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Latin America & the Caribbean

*The river, the Colombian Red Cross and the ICRC
all work together to bring help
to communities in a region with few roads.*



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Latin America and the Caribbean

ICRC delegations:

Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru

ICRC regional delegations:

Buenos Aires, Caracas, Guatemala City

Staff

ICRC expatriates¹: 90

National Societies¹: 13

Local employees²: 376

Total expenditure: Sfr 50,312,171.46

Expenditure breakdown:

Protection:	10,458,564.06
Assistance:	18,223,904.28
Preventive action:	9,697,001.02
Cooperation with National Societies:	5,681,706.64
Overheads:	3,048,864.80
General:	3,202,130.66



ICRC regional delegation



ICRC delegation

In 2000 there were divergent political developments in Latin America and the Caribbean. One trend was towards strengthened democracy, as in Mexico, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, but elsewhere authoritarian tendencies resurfaced. The military *coups d'état* which threatened Paraguay and Ecuador and the turbulent election campaigns in Peru and Haiti reflected the political instability besetting some countries.

In spite of two recessions in the previous five years, inflation remained under control and the continent saw a moderate improvement in economic growth. However, the chronic problem of marked disparities in living standards persisted and social divisions continued to widen,

a situation exacerbated by the population explosion.

In some countries, the political and economic climate gave rise to growing public discontent and there was a significant increase in urban crime, attributable in many areas to narcotics trafficking.

Most delegations in Latin America and the Caribbean continued to monitor conditions of detention in prisons and, when necessary, arranged visits to newly arrested people. The ICRC also provided prompt protection and assistance for civilian populations whenever situations of violence forced them to abandon their homes, land and security. Food and clothing were provided for

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 2000.

displaced persons and medical assistance for victims of fighting and landmine explosions.

Despite considerable challenges, the ICRC's delegations in Latin America and the Caribbean achieved the majority of their objectives set for the year.

In Colombia, the ICRC consolidated its role as a neutral intermediary, by strengthening its wide-ranging network of contacts with all parties to the conflict – an indispensable prerequisite for the successful implementation of humanitarian activities in areas of conflict in the country. Priority was given to maintaining an open dialogue with armed groups and promoting acceptance of the ICRC by all sectors of society. In 2000, the ICRC remained the only humanitarian institution in Colombia to maintain regular contact with all the parties to the conflict.

Faced with repeated violations of humanitarian law in the mounting internal violence, the organization continued to assist the growing numbers of displaced persons throughout Colombia by providing both immediate and medium-term food and material aid and medical care. The assistance provided was always linked to the protection work carried out nationwide by ICRC delegates who recorded, as objectively as possible, the incidents and violations of humanitarian law that caused the displacements. The aim was to take up these matters with the parties to the conflict so as to convince them of the need for better compliance with international humanitarian rules.

Throughout the continent the ICRC took steps to strengthen its presence and expand its capacity to respond to situations of internal violence, should the need arise. Some administrative changes took place: the Brasilia delegation handed over regional responsibility to a newly established delegation in Caracas, which now covers Venezuela and Ecuador.

Numerous cooperation programmes with the Latin American and Caribbean National Societies were implemented to strengthen their internal structure and enhance their operational capacity in their respective countries, particularly in connection with the ICRC's field of activity. Coordination with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other humanitarian agencies was also stepped up with a view to creating synergy in humanitarian action across the continent.

The ICRC in Latin America and the Caribbean continued to promote adherence to humanitarian treaties. The existence in most countries of interministerial committees for the implementation of international humanitarian law facilitated the incorporation of this body of law into national legislation. Prohibiting the use of anti-personnel landmines remained a priority and governments concerned by the problem were urged to adopt national laws to this effect.

Innovative dissemination projects were launched in cooperation with several National Societies, targeting young people from schoolchildren to university students and their teachers. The media in all countries in the region were kept up to date on ICRC activities worldwide and encouraged to give broader coverage to events and situations of concern to the organization. The experience gained by the Brazilian delegation in running training courses for military police instructors was put to good effect in programmes for police and security forces in Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru.

BRAZIL

The economic situation remained generally stable in Brazil in 2000. However, social disparities persisted and the high level of urban violence prompted an increase in police action. The activities of the *Movimento sem Terra* (Movement of the Landless) were a source of concern for the government and some militants accused of creating public unrest were imprisoned.

Regional delegation transferred to Caracas

In February, the regional delegation officially opened in Caracas, leaving the Brazilian delegation to focus on its specialized function as a resource and support centre for dissemination programmes targeting police forces in Latin America.

Promoting humanitarian law

The ICRC maintained constructive relations with the government concerning humanitarian issues such as the International Criminal Court (Brazil signed the Rome Statute in 2000) and Protocols II and IV to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which were ratified in 1999. Brazil was actively involved in preparations for the 2001 Conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

ICRC delegates continued to work with the armed forces to enhance knowledge of humanitarian law, dealing mainly with the unit in charge of preparing contingents for peace-keeping missions, the Air Force Academy and the Military Academy.

