society staff. TV and radio spots were broadcast on 15 different channels and stations.

The ICRC organized a mobile art exhibition, entitled "Even Wars have Limits", to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. The exhibition, which displayed the works of 73 Iraqi painters and calligraphers, was shown in the towns of Sulaymaniyah, Dohuk and Arbil.

Although the ICRC was not yet authorized to organize humanitarian law sessions for the armed forces, it continued to promote humanitarian law among

<sup>11</sup> See p. 325.

*cooperation  
with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society*

*promoting the ICRC's  
activities and mandate*

*dissemination in northern Iraq*

*winter relief programme  
for internally displaced persons  
in northern Iraq*

*visits to detainees*

*neutral intermediary*

the military by donating promotional material and booklets on the basic rules of this body of law.

In northern Iraq, an estimated 120,000 people had been driven from their homes since fighting broke out between rival Kurdish factions in 1994. As many of the displaced lived in tents or in open, unheated public buildings, conditions were particularly harsh during the winter months. As part of the ongoing ICRC programme for the most vulnerable displaced persons, a major distribution of winter relief supplies was carried out in February 1999.

The ICRC was in constant contact with some 25 to 30 medical facilities treating the war-wounded and provided medical material in accordance with needs.

In northern Iraq, delegates continued to visit detainees arrested for security reasons or as a result of the hostilities or internal violence, in order to monitor their living conditions and treatment. Wherever improvements were deemed necessary, the ICRC made representations to the authorities on the detainees' behalf. Contacts between detainees and their families were established and maintained through Red Cross messages.

Persons still unaccounted for as a result of the Iran-Iraq and Gulf wars continued to be a source of concern to the ICRC,<sup>12</sup> which again acted as a neutral intermediary between the parties involved, with the aim of overcoming the stalemate in the proceedings and providing technical assistance when needed.

<sup>12</sup> See pp. 325-326.

## IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- visited 120 civilian nationals of countries not represented in Iraq since the Gulf war and held at Abu Ghraib detention centre near Baghdad, and provided one-off assistance;
- carried out 91 visits to 47 places of detention in northern Iraq, where it saw 856 people detained for security reasons or in connection with the fighting between the various Kurdish factions;
- provided regular ad hoc material aid (hygiene articles, clothes and leisure items) for detainees visited in northern Iraq;
- organized five workshops on humanitarian law and minimum international standards for the treatment of detainees for some 120 members of the security forces and prison staff in northern Iraq;



- handled 14,000 Red Cross messages, in cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society; issued 33 detention certificates and 703 travel documents (for asylum seekers for whom a resettlement country had been found by UNHCR);



- provided 72,000 internally displaced people in northern Iraq with emergency winter assistance (children's coats, blankets, heaters, carpets) and 1,000 people affected by the conflict with basic assistance, in cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society;
- following the air strikes, provided relief and medical assistance for wounded and displaced civilians, and for families whose homes had been partially or totally destroyed, in cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society;



- following the air strikes, provided three hospitals across the country with enough emergency medical and surgical supplies to treat 200 war-wounded;
- in northern Iraq, provided medical facilities with medical and surgical aid and anaesthetic material to cope with some 300 war-wounded, including mine victims;
- completed repairs to Tikrit hospital, which had suffered damage during the air strikes in December 1998;
- began repair work on Basra Teaching Hospital, Al-Batool Maternity Hospital in Mosul and Al-Karama General Hospital in Baghdad;
- provided 41 urgently needed air-conditioning units and other equipment for Ibn Al-Khatib Infectious Diseases Hospital in Baghdad;
- donated dressing and injection material and basic drugs to the Iraqi Red Crescent Hospital in Baghdad and to a private charity hospital;
- supplied a number of medical textbooks and CD-ROMs and took out subscriptions to 29 different medical journals for the Ministry of Health library in Baghdad;
- distributed emergency supplies to 43 medical facilities in northern Iraq for the treatment of about 400 war-wounded during the year;



- continued to provide support to four government prosthetic/orthotic centres (in Baghdad, Basra and Najaf), the Iraqi Red Crescent centre in Mosul and the ICRC's own centre in Arbil, by carrying out maintenance and construction work on the buildings and providing raw material, components, technical follow-up and staff training;
- fitted 2,472 new amputees with prostheses at the six ICRC-supported prosthetic/orthotic centres;
- produced, in its workshop in Baghdad, the necessary components for 3,468 prostheses (1,945 of them for victims of anti-personnel mines), 2,878 orthoses and 1,742 pairs of elbow crutches;
- built a new dormitory next to the Arbil limb-fitting centre in order to accommodate up to 40 patients coming from remote areas of northern Iraq;
- contributed to the training of technicians from all over the country by organizing, jointly with the Ministry of Health, two week-long seminars on "Partial foot prosthetics" and "Physiotherapy, gait analysis and gait training" and two one-day seminars on prosthetic socket design;



- carried out major repairs on 19 water-treatment plants, one sewage-treatment plant and five sewage-lifting stations, covering the needs of 4.94 million people;
- carried out maintenance work on 21 water- or sewage-treatment plants;
- completed 17 emergency drought-related projects on water-treatment and distribution plants across the country, for the benefit of a total of 3.6 million people;
- provided 100 tonnes of chlorine for water-purification plants in rural areas, and 50 tonnes of polyelectrolyte for Baghdad's major plant, Karkh, which covered the needs of 3.4 million people;
- repaired and overhauled 46 electricity generators in water- and sewage-treatment plants, thus enabling the plants to increase production;
- commissioned the design and construction of four new water-treatment plants, to improve the quantity and quality of water for some 30,000 inhabitants of remote and rural areas;
- hired tanker-trucks to empty the septic tanks of temporary accommodation housing around 5,000 internally displaced persons in northern Iraq;



- continued to support the National Society's three branches in northern Iraq, in particular in providing emergency aid for displaced families;
- continued to cover all the costs of the Iraqi Red Crescent limb-fitting centre in Mosul;
- organized training workshops for tracing and dissemination staff from all 18 Iraqi Red Crescent branches and provided the National Society with financial and technical support in these areas;
- developed the capacity of Iraqi Red Crescent branches to conduct at least three humanitarian law dissemination sessions a month for civilians and members of the armed forces;
- provided financial and technical support for production of a new National Society newsletter;
- donated equipment and drugs for the National Society's ongoing medical activities;



- produced eight TV spots on ICRC activities in Iraq, and made a video film, "Years of Drought", on the situation of the civilian population after nine years of sanctions, with the support of the ICRC's Regional Promotion Office in Cairo;
- financed and distributed 73,000 copies of the first three editions of a children's magazine, "Sindbad of Baghdad", co-produced with the Ministry of Culture and Information;
- produced three editions of the ICRC "News Bulletin", in Arabic, Kurdish and English, promoting knowledge of the ICRC's activities in Iraq and around the world;
- in northern Iraq, gave 12 lectures on humanitarian law and the Movement for different target groups and held 10 dissemination sessions in cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent;
- distributed promotional material on the Geneva Conventions and the rules of behaviour in combat, translated into Kurdish and Arabic, to the armed forces in northern Iraq;
- organized an exhibition of the paintings of over 100 Iraqi artists in Baghdad, entitled "Humanity crosses the threshold of the millennium";
- organized a mobile art exhibition, entitled "Even Wars have Limits", of the works of 73 Iraqi artists in northern Iraq, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions.