Drawing on the experience and expertise acquired over the previous two years in the dissemination project on human rights and humanitarian law for the Brazilian police, the delegation provided valuable assistance to other delegations in Latin America in developing and implementing similar programmes. This specialized project continued for police forces in Brazil and other Latin American countries, including Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. The final train-the-trainers courses on human rights and humanitarian law for military police officers were completed at the end of the year. An external evaluation of this project, carried out by the University of São Paulo, confirmed its value and that the required professional standards in relation to law enforcement had been attained. The delegation also

ran a training course for a newly created Colombian police unit specializing in emergency interventions in places of detention. The course covered human rights standards, especially those concerning the use of force, applicable to law enforcement agents.

IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- ran a total of 10 training courses on human rights and humanitarian law for 160 military police officers;
- trained 852 specialized officers through this 2-year programme to give courses to Brazilian police and police forces from other countries in Latin America;
- provided a number of specialized police officers with support in training Ecuadorian police instructors and in giving a course on human rights and humanitarian principles for 20 military police officers of the Ecuadorian armed forces;

- in cooperation with a Brazilian military police instructor, organized a training course on human rights for 44 members of the Mexican federal police force most closely involved in areas of concern to the ICRC, and for 17 police officers in Venezuela;
- trained 124 members of a new Colombian police unit in human rights and humanitarian law;
- gave presentations on humanitarian law and the ICRC at the 27th Course on International Law organized by the OAS* in Rio de Janeiro for diplomats from countries in the region;
- took part in a round-table discussion on humanitarian law, armed conflict and the ICRC's mandate for 100 students and professors at the Faculty of International Relations of the Catholic University of São Paulo.

* OAS: Organization of American States

COLOMBIA

PROTECTION

6,850,197

ASSISTANCE

12,130,167

PREVENTIVE ACTION

2,636,130

COOPERATION WITH NATIONAL SOCIETIES

1,985,826

OVERHEADS

1,624,016

GENERAL

1,430,113

TOTAL EXPENDITURE Sfr 26,656,449

Despite constant efforts to bring about a negotiated solution to the decades-old internal conflict, the general situation in Colombia deteriorated further as the various armed groups pursued their relentless struggle for control over territory, people and resources. At the same time, peace talks between the Colombian government and the armed groups continued, resulting in a midyear meeting in the *zona de despeje* (demilitarized zone) between government representatives and the FARC,* with the occasional participation of representatives of the European Union and several em-

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



ICRC delegation



ICRC sub-delegation



ICRC office

bassies. The ELN* and the Colombian government also started negotiations to create a *zona de encuentro* (meeting zone) for consultations with civil society on the country's future.

Consequences of the conflict

The arbitrary and horrendous methods of warfare employed caused extensive suffering among the civilian population and the displacement of thousands of people, either to areas in Colombia offering safer conditions or abroad. In particular, the *autodefensas* (AUC)*

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

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

stepped up their operations, increasing the mass movement of people, including indigenous communities. The intractable political situation directly affected not only the humanitarian situation but also, in many places, the economy. The inevitable exodus of human and economic resources contributed to the negative growth rate and high unemployment statistics, compounding Colombia's social problems.

"Plan Colombia"

In 2000 the government, backed by the United States, launched "Plan Colombia", a programme designed to eradicate drug production, which is a major economic factor in the internal conflict. One of the aims of the plan is to provide the armed and security forces with the necessary military means and training to combat the guerrilla groups which derive economic advantages from drug production. The plan attracted both approval and criticism at home and abroad, some observers fearing that its implementation would lead to a renewed escalation of violence and of the conflict.

ICRC response

The ICRC delegation in Colombia covers the entire country with its 16 sub-delegations and offices – a network which guarantees a rapid emergency response in terms of protection and assistance, while maintaining regular contacts with all armed groups. Activities in Bogotá, and occasionally in the field, were disrupted during the course of the year when the delegation was occupied by several hundred displaced persons seeking to put pressure on the government. Their aim was to obtain humanitarian aid that would enable them to achieve socio-economic rehabilitation.

The ICRC as a neutral intermediary

During the year the ICRC reinforced its role as a neutral intermediary between all parties to the conflict. It held bilateral discussions with the different armed groups and, in the case of the FARC and the AUC, issued confidential written reports on violations of humanitarian law. Discussions were backed up by information sessions aimed at enhancing awareness of the humanitarian principles and encouraging armed groups to apply the rules of humanitarian law in their operations. One workshop on this subject was held in Geneva for high-ranking members of the FARC and another for senior members of the ELN.

Humanitarian law, the emblem and the Ottawa treaty

The delegation continued to advise the government on national implementation of humanitarian law, and encouraged the adoption of national legislation regulating use of the red cross emblem.

In September the Colombian government ratified the Ottawa treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. Landmines nevertheless continued to be used in the internal conflict and caused many casualties among civilians.

Protection and assistance for civilians

During 2000, the ICRC observed a steady increase in the number of civilians displaced either individually or *en masse*. A total of 124,000 people received emergency assistance provided by the ICRC and, whenever circumstances permitted, by the Colombian Red Cross. The ICRC's technical support for the government rehabilitation programme for displaced persons was also increased.