# THE GULF AFTERMATH OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

## AFTERMATH OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

*release and repatriation  
of prisoners of war*

*persons still unaccounted for*



Considerable progress had been made in 1998 towards resolving the issue of POWs from the Iran-Iraq war, and in 1999 the ICRC was able to pursue its interviews with Iraqi POWs in Iran with a view to repatriating those wishing to return to Iraq.

Since the cease-fire in July 1988, the ICRC has urged the two parties to release and repatriate all POWs without further delay, to make progress in identifying and repatriating the bodies of those killed in the war, and to make serious efforts to resolve the problem of people who are still unaccounted for, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions.

The resumption in 1997 of talks between Iran and Iraq on the POW question and the issue of persons unaccounted for led to the release and repatriation in 1998, under ICRC auspices, of more than 6,000 Iraqi POWs held in Iran and over 300 Iranians detained in Iraq.

Bilateral meetings between the two countries continued in 1999. The ICRC, as a neutral intermediary, was authorized by the Iranian authorities to interview 958 Iraqi POWs in private who were either living freely in Iran or had been interned since the conflict. The objective of the interviews was to ascertain whether the POWs wanted to stay in Iran or return to Iraq.

During the year under review, the ICRC supervised three repatriation operations, in March, June and September, in which 715 Iraqi POWs crossed the Mundharih/Khosravi checkpoint on the border between the two countries. ICRC delegates registered and checked the identities of the prisoners and held private interviews with each of them to ensure they were going home of their own free will. This brought to 6,890 the number of prisoners freed and repatriated by both sides since April 1998.

The ICRC also cooperated with UNHCR on the issue of Iraqi POWs not wishing to be repatriated, in order to ensure they were protected as refugees.

In 1999 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 the issue, which affected tens of thousands of families still without news of their relatives. The ICRC did not take part in these discussions.

### IN 1999 THE ICRC:

- supervised the repatriation of 715 Iraqi POWs held in Iran and 53 Iranian civilian detainees held in Iraq after ensuring that they were returning home of their own free will;
- interviewed 243 other POWs still in Iran who did not wish to be repatriated;
- issued 418 detention certificates for former POWs from the Iran-Iraq war;
- processed 159 inquiries relating to the whereabouts of prisoners of war and persons unaccounted for in Iran.

## AFTERMATH OF THE GULF WAR

*Tripartite Commission*

*repatriation of mortal remains*

*visits to detainees  
in Iraq and Kuwait*

*restoring family ties*

The ICRC pursued its efforts to shed light on the fate of persons who were still unaccounted for as a result of the Gulf war (1990-1991), on the basis of the lists presented by Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Following Iraq's decision in December 1998 and January 1999 to suspend its participation in the ICRC-chaired Tripartite Commission<sup>13</sup> and its Technical Sub-Committee in their current composition, the ICRC pursued its efforts, at both technical and diplomatic levels, to find solutions to the humanitarian problem of people who were unaccounted for. To this end, the ICRC Head of Operations for the Middle East and North Africa conducted a mission to Baghdad and Kuwait in March. The ICRC relayed communications between the parties involved and worked on various suggestions to reactivate the process; its efforts had not met with success at the end of 1999.

Throughout 1999, Iraq maintained its position that it would agree to attend meetings of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-Committee under ICRC auspices only if Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were the sole other participants.

Over the year, the ICRC hosted three consultation meetings, on 3 February, 15 July and 19 November, with all the members of the Tripartite Commission except Iraq. The aim of the meetings was to discuss possibilities for continuing the process of ascertaining the fate of persons unaccounted for during the Gulf war and to restore the dialogue between the parties.

At the same time, the ICRC met regularly with the Iraqi authorities in order to find a way out of the impasse. Meetings on technical aspects of the files also continued on a regular basis.

In March, the ICRC repatriated from Kuwait the mortal remains of an Iraqi soldier who had been killed during the Gulf war.

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 November, ICRC delegates visited 59 people held at Abu Ghraib detention centre near Baghdad who had no diplomatic protection as a result of the conflict. The detainees, for the most part Syrians, but also some nationals of other Arab countries, wrote Red Cross messages for their families abroad. Also in November, ICRC health delegates carried out a survey of the prison hospital, where they saw 90 patients in the general medicine unit and 99 in the tuberculosis unit, and made a number of recommendations for improvements.

In Kuwait, the ICRC also visited detainees who were without diplomatic representation, mainly Iraqis, Palestinians without travel documents and stateless persons, in order to monitor their treatment and conditions of detention. The ICRC met the detainees in private and facilitated contacts with families abroad. Delegates also visited Jordanian detainees until February 1999, when the two countries re-established diplomatic relations and all Jordanian security detainees were released.

ICRC delegates also visited persons subject to expulsion orders and staying in transit camps, making sure that their departure for countries of resettlement took place under proper conditions.

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.

<sup>13</sup> The Tripartite Commission was set up in 1991 under ICRC auspices to deal with the question of persons still unaccounted for. It is made up of representatives of France, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

## IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- in Iraq, visited 120 civilian nationals of countries not represented in Iraq since the Gulf war and held at the Abu Ghraib detention centre near Baghdad, and provided one-off assistance;
- in Kuwait, visited 212 civilian nationals of countries without diplomatic representation in Kuwait since the Gulf war in six places of detention;
- in March, repatriated the mortal remains of one Iraqi soldier from Kuwait;



- held three consultation meetings with the parties to the Tripartite Commission to help ascertain the whereabouts and fate of persons unaccounted for since the Gulf war and reactivate the talks;
- collected and distributed 14,000 Red Cross messages exchanged between civilians living in Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other countries, and separated as a result of the Gulf war;
- issued 19 travel documents for people leaving to resettle in host countries, and 109 detention certificates.

## YEMEN

*refugees from the Horn of Africa*

*monitoring the treatment  
and living conditions of detainees*

*psychiatric care programme  
in Yemeni prisons*

*water and sanitation programme  
in prisons*

In 1999, Yemen continued to suffer the lasting effects of the 1994 conflict between northern and southern forces, characterized by increased economic hardship for the population, indiscriminate violence against civilians, and kidnappings. Arrests for security reasons were also on the rise.

In view of this unstable situation, which set Yemen apart from the other States in the Arabian Peninsula, the ICRC decided mid-year to make the Yemen office an operational delegation. This should also facilitate the smooth running and continuity of the psychiatric programme in prisons and other ICRC activities in the country.

An estimated 100,000 Somalis and Ethiopians who had sought refuge in Yemen as a result of conflict continued to need help in restoring and maintaining links with their families at home. Together with the Yemen Red Crescent Society, the ICRC transmitted Red Cross messages and dealt with cases of missing persons. Tracing activities were supervised by the ICRC in Kuwait until the end of the year, when the two Somali field officers based in Sana'a had acquired sufficient experience to run the service themselves.

The ICRC, with the support of the Yemen Red Crescent Society, successfully negotiated renewed access to all detainees in accordance with ICRC procedures. A first round of visits - which had been suspended since July 1997 - was carried out in November to the central prisons of Sana'a and Aden, which together held over 3,000 inmates. The ICRC team, which included a medical doctor, conducted over one hundred interviews in private. Earlier, in June, two medical delegates had visited several Yemeni prisons in the framework of the psychiatric care programme (see below).

The assistance programme for mentally-ill detainees in three prisons in Yemen, launched in 1995, was maintained throughout 1999. As 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 over 200 inmates in the central prisons of Ibb, Sana'a and Taiz. Given the project's success, the Netherlands Red Cross decided to maintain its support for another two years.

The ICRC continued working for the gradual transfer of responsibility for the programme to the authorities and the Yemen Red Crescent Society. Although the economic situation slowed down the handover process considerably, and continued ICRC commitment was required, certain responsibilities were handed over to ICRC local employees and the local authorities in Taiz prison.

In June, the ICRC carried out its annual evaluation of the project. This involved complete visits to the three prisons and to Hodeida detention centre, and to three new prisons (Lahej, Hajjah and Dhamar). In Dhamar, twenty or so mentally-ill prisoners were found to be living in conditions deemed unfitting for their rehabilitation. Steps were taken to transfer them to one of the three ICRC-supported psychiatric sections. The ICRC also visited the general sections of a further seven prisons under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior, in order to assess the overall conditions of detention.

The ICRC carried out maintenance work on the sanitary installations in the prisons of Sana'a, Hodeida, Taiz and Ibb, where it had completed a major project to improve hygiene conditions and water supplies in 1998.

## *national committee for humanitarian law*

The ICRC continued to encourage the Yemeni authorities to undertake legal and administrative steps to implement humanitarian law. On 21 September, the President of the Republic enacted a new law on the protection of the red cross and red crescent emblems. The ICRC, through the Ministry of Legal Affairs and with the support of the National Society, had long advised and encouraged the Yemeni authorities to set up a national committee for humanitarian law. Its efforts bore fruit in December when a presidential decree was published announcing the creation of such a national committee, whose role would be to bring Yemeni legislation in line with humanitarian law, to spread knowledge of the law, and to consult with the government on matters pertaining thereto.

## *dissemination in academic circles*

On 19 and 20 April, a national seminar on humanitarian law was held at the University of Aden. Organized by the ICRC and the Yemen Red Crescent in conjunction with Aden University Law Faculty, the seminar took place under the patronage of the President of the Republic and enabled the forty participants – among them high-ranking representatives of the principal ministries and members of other universities – to explore the concepts of the law in depth.

As in the other Gulf States, the ICRC distributed up-to-date news of its activities in the region and worldwide to a number of local newspapers. In particular, an ICRC article on developments in humanitarian law was published by a major Yemeni newspaper to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions.

## *working with the National Society*

The Yemen Red Crescent Society was again the ICRC's chief partner in Yemen, particularly in the field of dissemination and in the prison psychiatric project. The National Society also backed the ICRC in the negotiations for access to all places of detention.

The general need to make the Yemen Red Crescent Society better known and to boost its image in Yemeni society was the subject of regular discussions throughout the year with the National Society's newly-elected Secretary General. A number of projects were worked out jointly, with the goal of reinforcing the Society's capacity in the field of dissemination and enhancing its members' knowledge of humanitarian law with the assistance of the ICRC's Arabic-speaking dissemination delegate.

## IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- handled 3,786 Red Cross messages, mainly on behalf of Somali and Ethiopian refugees;
- visited two prisons with a total population of 3,200 inmates and held private interviews with 103 detainees;
- maintained sanitary installations in the prisons of Sana'a, Hodeida, Taiz and Ibb;



- continued the psychiatric care project for mentally-ill detainees in three central prisons in Yemen, in partnership with the Netherlands Red Cross and the Yemen Red Crescent Society;
- maintained support for National Society programmes aimed at spreading knowledge of humanitarian law and principles among the population;
- together with the Yemen Red Crescent Society, organized lectures on basic humanitarian principles for staff and volunteers from the branches in Sana'a, Taiz and Ibb;
- supported production of National Society/ICRC calendars aimed at enhancing the visibility of the National Society and ensuring improved public knowledge of the Movement and the principles of humanitarian law;



- held a seminar on humanitarian law for high-ranking officers of the armed forces, the security forces and the police, top officials from several Ministries, faculty from Yemen's universities, and the Yemen Red Crescent Society at Aden University (19-20 April).

## KUWAIT

### Regional delegation

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

#### *visits to detainees*

#### *encouraging the implementation of humanitarian law*

In 1999 the regional delegation again gave priority to efforts to resolve the humanitarian problems arising from the Gulf war,<sup>14</sup> in particular the fate of persons still unaccounted for, and to detention-related activities in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. It also focused on communication strategies with a view to promoting humanitarian law and the ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary in situations of conflict and internal violence, and on raising funds for ICRC activities worldwide.

In June, the ICRC office in Yemen was made an operational delegation.<sup>15</sup>

In Kuwait, the ICRC continued to visit nationals of countries who were without diplomatic representation as a result of the Gulf war.<sup>16</sup> It also met with other detainees, so as to gain a more complete picture of conditions in the various places of detention. However it stopped visiting detainees of certain nationalities, for example Jordanians, following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between their countries and Kuwait.

In Bahrain, the ICRC carried out five series of visits to detainees to monitor their treatment and conditions of detention. It made representations to the Bahraini authorities where necessary.

In Qatar, the ICRC began visiting places of detention, focusing on people detained in connection with the attempted coup d'état of February 1996 and being held under the authority of the Ministries of the Interior and of Defence. The visits were conducted in accordance with ICRC standard procedures and included interviews in private with the detainees. An ICRC physician took part in the first series of visits, in May, and assessed the detainees' state of health and the health care infrastructure in the prisons. During the second series of visits, in October, the same detainees were revisited and three newly-arrested detainees were registered.

Islam has a long tradition of humanitarian principles, in particular during armed conflicts, and the Gulf countries showed a marked interest in contemporary international humanitarian law, which continued to be disseminated in the region. Throughout the year, the ICRC took part in a number of seminars and courses on humanitarian law, with the aim not just of teaching and promoting this body of law, but also of encouraging governments, and in particular the political and military authorities, to introduce national measures for the implementation of their treaty obligations. International as well as local experts, for instance specialists from government legal departments, departments of military justice, universities and Red Crescent Societies, played an active role as lecturers.

Highlights of the year included a two-day seminar on humanitarian law organized by the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the initiative of the ICRC, which was attended by some 30 high-ranking government officials and the National Societies of the region, and a two-day seminar on humanitarian law in Saudi Arabia organized by the Institute of Diplomatic Studies, which is run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Participants included government officials, high-ranking military officers and students from the Institute. An ICRC legal specialist and a representative of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society were among the guest speakers.

In addition, the ICRC pursued regular contacts with the relevant ministries with a view to discussing the incorporation of humanitarian law into national legislation.

<sup>14</sup> See p. 326.

<sup>15</sup> See p. 328.

<sup>16</sup> See p. 326.

## *ICRC Vice-President in Saudi Arabia*

*promoting humanitarian law  
among the armed forces*

*dissemination  
for the general public*

*cooperation  
with National Societies*

This entailed keeping the authorities abreast of ICRC activities in the region and worldwide, for instance by providing updated information to the various ministries, the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Saudi Arabia, and academic institutions.