The majority of the displaced continued to suffer directly or indirectly from the prevailing lack of security. The humanitarian assistance provided was therefore clearly linked to the protection work carried out nationwide by ICRC delegates, who recorded the incidents and violations of humanitarian law that caused displacement. Numerous representations were subsequently undertaken with the parties to the conflict so as to convince them of the need for greater compliance with international humanitarian rules.

More particularly, the common practice of hostage-taking remained a serious problem. The ICRC continued its efforts to persuade the parties concerned to abandon this practice, and urged kidnappers to respect the physical integrity and the dignity of hostages.

Post-emergency aid was channelled through formal ICRC programmes such as "Quick Impact Projects". These programmes, which were implemented by the ICRC in several departments in coordination with public agencies and other organizations, are designed to help displaced, returnee and host communities during the critical transition period between relief, rehabilitation and community integration. The projects focused on the restoration of small-scale infrastructure such as community centres, schools and bridges, and on income-generating projects in the agricultural and fisheries sector.

Medical personnel abandoned State-run health centres in several conflict areas owing to the steady deterioration in security conditions. In other areas the ongoing conflict prevented civilians from having access to health services. Together with Colombian Red Cross workers, the ICRC's four mobile health units (some of them water-borne) regularly visited isolated communities, providing basic medical assistance and conducting health-promotion activities.

Protecting detainees

In 2000, the number of people detained in Colombia in connection with the conflict reached 3,894. There was severe overcrowding in detention centres and throughout the year prison riots and internal disputes caused the death of dozens of detainees. On several occasions the ICRC played a decisive role as mediator between inmates and prison authorities. This action often had a conciliatory effect and helped to avoid further casualties.

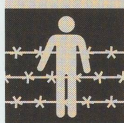
During visits to detention centres, delegates focused on maintaining a dialogue with both detaining authorities and security detainees, and took every opportunity to insist on the detainees' fundamental right to physical integrity and human dignity. The ICRC continued its visits to security detainees held in State detention centres, but failed to gain access to members of the armed and police forces held by the FARC and the ELN despite repeated efforts. Nevertheless, it maintained close contact with leaders of the two groups, who supplied information on the state of health of captives and authorized the exchange of Red Cross messages with the families concerned.

Cooperation with National Societies and other humanitarian agencies

ICRC activities were often carried out with the Colombian Red Cross, and various delegated projects were run by the Canadian, German, Norwegian and Swedish Red Cross Societies. Wide-spread cooperation also included the Ombudsman's office, United Nations agencies, NGOs* and universities. The ICRC increased its support to the Social Solidarity Network, the government agency officially responsible for displaced persons. An ICRC pilot project for creation of an integrated aid network was handed over to this agency and, with ICRC guidance, the project was expanded to cover the entire country.

* NGOs: non-governmental organizations

IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- regularly visited 3,500 detainees, 1,114 of them for the first time, in 134 places of detention;
- issued 3,400 travel

vouchers for family visits to detainees;

- organized the exchange of 720 Red Cross messages between families and hostages, detainees, displaced persons and members of the armed and police forces held by the FARC and the ELN;
- financed medical or surgical treatment for 564 detainees;
- supplied medical material to 12 detention centres;



- registered 745 cases of humanitarian law violations affecting 1,805 individuals;
- helped 1,620 civilians

whose lives were in danger to relocate to safer areas;



- in cooperation with the Colombian Red Cross, distributed food, hygiene kits and mattresses to 134,800 needy civilians;
- conducted agricultural micro-projects aimed at restoring food security and self-sufficiency for people affected by the conflict;
- completed 29 and started 43 new "Quick Impact Projects" in rural and urban areas for displaced persons, residents of host communities and returnees;
- continued a capacity-building programme for the State agency responsible for humanitarian assistance;



- through projects delegated to the National Societies of Canada, Germany, Norway and Sweden and maintained

medical assistance for

26,046 beneficiaries in conflict zones in Atrato, Bolivar, Caquetá and Putumayo using mobile health units;

- financed medical or surgical treatment for 300 wounded civilians and 375 displaced people;



- through a series of bilateral cooperation projects, continued to support the Colombian Red Cross in enhancing its

administration, staff training, telecommunications network, external communication and dissemination activities;





- conducted 190 sessions on humanitarian law for instructors from the armed forces;
- organized 105

dissemination sessions on humanitarian law for 1,187 members of irregular armed groups;

- in cooperation with the Colombian Red Cross, promoted the incorporation of humanitarian law and human rights into police training programmes by organizing 96 training courses for 2,643 police instructors;
- organized 164 dissemination sessions for 7,394 civil servants, NGO staff, university teachers and students, medical personnel, journalists and community leaders.

MEXICO



 ICRC delegation
  ICRC sub-delegation

With the election of a new President in 2000, Mexico experienced a change of government after 71 years of rule by the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*. The orderly transfer of power to the *Partido Acción Nacional* took place in a stable environment.

The ICRC maintained its presence in the state of Chiapas, where displaced persons and residents benefited from medical and food assistance programmes. Agricultural projects were also maintained to improve basic nutrition and help restore self-sufficiency.