The ICRC Vice-President visited Riyadh from 10 to 15 May, at the invitation of the Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs, and met a number of high-ranking dignitaries, in particular the Crown Prince. Issues raised during the talks included the problem of persons unaccounted for since the Gulf war, the need to increase awareness of humanitarian law in the region, and the international aid provided by the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society for Kosovo. 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.

The ICRC Vice-President was also received by the President and Vice-President of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society.

The ICRC pursued its goal of promoting the incorporation of humanitarian law into training courses for the armed forces in the Gulf region. Two major seminars on the law of armed conflict were organized in Kuwait in March for officers of the National Guard and, for the first time, in Oman in May for officers from the various branches of the armed forces.

In addition to these events, the ICRC gave a number of presentations and lectures on the law of armed conflict and the Movement, for instance to the military police in Kuwait, and to students of the Command and Staff Colleges in Oman and in Kuwait; all the Gulf countries were represented at the latter. In the United Arab Emirates, the ICRC led a dissemination session followed by a discussion on humanitarian law for 16 staff officers involved in organizing a special humanitarian operation for refugees in the Balkans.

The ICRC also pursued its efforts to improve knowledge and understanding of humanitarian law and the Movement among the media and academic circles, which were then able to relay this knowledge to the public in the region. Articles on humanitarian law drafted by the regional delegation were regularly published in newspapers in all the region's countries, and radio and TV stations broadcast information on ICRC activities in the region and worldwide, thus increasing the organization's visibility throughout the Gulf States. The ICRC-published bi-monthly magazine, "Al Insani (The Humanitarian)", was also distributed to academic circles and to all Red Crescent Societies in the Arabian Peninsula. In particular, a special article written by the regional delegation was published in various newspapers in the region to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions.

The ICRC continued to have a fruitful dialogue with the National Societies of the region. It worked to increase knowledge of the ICRC by regularly providing the National Societies with updated news about ICRC activities in the region and worldwide, and information on humanitarian law for publication in their magazines.

## IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- visited 212 detainees in six places of detention in Kuwait;
- carried out five series of visits to detainees in Bahrain;
- carried out three series of visits to 36 detainees in five places of detention in Qatar;



- kept the Red Crescent Societies of the Arabian Peninsula informed about ICRC activities in the region and worldwide by regularly sending them updated newsletters;



- in Qatar, took part in a two-day seminar on humanitarian law, attended by 30 high-level government officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence;
- in Saudi Arabia, took part in a two-day seminar on humanitarian law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Institute of Diplomatic Studies;
- in Kuwait, organized a five-day seminar on the law of armed conflict at the National Guard Headquarters in March, attended by 17 officers with operational responsibilities;
- gave four presentations on humanitarian law, ICRC activities and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement to members of the Kuwaiti armed forces and the police;
- in Oman, organized a four-day seminar on the law of armed conflict at armed forces headquarters in Muscat, attended by 31 officers from the various branches of the armed forces, the national guard and civil police;
- gave a presentation on humanitarian law at the Staff and Command College in Muscat, for 51 students and 13 members of the teaching staff;
- held a dissemination session in the United Arab Emirates for 16 staff officers involved in planning a special humanitarian operation for refugees in the Balkans;
- in Kuwait, gave three lectures on the ICRC and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement for around 160 university students;
- on the anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights, on 4 December, ran a stand at a three-day seminar/exhibition in Kuwait, organized under the patronage of the President of the Arab Organization for Human Rights;
- regularly provided the local press with articles for publication covering ICRC activities in the region and worldwide and on humanitarian law;
- distributed 600 copies of the ICRC-published magazine, "Al Insani (The Humanitarian)", every two months, to universities, Red Crescent Societies and newspapers across the region;
- gave a live interview on the Kosovo crisis and humanitarian law on Qatar-based Jezirah Satellite Television station in April.

## EGYPT

*compulsory training  
in humanitarian law for civilian  
and military judges*

*implementing humanitarian law*

*top-level regional conference  
on humanitarian law*

As in the past, the ICRC delegation in Cairo focused on promoting humanitarian law and the organization's various activities in Egypt and throughout the Arab world. To this end, it consolidated its contacts with the Egyptian authorities, the armed forces, the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, university circles and the media, and produced materials and dissemination tools specially adapted to the local context. Considerable progress was made in 1999 towards the incorporation of humanitarian law into national legislation and in the dissemination of humanitarian law in legal circles.

A signal development in 1999 was the introduction, pursuant to an ICRC proposal, of humanitarian law as an integral part of training for civilian and military magistrates, in accordance with an agreement signed with the National Centre for Judiciary Studies. This institution, which comes under the joint authority of the Ministries of Justice and of Defence, is in charge of providing formal and practical instruction for trainee judges. Regular humanitarian law teaching began in March and was dispensed by Egyptian professors and ICRC legal experts. The ICRC determined the content of the classes, chose the teachers and provided documentation.

Additional training courses were organized for already qualified judges in August, and for public prosecutors in July and September. In November, a full instruction programme for 32 judges and prosecutors from civil and military courts was organized by ICRC experts, university professors and armed forces officers, after which the delegation launched a competition on humanitarian law for the participants.

In another development, the Egyptian authorities lent their full support to the start of the process of revising national laws to incorporate measures for the implementation of humanitarian law. The ICRC drafted a plan of action which it shared with the leadership of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society – which is spearheading the process – before being submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Throughout the year, an ICRC legal advisor held meetings with officials from different ministries to look at ways of translating the Egyptian State's legal obligations into action. He helped draft a preliminary national report outlining Egypt's position on several conventions and protocols and the situation of national legislation with regard to treaties of humanitarian law.

Another highlight was the regional conference, organized from 14 to 16 November by the Egyptian Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Arab League, the ICRC and the Egyptian Red Crescent, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. The conference was attended by representatives of the Ministries of Justice of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and the United Arab Emirates, or by these countries' diplomatic representatives in Cairo, and by the National Societies of a dozen countries in the region. Numerous Arab and European humanitarian law specialists also participated.

The conference was opened by the ICRC President, the President of the Federation, and the Secretary General of the Arab League, and held under the auspices of the Egyptian Minister of Justice and the Egyptian Prime Minister. It covered the history and development of international humanitarian law and its application by the military authorities at national level. The role of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement in promoting and implementing humanitarian law was also discussed.

At the end of the conference, the participants adopted the "Cairo Declaration" asserting the need for commitment to and respect for humanitarian law, and a plan of action for each Arab State in terms of implementation at the national level was drawn up. A follow-up conference was planned for 2000.

During the conference, the ICRC President met the President of the Egyptian People's Assembly to discuss national measures of implementation. He also met the head of the Egyptian armed forces to discuss training of the military on the law of war.

The ICRC continued to work with the League of Arab States with a view to promoting humanitarian law in the Arab world and addressing mutual humanitarian concerns. This cooperation was formalized in 1999 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, which had been under negotiation for some years, between the Secretary General of the Arab League and the ICRC President on 15 November. The Memorandum covers cooperation and consultation between the two institutions on subjects of common interest, their participation in each other's conferences, and the exchange of information.