Visits to detainees

The ICRC visited detainees held in connection with the situation in Chiapas or for their presumed involvement with armed groups in other states (Oaxaca, Guerrero, Michoacán, Veracruz, Jalisco, Mexico and Tabasco). For the first time since 1997, delegates were granted access to high-security prisons and were able to assess the physical and psychological conditions of inmates.

Assisting displaced communities

The 1994 conflict in Chiapas and subsequent events caused the displacement of thousands of people. In 2000, the need for humanitarian action continued owing to the persistent movement of large numbers of civilians in the area. Cases of malnutrition in displaced communities, especially among children, were still observed, and water supplies were inadequate. The ICRC provided food, agricultural supplies and equipment, and technical assistance to communities in need. The focus was on restoring self-sufficiency by improving farming methods and making better use

of agricultural resources. The security of displaced persons was also a major priority for the ICRC. Representations were made to all parties concerned following reports collected by ICRC delegates of alleged abuses prompting population movements or preventing people from returning to their places of origin.

In its role as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC placed the premises of its sub-delegation in San Cristóbal de las Casas at the disposal of the Chiapas authorities and the representatives of displaced persons in order to discuss the safe return of the displaced to their homes.

Working with National Societies

The ICRC worked in cooperation with the Mexican Red Cross to provide medical care for displaced people and isolated village communities, and accompanied medical personnel from the National Society on vaccination campaigns in Los Altos and Las Cañadas. Medical staff from government health services took part in these campaigns on some occasions. Regular training courses on different aspects of medical assistance were organized for health workers in order to improve preventive health care.

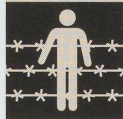
The German and Spanish National Societies worked in Chiapas for part of the year, participating in the food and medical assistance programmes and coordinating their activities with the ICRC and the Mexican Red Cross.

In 2000, a self-evaluation method for rural communities was introduced in Mexico and implemented by ICRC delegates. This enabled such communities to independently assess their own needs and allowed the ICRC to acquire a better understanding of the impact of its programmes.

Spreading awareness of humanitarian principles

The ICRC organized dissemination activities targeting various sectors of Mexican society, including universities, security forces and government services, and covering humanitarian law, human rights and the ICRC's mandate.

IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- visited 129 detainees within its purview, 34 of them for the first time;
- paid for 88 travel vouchers for family visits to detainees;



- took part in several meetings between the authorities in Chiapas and representatives of displaced communities in the state;



- regularly supplied food rations and hygiene items to 9,683 displaced persons and residents affected by the situation in Chiapas;
- provided 10,171 people in 93 communities with seeds and gardening tools and ran 14 courses for farmers on harvest-improvement and agricultural methods;



- continued to provide the National Society's medical services, including mobile medical teams, with support in providing health care for 25,000 beneficiaries in remote areas of Chiapas;
- accompanied the National Society and government health teams on vaccination campaigns for 5,384 children in isolated communities in Chiapas;

- ran workshops for 80 health-care workers in remote areas in Chiapas and training courses for 32 traditional midwives in camps for displaced persons;



- with the participation of resident and/or displaced communities, continued water and sanitation programmes for 5,000 beneficiaries in Chiapas;



- together with the Mexican Red Cross, ran seminars for 30 of the Society's dissemination trainers;
- continued to give financial and material support to 5 health-care facilities run by the National Society in Las Cañadas and Los Altos;
- organized a seminar on tracing services for Mexican Red Cross staff;



- together with the National Commission on Human Rights, UNHCR* and the Ibero-American University, organized a seminar on humanitarian law and refugee rights and established a pool of 30 specialized instructors;
- ran 4 seminars on humanitarian law and human rights for 120 police instructors from the federal police and security forces, and a similar seminar for 25 police instructors at the Chiapas Police Academy.

* UNHCR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

PERU

Regional delegation
(Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay)

The first concern of the regional delegation was important political changes in 2000 in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay which had new presidents in Chile, Andrés Bello's administration, and in Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez's administration.

The delegation also visited the ICRC delegation in Lima, Peru, and the ICRC delegation in Bogotá, Colombia, to discuss the situation in the region and the work of the ICRC.

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Early in the year, the phasing out of emergency measures imposed by the government in former conflict zones was completed. However, unrest persisted in parts of the Huallaga region and the Ene valley, where the ICRC maintained a presence. Visits were made to communities in areas of tension in order to urge bearers of arms to respect the fundamental rights of vulnerable groups. These field trips gave delegates the opportunity to assess living conditions, and where necessary communities were provided with food, clothing and other subsistence items. Medical assistance was given to people affected by violence and to victims of landmine explosions, a constant danger for civilians in some rural areas of Peru.



⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation + ICRC office

Improving conditions for detainees

The ICRC's activities in Peru focus primarily on people deprived of their freedom. Since 1993, ICRC delegates have been the only external observers permitted by the Peruvian authorities to conduct regular visits to detainees held at the El Callao naval base. Elsewhere in the country, delegates continued to visit security detainees held in temporary and permanent places of detention and to monitor their conditions of detention and access to medical care. The organization provided assistance in the form of medical equipment and medicines and the funding of medical tests and treatment

when necessary. Contact between prisoners and their families was facilitated by ICRC travel vouchers and the exchange of Red Cross messages.

Early in the year, ICRC visits to detainees were suspended following violent incidents in several prisons. The head of the ICRC delegation attended a meeting between the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the President of the Penitentiary Administration. The situation was subsequently resolved and ICRC visits to detainees were restored.

Initiatives taken by prison authorities to upgrade their training programmes for prison staff were given full support by the ICRC. For the first time, delegates attended two seminars organized by the INPE* training school and gave presentations on the ICRC's mandate and its activities in Peruvian prisons.

Despite the internal instability in Peru and changes in the administration in 2000, the ICRC continued its normal working relationship with government authorities. Close contact was maintained with the Ministry of Justice.

The ICRC has been conducting training courses and seminars on humanitarian principles for the Peruvian armed and police forces since 1998.

Dissemination for young people

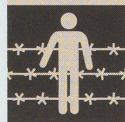
Together with the Peruvian Red Cross, the ICRC continued to promote dissemination activities for young people. Interactive life-size puppet shows on Red Cross activities were presented in schools in regions prone to violence. Preparatory representations were made to the relevant authorities to promote "Exploring Humanitarian Law", a long-term educational programme designed to raise awareness of all aspects of humanitarian law among young people.

Raising the ICRC's profile in the media

An ICRC press competition on humanitarian law was launched in May in coordination with the Ombudsman's office and law and journalism professors from the University of Applied Sciences. Relations with media circles were stepped up in an effort to improve press coverage of ICRC activities.

* INPE: *Instituto Nacional Penitenciario* (National Penitentiary Institute)

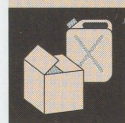
IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- carried out regular visits to 2,961 detainees, of whom 289 were visited for the first time, in 113 prisons, including

6 institutions for minors and the El Callao naval base;

- supplied leisure items, books and transistor radios to 9 places of detention;
- issued 17,164 travel vouchers for family visits to detainees;
- purchased 197 dental prostheses and 162 pairs of spectacles for detainees;
- organized the exchange of 173 Red Cross messages between security detainees and their families;



- provided 1,847 vulnerable people in areas of tension with clothing, food and other subsistence items;



- made 763 visits to State-run health facilities in order to assess needs, and supplied them with medicines and medical

material where necessary;

- financed medical treatment for 218 victims of violence;
- covered the costs of Magnetic Resonance Imaging examination equipment for 2 paraplegic detainees;
- financed outpatient treatment for 1,249 detainees;

- financed medical treatment for 47 hospitalized detainees;



- provided funds for 5 victims to receive prostheses;



- gave the Peruvian Red Cross technical and material support in reorganizing its internal administration;

- provided financial support for the production and distribution of 12 Peruvian Red Cross newsletters;
- provided financial and technical support for 3 training courses for instructors from the Peruvian Red Cross National Training School;



- gave presentations on the ICRC's mandate and the law of armed conflict to 378 police officers and members of the armed forces;

- supported the production of 19 life-size puppet shows for young audiences;
- gave 9 presentations on humanitarian law to various universities and organized seminars for 60 law students.

BUENOS AIRES

Regional delegation

(Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay)

The area covered by the regional delegation saw important political changes in 2000 as Argentina, Chile and Uruguay elected new Presidents. In Chile, Senator Pinochet's parliamentary immunity was withdrawn, and the new government in Uruguay began the process of resolving cases of people who had disappeared during the military regime.

In May, there was an attempted military coup in Paraguay and numerous arrests were made.

On two occasions during the year, Bolivia's administrative and economic policies, which included measures to eradicate coca plantations, led to violent clashes between demonstrators and military or police forces. The government declared a state of emergency. Argentina also embarked on economic reforms which gave rise to public protests throughout the country.

ICRC response

All governments in the region fully supported ICRC initiatives and facilitated meetings with senior government officials and heads of armed forces. Giving special attention to newly formed governments, the organization promoted issues relating to its mandate, including ratification of international treaties. It also cooperated closely with the region's national committees for the implementation of humanitarian law, especially in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, and encouraged the adoption of national legislation in this regard.

Even though the regional delegation operated in a relatively peaceful environment in 2000, it found itself faced with a number of situations requiring its action. In three out of the five countries of the region, people were imprisoned either as the result of sporadic internal tension or in connection with the activities of former military regimes.

Following the failed *coup d'état* in Paraguay, the ICRC reached an agreement with the government on visits to security detainees. This was the first time in more than 10 years that the ICRC had submitted an offer of services to visit detainees in Paraguay.

In Bolivia, the delegation carried out two special missions during the internal unrest. In April delegates visited detainees held in a remote penal colony, and in November visits were made to detainees in the Chapare region, where most of the social unrest had occurred and where the Bolivian army had been sent to enforce law and order.