The delegate to the armed forces based in Cairo again covered all Arabic-speaking countries, acting as coordinator and adviser to the other delegations. In the course of the year, he visited a number of countries and organized seminars on the basics of humanitarian law and workshops to train instructors.

In Egypt itself, officers and instructors from the Military College for Administrative Science, the Military Intelligence Department at the Ministry of Defence, and the Defence College of Nasser Academy, as well as military judges and prosecutors from the armed forces legal department, attended ICRC presentations on humanitarian law. Although these were mostly Egyptians, some students from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait also participated. Topics looked at in these sessions included the role of the ICRC in the implementation of humanitarian law during the Gulf war, the conduct of military operations, and the training needed in this regard during tactical exercises. In 1999, the ICRC also held the first course ever for 60 officers from the Egyptian navy and air force.

Through its Regional Promotion Office, set up at the Cairo delegation in 1998, the ICRC worked to raise its profile in the Arab world and to promote acceptance of the principles of humanitarian law in conflict and non-conflict situations by producing promotional materials specially adapted to the region's public. It ensured that the materials were widely distributed by ICRC delegations in the Middle East, and provided support for their activities to promote humanitarian rules and principles.

In 1999, six issues of the ICRC's magazine in Arabic, "Al Insani (The Humanitarian)", which was launched at the end of 1998, were produced and distributed via the delegations in the Middle East and North Africa. They were also sent to relevant ICRC contacts in Geneva, New York and Paris.

The Regional Promotion Office also increasingly diversified into the world of audio-visual media. This involved translating and dubbing ICRC video spots into Arabic and producing a number of documentary films on major aspects of humanitarian law and themes, such as children in war. The Regional Promotion Office also represented the ICRC at numerous events such as international film festivals and bookfairs.

*Memorandum of Understanding  
signed with the Arab League*

*dissemination to the armed forces*

*Regional Promotion Office  
based in Cairo*

*ICRC regional news  
bulletin consolidated*

*media contacts and production  
in the Arab world*

## *academic circles*

The regional delegation addressed the Fourth National Conference for the Modernization of Legal Studies at Egypt's Mansura University in March, calling for the inclusion of humanitarian law in university curricula. ICRC representatives regularly gave talks on humanitarian law and the Movement to students. They cooperated in particular with the National Centre for Middle East Studies and with the Centre for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, organizing gatherings and providing speakers. Themes looked at over the year included humanitarian law and conflict resolution, the refugee problem in the Arab world, and humanitarianism within the Arab tradition. The ICRC also took part in the annual summer course on human rights at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

## *working with journalists*

Also of note was a training course organized by the regional delegation for students and journalists at the Regional Press Institute in November. The protection of journalists during war and the role of the media in armed conflict were among the topics dealt with.

## *campaign against landmines*

The issue of anti-personnel landmines attracted much attention in Egypt throughout the year, particularly after the international ambassador of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jody Williams visited the Al-Alamein minefields in early February. Egyptian soil still contains millions of mines laid during the Second World War by foreign troops. The ICRC gave talks on the legal and humanitarian aspects of landmines and provided audio-visual material.

## *cooperation programmes with the Egyptian Red Crescent*

Cooperation between the ICRC and the Egyptian Red Crescent focused on dissemination, emergency preparedness and tracing activities. ICRC representatives both organized and took part in basic training courses for various target groups - youth disseminators, medical staff and branch managers - at the National Society branch in Zeinoh, Cairo. Highlights of the year included two seminars on medical emergencies in May and September - in which an ICRC war surgeon instructed National Society and other medical staff from across the country on the application of the "mass casualty approach" and wound management - and a five-day training course on crisis management and capacity building for senior National Society personnel in July, with speakers selected by the ICRC from the Egyptian armed forces, UNHCR and the Federation.

In the first week of June, a tracing delegate from ICRC headquarters visited the Egyptian Red Crescent headquarters in Cairo and the Alexandria and Giza branches, to assess existing National Society tracing methods and evaluate needs, and to provide individual coaching in the branches.

## IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- restored and maintained links between members of separated families, mainly nationals from the Horn of Africa and people displaced by the conflict in southern Sudan, by handling 241 Red Cross messages and issuing 1,012 travel documents for refugees, displaced or stateless people, in cooperation with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society;



- took part in two basic training courses and three workshops for around 50 Egyptian Red Crescent youth disseminators and youth leaders from across the country, and gave an introductory talk on humanitarian law for new members of the National Society's Youth Club at Egyptian Red Crescent headquarters in Zeinoh, Cairo;
- took part in two seminars lasting a total of nine days for National Society medical staff to help develop the National Society's emergency capacity;
- organized, jointly with the Egyptian Red Crescent, a five-day training course from 4-8 July on crisis management for 22 senior National Society staff;



- organized a series of lectures and practical exercises for future civilian and military magistrates;
- took part in an Arab League conference on humanitarian law and arms control in June, giving a presentation and providing documentation in Arabic;
- gave four courses on humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict for 123 officers and instructors of the Egyptian armed forces;
- organized a course on the basics of humanitarian law for 185 officers in Jordan;
- on 8 May, took part in a live-link video conference on the significance of Red Cross/Red Crescent Day and on ICRC and National Society activities, with education specialists and representatives of student bodies from the country's 26 governorates, at the invitation of the Egyptian Ministry of Education;
- organized a gathering of 60 participants, including representatives of the Presidency, the Foreign Ministry, the Defence Ministry, law professors, diplomats and the press, at the National Centre for Middle East Studies;
- produced six issues of "Al Insani (The Humanitarian)", the ICRC's magazine in Arabic, whose distribution throughout the Arab world increased from 3,000 to 7,000 over the year;
- produced three series of comic strips with a humanitarian message for a major Egyptian youth magazine, and, for the first time, co-published two comic books with an Egyptian publisher, thus gaining access to the network of bookshops in the Arab countries;
- co-published, with an Egyptian publisher, a book containing a collection of true stories of war victims and humanitarian workers;
- produced four short films on humanitarian issues, with guest appearances by film stars;
- produced two documentary films about the humanitarian situation in Iraq;
- dubbed ICRC films and spots into Arabic for the "People on War" and the Ottawa landmines treaty campaigns;
- translated numerous ICRC brochures and publications into Arabic and reprinted the teaching file for armed forces instructors.

## TUNIS

## Regional delegation

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

*renewed access to detainees  
in Algeria*

*support for victims of violence  
in Algeria*

In 1999, the Tunis regional delegation again focused on the humanitarian issues arising from the aftermath of the Western Sahara conflict. It also started visits to detainees in Algeria and developed its cooperation with the Algerian Red Crescent Society in providing assistance for victims of violence. The ICRC's work in the countries of the Maghreb also involved promotion of humanitarian law, spreading knowledge of ICRC activities and humanitarian diplomacy.

The situation in Algeria, which since 1992 had been regularly afflicted by unspeakable acts of violence, continued to be a major cause for humanitarian concern. The election of a new Algerian President in April 1999 gave rise to fresh hopes for national reconciliation. When put to a referendum on 16 September 1999, the law on civilian reconciliation received the overwhelming support of the Algerian people.