New initiatives in communication

A major initiative was launched within the regional delegation: the establishment of a Regional Communication Support Centre for delegations in Latin America. This centre benefited from the growing popularity of the ICRC's Spanish-language Website based in Buenos Aires, which was updated and expanded in 2000 to meet increased demand. Linking art with the promotion of humanitarian law, the delegation devised innovative communication projects such as the production of television spots involving celebrities which were broadcast free of charge, and the distribution of a dissemination calendar illustrated with donated paintings.

Working with National Societies

The ICRC established closer coordination with the region's National Societies and the International Federation in order to implement joint activities in the areas of dissemination, youth and communication programmes, and the restoration of family links. Technical support was provided for the creation of Websites and for publishing national Red Cross information magazines.

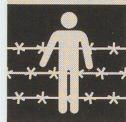
In Chile, talks were held with the Ministry of Education and the National Society in preparation for implementation of the education module "Exploring Humanitarian Law" in high schools. The project will be launched in 2001.

Spreading knowledge of humanitarian law

The ICRC continued working with the Canadian Red Cross in a joint project for the armed forces of Latin America focusing on the implementation of humanitarian law. Instructors from all branches of the armed forces in the region were given training in the law of armed conflict tailored to their specific needs and partly funded by the military authorities. ICRC delegates took part in multinational military exercises for prospective peace-keeping operations. With ICRC support, officers of the armed forces throughout the region attended courses at the San Remo International Institute of Humanitarian Law, and in Toronto, Canada.

Academic circles showed increasing interest in the ICRC's mandate and activities in the region and sought its participation in university seminars and workshops. Dissemination programmes on humanitarian law were in constant demand and enrolment in ICRC courses to bring professors up to date on the subject doubled to a total of 205.

IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- visited 39 security detainees in Bolivia and 108 in Paraguay, and issued reports on their conditions of detention for the relevant authorities;
- in Chile, visited 43 security detainees following discussions with the newly appointed Ministry of Justice officials and prison authorities on the renewal of the agreement authorizing prison visits;



- together with the US Naval War College and the Argentine Naval War School, held a seminar for 16 naval officers on the International Criminal Court, international peace-keeping operations and the ICRC's mandate;
- ran workshops for 66 instructors from the 3 arms of the military in Bolivia and Paraguay;
- held a series of 3 courses on humanitarian law for military instructors, with the cooperation of the Armed Forces Joint Command of Argentina, attended by 62 army, navy and air force officers;

- in Argentina, took part in the multinational exercise "Cabañas 2000" involving 1,200 troops from 8 countries and organized by the US Southern Command with the backing of the UN Department of Peace-keeping Operations;
- in Argentina, attended a war correspondents' course organized by the Armed Forces Joint Instruction Centre for Peace Operations (CAECOPAZ), and explained the ICRC's mandate to journalists and media representatives;
- donated 54 sets of documents on humanitarian law to academic and ministerial libraries in the region and to people specializing in humanitarian issues;
- in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, ran 13 courses and seminars on several humanitarian law topics, including the International Criminal Court, for university professors and students;
- took part in 13 courses on humanitarian law and principles organized by National Societies in the region and supported 16 similar events.

CARACAS

Regional delegation (Ecuador, Venezuela)

In 2000, while Venezuelans looked to their new government for solutions to the problem of social disparities, the indigenous population in Ecuador, grouped under CONAIE,* threatened to resort to violence if social conditions did not improve.

Both countries anticipated repercussions in the areas bordering Colombia from the implementation of "Plan Colombia".³ The authorities feared that the plan would prompt mass population movements resulting in an influx of refugees, increased drugs and arms trafficking and clashes between armed groups.

New regional delegation

In February, the ICRC signed an agreement with the government of Venezuela providing for the establishment in Caracas of a regional delegation covering Venezuela and Ecuador.

The main tasks of the new delegation were to spread awareness of humanitarian law among the armed and police forces and civil society, and to support the National Societies' internal and external training courses and other dissemination activities.

Promoting adoption of humanitarian instruments

Delegates met the Venezuelan Minister of Defence and the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons scheduled for 2001.

Improving Red Cross preparedness

Representatives of the governments of both countries cooperated closely with the ICRC, the International Federation, UNHCR, their respective National Societies and the Catholic Church in drawing up contingency plans to respond to the potential impact of the internal conflict in Colombia. Within the framework of these humanitarian preparedness plans, the ICRC, together with the National Societies of Ecuador and Venezuela, focused on the provision of drinking water, first aid and tracing services for people in need. Troops stationed at border zones in the provinces of Tachira, Zulia and Apure in Venezuela, and in the province of Sucumbíos in Ecuador, received training in humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law.

The ICRC organized specialized training courses for Red Cross workers in the region with the aim of enhancing their technical knowledge and response capacity and creating a core unit for emergency operations.

Expanding the network of police trainers

In Venezuela, the ICRC met the national police coordinator in Caracas to discuss the establishment of a national training programme targeting the country's various police forces, on the basis of the project for training military police instructors formulated by the ICRC's delegation in Brasilia.⁴

The ICRC continued to supervise the training courses in Ecuador aimed at establishing core units of instructors in the national police force and the military police. The courses were temporarily disrupted when all police forces were mobilized to deal with the social unrest prompted by economic instability in the country. They resumed in November.