There was still no breakthrough on the Western Sahara issue, despite intensive efforts by the UN. Over 1,800 Moroccan prisoners were still detained by the Polisario Front, and about 150,000 Sahrawi refugees, according to official figures, were still living in precarious conditions in camps in the region of Tindouf.

The year under review saw the death of King Hassan II of Morocco and the accession to the throne of his son King Mohammed VI in July.

International sanctions imposed on Libya were suspended in April 1999, following the handover of two suspects for trial under Scottish law in connection with the Lockerbie bombing in 1989.

Following a mission by the ICRC Director of Operations to Algiers in November 1998 to resume talks on ICRC activities in Algeria,<sup>17</sup> the Algerian authorities wrote to the ICRC on 16 March expressing their willingness to allow it to visit all persons held under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. A first technical mission to Algeria was carried out from 14 to 16 June. Questions discussed with representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs included ICRC standard procedures, such as repeated visits, access to all detainees and private interviews with detainees selected by the ICRC.

These procedures having all been accepted, the ICRC carried out a first series of visits from 10 October to 15 November to places of detention under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice in Algiers, Annaba and Oran. The delegates, including one medical doctor, were given full access to all premises and all detainees in each location. In all, twelve places of detention holding 6,980 inmates were visited, and interviews in private were held with 457 detainees. The resumption of visits to detainees had been a major ICRC goal ever since visits were suspended in 1992.

The ICRC's findings concerning the conditions of detention and the problems raised by the detainees were discussed with the detaining authorities. A first report was drawn up for submission to the Algerian government in early January 2000.

In 1996, the ICRC started providing financial support for the Algerian Red Crescent's assistance programmes for vulnerable families during the holy month of Ramadan and for the organization of summer camps for needy children. In 1999, it increased its cooperation by supporting a new National Society programme to provide psychological assistance for the victims of the violence in Algeria, in particular traumatized children and women.

<sup>17</sup> See the ICRC's 1998 Annual Report, pp. 299-300.

*new psycho-social  
rehabilitation programme*

*developing the Algerian Red  
Crescent's operational capacity*

*aftermath of the Morocco/Western  
Sabara conflict*

*ICRC calls for repatriation  
of detainees*

The primary aim of the programme was to respond to some of the most pressing needs by supporting both State-run centres – where affected children received assistance and psychologists and social workers training – and Algerian Red Crescent workshops, where women could find psychological support and learn a trade, and hence gradually be reintegrated into society. Three new workshops had been set up by the end of the year. ICRC support included the services of a psychiatrist, the distribution of material, books and texts, and funding.

Hand-in-hand with the above programme, the ICRC decided to help the Algerian Red Crescent strengthen its operational capacity, in particular its national first-aid network and its activities to spread knowledge of humanitarian law. A joint ICRC–Swedish Red Cross mission was carried out to Algiers in August to assess the National Society's needs in terms of first-aid equipment and training.

The ICRC worked to reinforce the National Society's capacity to spread knowledge of humanitarian law by providing materials on the subject and communications equipment. It helped organize dissemination training seminars and create dissemination tools such as publications and radio and TV programmes.

For over 20 years the repercussions of the conflict in the Western Sahara have been felt by thousands of people, including around 1,800 Moroccan prisoners held by the Polisario Front. The UN settlement plan, drawn up in 1991, had provided for the repatriation of all the captives only after the registration of everyone eligible to vote in a referendum on self-determination for the people of the Western Sahara. This thus linked the issue of the prisoners to a political settlement. The referendum has been postponed on numerous occasions, most recently until 2002.

In early 1999, in addition to the some 1,800 still held prisoner, 83 people released in April 1997<sup>18</sup> were still awaiting repatriation because Morocco was opposed as a matter of principle to any repatriation which did not encompass all the prisoners.

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 1999, it repeatedly expressed its concern about the plight of all these men, most of whom were captured between 1978 and 1982, and made representations to all the parties concerned in order to find a humanitarian solution as soon as possible. The ICRC, which visits the prisoners regularly, has spared no effort in recent years to secure their unconditional release and repatriation in accordance with humanitarian law.

On 8 January, the ICRC President met the Polisario Front Coordinator for the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara at ICRC headquarters. The President reiterated the ICRC's willingness to repatriate all persons detained in relation to the conflict and to undertake all necessary steps to ascertain the whereabouts of combatants from both sides who were still missing.

In 1999, a team of ICRC delegates including a doctor, an ophthalmologist and a dentist carried out two visits to the Moroccan prisoners, in March and in May. They saw over 1,500 of the Moroccan prisoners held by the Polisario Front, as well as the 83 prisoners released in April 1997 who were still awaiting repatriation.

The doctor drew up a list of prisoners who should be transferred to hospital for medical treatment. For many, the only possibility of receiving proper examination and

<sup>18</sup> 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. Two of them have since died in Tindouf without being reunited with their families.

## *concern for detainees' health*

treatment lay in repatriation. ICRC delegates noted that the prisoners were pinning their hopes on the new timetable for the UN settlement plan, and that any further deferral would have a disastrous effect on their already weak health and low morale.

In August the ICRC received the green light from the Polisario Front and the Algerian authorities to transfer five Moroccan prisoners urgently in need of medical treatment from their camp in Tindouf to hospital in Algiers, in coordination with the Algerian Red Crescent. The ICRC subsequently repatriated the five to Morocco on 23 November, when the Polisario Front handed over to the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative a list of 191 Moroccan prisoners who had been freed on humanitarian grounds. The ICRC offered its services to the Polisario Front and to the Moroccan government for the repatriation of the remaining 186 prisoners on the list, including the 83 already released, in an operation that was due to be organized in early 2000.

## *restoring family links*

Throughout the year, a thousand kilos of family parcels and Red Cross messages received from Moroccan families were sent via the Algerian Red Crescent to the prisoners in the Tindouf area. At the end of July, an ICRC delegate met with families of the prisoners in Casablanca and Rabat, passing on news of their relatives following the ICRC's most recent visit and giving them the opportunity to write Red Cross messages.

In 1999, growing interest for humanitarian law and for its dissemination was discernible in the region, as was the wish on the part of the National Societies to play a leading role in this field.

In Morocco, a series of meetings was held with the Minister of Education and the Minister for Human Rights, to discuss ways of disseminating and implementing humanitarian law. In Tunisia, the ICRC met with a number of senior Tunisian officials, including the Minister of Higher Education, the President of the Arab Institute for Human Rights, and the Director of the International Studies Association. The discussions revolved around cooperation between these institutions, in particular for the events marking the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions.

## *disseminating humanitarian law*

Significant efforts were undertaken to pursue the promotion of humanitarian law within Moroccan academic circles, in cooperation with the Moroccan Red Crescent. In January and June, an ICRC representative went to Morocco where he visited the law faculties of Oujda, Casablanca and Mohammedia Universities and the Higher Institute for Information and Communication in Rabat. He gave lectures on the Movement and the Geneva Conventions and completed the distribution of standard collections of humanitarian law books in these institutions. In October, the University of Casablanca started a "research and training unit" for postgraduate students, comprising 40 hours of teaching on humanitarian law and 40 hours on the Movement.

From 10 to 15 June, the ICRC carried out a mission to Nouakchott, Mauritania, where humanitarian law had already been integrated into the teaching programme for the armed forces and the National Guard. In September, the subject was introduced as part of the "civic instruction" course for high-school students.