Getting through to the younger generation

In Venezuela, a pre-military education programme designed to enhance awareness of humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles among high-school students was launched midyear by the Ministries of Education and Defence. ICRC input, with the cooperation of the National Society, included the development of training modules on humanitarian principles and rules.

* CONAIE: *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Communities of Ecuador)

³ See p. 133.

⁴ See p. 131.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN CARACAS

IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- paid several visits to 6 Colombians held in Ecuador in connection with the Colombian internal conflict;



- together with the International Federation, took part in a training session on humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law for the new President and staff of the Ecuadorian National Society, and in the training of branch presidents and directors of the Venezuelan Red Cross;



- supported the delegate to the armed and security forces based in Buenos Aires in running training courses on the law of armed conflict for 65 senior officers of the Venezuelan army, National Guard, navy and air force;
- provided grants to enable 3 senior officers of the Venezuelan and Ecuadorian armed forces to attend the training course at the San Remo Institute of Humanitarian Law and courses on the law of armed conflict in Canada;
- together with the Venezuelan Red Cross, gave a lecture on the ICRC's mandate and activities to some 150 postgraduate students;
- organized training sessions on humanitarian law and human rights for police forces in Venezuela and Ecuador;
- ran a training course on humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict for 33 high-ranking officers at the National War Institute in Ecuador;
- gave a talk on humanitarian law at the Cuenca branch of the Ecuadorian Red Cross to representatives of local authorities, law professors and students, and National Society staff.

GUATEMALA CITY

Regional delegation

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

The year under review was a period of relative economic stability in the region, but governments had to deal with an increase in urban violence and with social issues related to indigenous communities.

The regional delegation, covering some 22 countries in Central America and the Caribbean, focused its activities on promoting humanitarian law, together with National Societies of the region, and on encouraging governments in the area covered to adopt humanitarian treaties and incorporate their provisions into national legislation.

The ICRC generally enjoyed a high degree of respect in the region and its participation in a wide range of seminars and conferences was requested by various national and international organizations. By opening an office in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in 1999, and another in Costa Rica in July 2000, the regional delegation extended its coverage in Central America. The office in Trinidad and Tobago serves as a support centre for the promotion of humanitarian treaties and national measures to implement humanitarian law in the CARICOM* countries. The office in Costa Rica maintains contact with different continental organizations such as the OAS and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

In Haiti, events during the campaign for legislative elections prompted threats of sanctions by the international community and the presidential elections took place in a climate of tension. The assignment of the UN International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti, MICAHA, whose role included strengthening the Haitian judiciary and supporting the Office for Civilian Protection, was due to come to an end in February 2001, upon the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General.

ICRC cooperation with regional organizations

In March, the regional delegation took part in the Third Meeting of Ministers of Justice of the Organization of American States. Items on the agenda which were of concern to the ICRC included humanitarian law and the International Criminal Court.

In August, the ICRC signed a cooperation agreement with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights with a view to improving the protection of vulnerable groups through the dissemination and application of the instruments of human rights and humanitarian law.

Advisory Service

The regional delegation in Guatemala appointed a specialized legal adviser in 2000 in order to strengthen its capacity and resources in legal matters, especially those relating to the implementation of humanitarian law throughout the continent. The Advisory Service also establishes and maintains working relations with inter-American bodies and international organizations active in the promotion of humanitarian law in the hemisphere.

Adherence to humanitarian treaties

The ICRC's efforts to promote adherence to humanitarian instruments yielded positive results in 2000. Belize ratified the Rome Statute, Costa Rica and Panama recognized the competence of the International Fact-Finding Commission, and the Dominican Republic ratified the Ottawa treaty in June. El Salvador and Panama became party to the 1980 UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols. Ratification of the 1954 Hague Convention on Cultural Property and its Protocols was the subject of a detailed discussion with the authorities in El Salvador.

Adapting national legislation to humanitarian law

A national law prohibiting the use of anti-personnel landmines was formally adopted in Nicaragua, and a similar law was approved by the Honduran government. In Costa Rica, the ICRC helped draft a text to the same effect, proposed by the President of the PARLATINO* Human Rights Commission and members of the National Congress. In Honduras and Nicaragua, the regional delegation contributed to the drafting of new penal codes providing for national implementation of the rules of humanitarian law. In El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, the ICRC advised government commissions on the drafting of laws regulating use of the red cross emblem.

The ICRC held a regional seminar in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on the International Criminal Court, which was attended by representatives of nine CARICOM States and members of the CARICOM secretariat, the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society and the media.

* CARICOM: Caribbean Community

* PARLATINO: Latin-American Parliament

Spreading awareness of humanitarian law

Dissemination activities for all branches of the armed and security forces in the region were given special emphasis in 2000. The size of the region covered by the delegation presented a major challenge to ICRC dissemination staff. The policy of reaching all sectors of society, at all levels, was reinforced by organizing seminars, workshops and presentations for members of governments, academics and representatives of the media.

In Guatemala, presentations on human rights and humanitarian law were given for 83 police officers, and courses on the law of armed conflict were drawn up for navy personnel. Training courses on humanitarian law were held for 808 members of the armed forces in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Police instructors from the CARICOM region attended a second training course on humanitarian law.

In Honduras the armed forces took over the running of their training courses on humanitarian law. The ICRC oversaw the adoption of a long-term national training programme on the law of armed conflict for instructors of the armed forces. In 2000, 63 instructors were trained.

In conjunction with the armed forces in El Salvador, the ICRC conducted the first international war game on the application of the law of armed conflict for high-ranking military personnel from Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

In Haiti, in cooperation with the National Society and the Department of Instruction of the police force, the ICRC launched a dissemination programme for police officers on the mandates of the ICRC and the International Federation, and on matters relating to humanitarian law and human rights.

In Guatemala, training in humanitarian law for staff of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights finally got under way. Training courses for NGO personnel continued and several NGOs incorporated humanitarian law into their own training programmes.

The regional delegation's magazine *Región*, which describes ICRC activities and covers events of concern to the organization, enjoyed wide readership in 2000 and regularly published articles contributed by members of the armed forces and National Societies.

Protection activities

In Haiti, the ICRC continued to visit detainees and monitor conditions in places of detention, and stepped up nutritional assistance in several prisons. The ICRC provided the prison health services with material and technical assistance and took part in information sessions for medical staff.

In Nicaragua, a deterioration in the security situation in the north of the country due to violence perpetrated by residual guerrilla groups forced many families to abandon their homes in April. Humanitarian protection and assistance were immediately provided by the ICRC and the National Society and a programme was set up for longer-term aid.

In Panama, the ICRC continued to provide assistance for Colombian refugees and internally displaced persons in Darién and San Blas provinces, and for three communities where government services were no longer available owing to the prevailing unrest in the country.

Anti-personnel landmines

In Nicaragua and the northern border area of Costa Rica there are still a large number of unexploded landmines. Red Cross ambulances and first-aiders accompanied army demining teams in both countries and the ICRC continued to provide National Society medical personnel with support. Also, in Nicaragua, thanks to a network of 150 children and 206 teachers trained by the ICRC and UNICEF* in 1998 and 1999, a total of 4,256 children took part in mine-awareness sessions between January and June 2000.

Delegates made contact with mayors of various communities and associations for the disabled in Nicaragua in order to coordinate aid programmes for the disabled, in particular mine victims, and assess their requirements. Following discussions with the Ministry of Health, a project was re-launched in February by the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled at the prosthetic/orthotic centre in Managua. Its objectives included carrying out repairs on the centre's infrastructure and providing technical and organizational advice.

* UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

Western and
Central Europe
and the Balkans

ICRC delegations:

Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina,
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

ICRC regional delegations:

Algeria, Budapest, Paris
Spain, United Kingdom, United States
of America, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile,
Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador,
Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama,
Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- monitored the conditions of detention of 4,178 detainees in Haiti, and followed up on the cases of 16 security detainees;
- carried out 2 visits to 4 detainees in Panama;
- visited 16 detainees in Grenada;
- supplied 3 hospitalized detainees from Haiti's National Penitentiary with food rations;
- provided 19 prisons in Haiti with technical assistance, medical supplies, food aid and leisure and educational items;
- donated crutches or wheelchairs to 9 disabled detainees in detention centres in Haiti;
- supplied equipment to the prison health service in Haiti for the creation of a mobile dental clinic which will serve 50% of the prison population;
- also in Haiti, carried out repairs on buildings and improvements to sanitation systems in Hinche, Port-de-Paix and Jérémie prisons, and renovated the kitchen facilities in the National Penitentiary;



- in Panama, in cooperation with the National Society, provided food and non-food assistance and medical care, and set up agricultural programmes, for 1,200 beneficiaries including refugees, displaced persons from Colombia and residents of isolated communities in Darién province;
- in Nicaragua, provided food and non-food items, which were financed by the ICRC and distributed by the Nicaraguan Red Cross, for 400 families displaced by the violence in April;



- with the participation of the International Federation, organized seminars and workshops for senior staff of National Red Cross Societies in the region with the aim of strengthening cooperation;
- ran training courses for dissemination officers from all National Societies in the region;
- supported the Red Cross Society of Panama in setting up a branch in Darién province;



- gave support to enable instructors from the armed forces of Belize and Trinidad and Tobago to attend the training course at the San Remo Institute of Humanitarian Law;
- in Costa Rica, organized a conference on the Rome Statute, in cooperation with the Ombudsman's office and the Regional Diplomatic Institute, for 35 government officials;
- in Cuba, helped the Centre for the Study of International Humanitarian Law conduct courses for military personnel and officials of the Ministry of the Interior;
- together with El Salvador's Inter-ministerial Committee on the Implementation of Humanitarian Law, organized dissemination sessions and training conferences on the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property for 26 participants;
- in Guatemala, organized a seminar on humanitarian law for 15 members of various commissions of PARLACEN (Central American Parliament).