Also in Mauritania, the ICRC organized a seminar in April on "Humanitarian Law, Human Rights and the Security Forces" at the National Guard Headquarters in Nouakchott. It was attended by instruction officers from the National Guard, the police, the army, and the gendarmerie. It was the first time this topic, in a form adapted to the participants' daily work, was dealt with in a seminar in the Maghreb.

*focusing on journalists*

*cooperation  
with the National Societies*

*50th anniversary  
of the Geneva Conventions*

In Tunisia, the ICRC gave lectures on humanitarian law and the Movement to students at the Institute for Diplomatic Studies, after which the Board of Directors expressed the wish to incorporate the humanitarian law course into the Institute's curriculum.

A team from the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the University of Tunis took part in the 11th Jean Pictet Moot Court Competition in Greece from 20 to 28 March. The team received financial and academic support from the ICRC, and expressed the wish to participate regularly in the future.

The regional delegation worked on developing its relations with the media, which play a major role in relaying knowledge of humanitarian law and ICRC activities. A seminar for Moroccan journalists, focusing on the responsibility of the media in promoting better awareness among the public of humanitarian rules and principles, was organized in Rabat in November by the ICRC in cooperation with the Moroccan Red Crescent and the Moroccan Journalists' Union. A competition for journalists was subsequently launched on the theme of the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions.

The ICRC also contributed to a number of regional seminars on themes related to its mandate. In January, the regional delegation took part in a seminar on anti-personnel landmines for the countries of the Maghreb and in March it gave a presentation on the situation of children in armed conflicts at a regional conference on children's rights, both organized by the Arab Institute for Human Rights in Tunis. Arab NGOs, government representatives, the Arab League, and UNICEF were among the participants.

Throughout the year the ICRC continued to cooperate with the region's National Societies, particularly as regards the promotion of humanitarian law within civil society. This entailed boosting the National Societies' information and dissemination capacity by providing material on the Movement and equipment and by supporting their events - organized either for Red Crescent volunteers or for the public at large - by giving presentations on humanitarian law and helping out with funding.

The 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions provided a particularly good opportunity for joint activities. From 10 to 18 August, the regional delegate went to Mauritania to take part in a Mauritanian Red Crescent workshop for Mauritanian journalists, NGOs and representatives of UN organizations and in a training seminar in the town of Kaedi for 30 women who were heads of National Society branches. The delegate gave talks on fund-raising and tracing activities.

In Tunisia, the ICRC gave lectures on humanitarian law and the Movement to young Tunisian Red Crescent volunteers and first-aiders. In a congress on emergency preparedness organized by the National Society in Monsatir on 25 July, ICRC representatives gave a presentation on how to set up camps for displaced persons. Besides Red Crescent volunteers, the representatives of several ministries attended.

Also to mark the 50th anniversary, the ICRC regional delegation, together with the Tunisian Association of International and Transnational Law, organized a symposium in Tunis in November. Held under the patronage of the President of the Republic, the symposium afforded university professors from North Africa, Europe and America an opportunity to discuss recent developments in humanitarian law. The ICRC presented the results of its worldwide consultation on the rules of war and distributed copies of the "People on War" report to the participants.

## IN 1999 THE ICRC:



- carried out a first series of visits in Algeria to 12 places of detention holding a total of 6,980 inmates and held interviews in private with 457 detainees;
- visited, in March and May, 1,556 Moroccan prisoners being held by the Polisario Front in 12 places of detention, including the 83 men released in 1997 and still awaiting repatriation;
- restored and maintained contact between Moroccan prisoners and their families by forwarding 33,679 Red Cross messages (10,447 from the prisoners and 23,232 from their families);
- sent 507 family parcels to Moroccan prisoners via the Algerian Red Crescent;
- improved health care for Moroccan prisoners in Tindouf by providing ad hoc medical and dental assistance;
- transferred five sick Moroccan prisoners, released for humanitarian reasons, from their camp to a hospital in Algiers on 17 August and subsequently repatriated them to Morocco in November;
- provided 2.6 tonnes of essential medical supplies, including material for prostheses, as well as books, games and other leisure items, for the Moroccan prisoners and for the Sahrawi population;



- in Algeria, continued to give financial support for the National Society's Ramadan programme through which soup kitchens were organized and material supplies were distributed to especially needy families;
- supported eight two-week summer camps, organized by the Algerian Red Crescent, for over 15,000 children traumatized by violence;
- provided material and technical support for Algerian Red Crescent programmes to provide psychological care for women and children traumatized by violence;
- on 8 May, gave two presentations on humanitarian law and the Movement for 30 young Tunisian Red Crescent volunteers;
- gave a lecture on humanitarian law and the Movement for Tunisian Red Crescent first-aiders, as part of a regional first-aid seminar organized by the National Society from 15 to 27 August which was also attended by around 100 Tunisian university students;
- continued to provide monthly financial support for the Mauritanian Red Crescent's Information Department; donated audio-visual equipment in order to boost its information and dissemination capacity;
- worked to strengthen the Oudja section of the Moroccan Red Crescent by providing dissemination material on the Movement and by visiting its seven health centres;
- regularly provided promotional material and books for the Moroccan Red Crescent's documentation centre in Rabat;



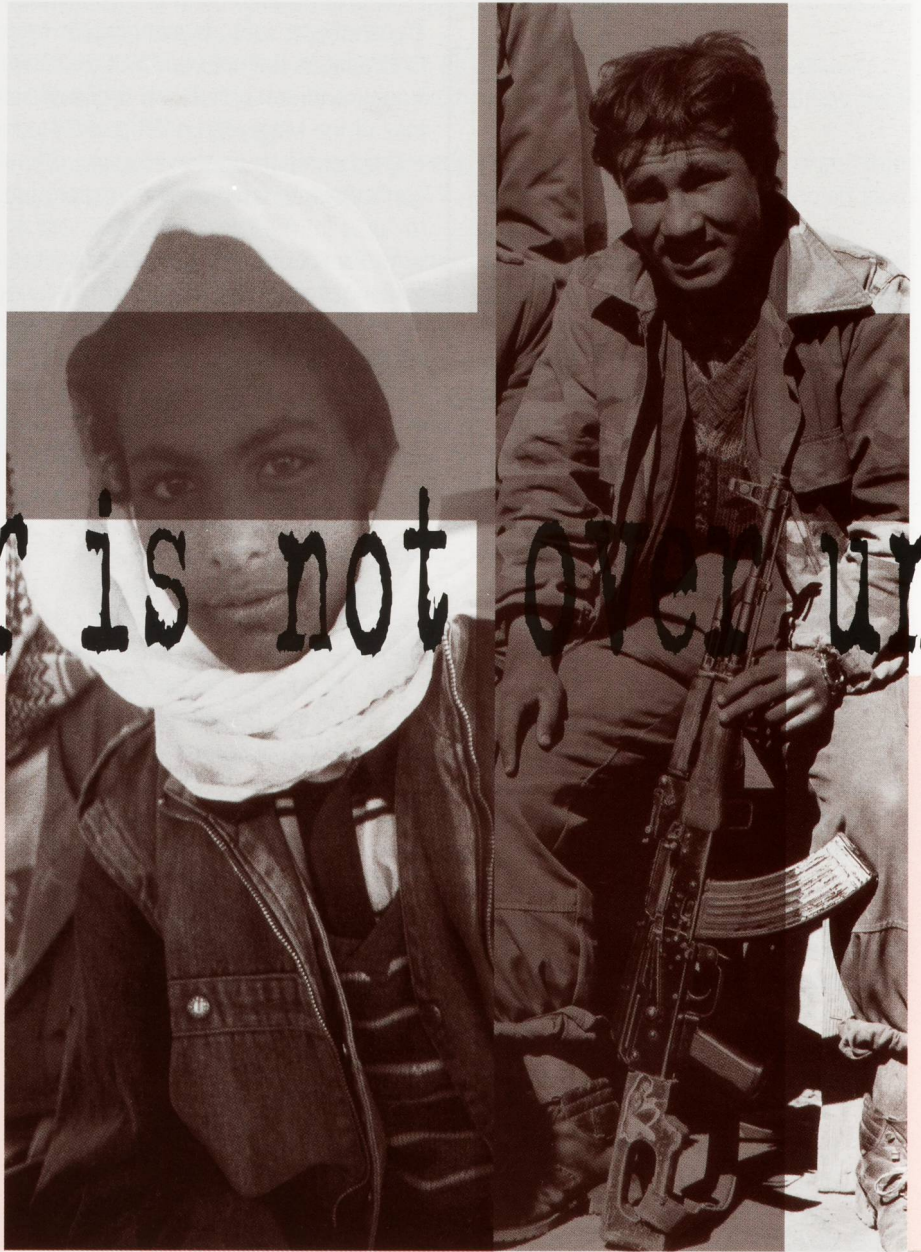
- in Mauritania, held a seminar on humanitarian law, human rights and the security forces for 26 officer instructors from the army and police;
- in Morocco, inaugurated a series of courses on humanitarian law and the Movement at the Higher Institute for Information and Communication in Rabat, which was attended by over 1,000 people;
- in Tunisia, gave lectures on the Movement, ICRC activities and humanitarian law at the Institute for Diplomatic Studies and Continuing Education and at the Institute of the Press and the Science of Information;
- co-organized, together with the Tunisian Association of International and Transnational Law, a symposium to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions in Tunis on 26 and 27 November;
- took part in the first-ever regional seminar on anti-personnel landmines for countries of the Maghreb on 25 and 26 January in Tunis;
- gave a report on the situation of children in armed conflicts at an Arab regional conference on the rights of children, organized by the Arab Institute for Human Rights in Tunis from 12 to 14 March;
- for the second year running, co-produced 30 episodes of a radio drama series with National Moroccan Radio, with the support of the ICRC Regional Promotion Office in Cario, to be broadcast during Ramadan, raising listeners' awareness of the importance of protecting civilians' rights at all times.

# PEOPLE ON WAR



"We cannot stop war but at least we should have some values to be respected. We had more values in the Middle Ages..."

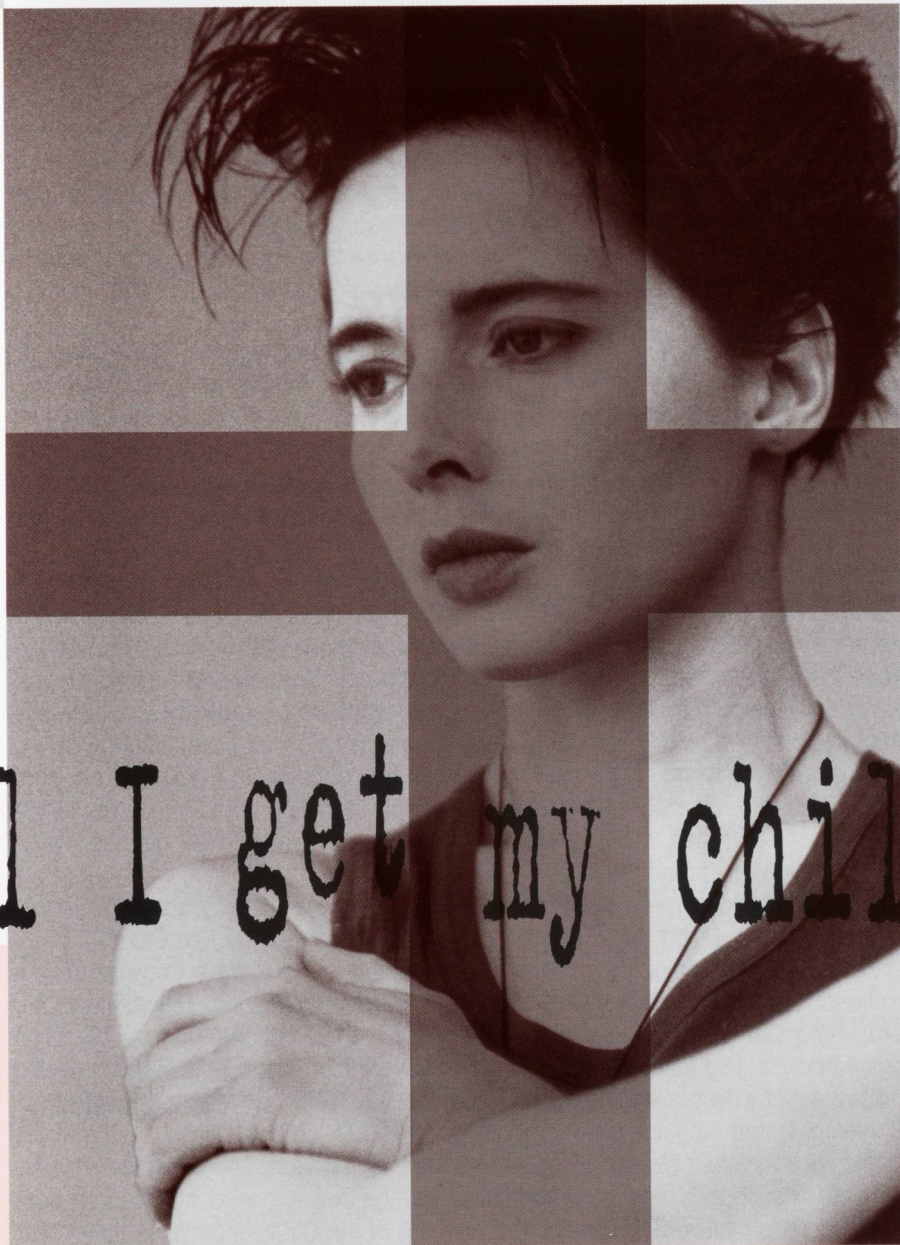
"A country like this won't get back to prosperity if it doesn't get back its soul."



"The war is not over un"

"There have to be rules that are obeyed. Every man has to act as a human for himself... because he must live with himself after the war."

# PEOPLE ON WAR



“Under no circumstances  
should civilians become  
military targets...  
if we start to allow that,  
there will be  
no end to it.”

“The question is,  
how normal were we when  
we were in the field.”

“I get my child back.”

“In every country they have treaties  
defending civilians,  
otherwise everyone would be dead.”

everyone has something  
to say about war



HOW  
ABOUT  
YOU  
?

<http://www.onwar.org>

