

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Disabled himself, Nafith works at the ICRC physical rehabilitation center in Erbil

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IRAQ: GIVING DISABLED PEOPLE A CHANCE TO RESUME A NORMAL LIFE

Physical and psychological suffering is not the only trauma people living with disabilities have to endure. They often also face economic difficulty. The ICRC provides them with limb-fitting and physical rehabilitation services, and supports those willing to set up small businesses.

Nafith will get married soon. Nothing very unusual for a 32-year-old man living in Erbil, in the North of Iraq, but until recently it was not something Nafith thought would ever happen. Seriously disabled after being injured by a cluster bomb in 2003, Nafith relied mainly on government aid to survive. What he received was not enough for him to consider starting a family. In 2010, however, he began a job as a bench worker at the ICRC's physical rehabilitation centre in Erbil. "My life changed completely," he said. "I now have a salary, which enables me to live like everyone else."

Years of conflict and other violence have left an estimated 150,000 people disabled in Iraq. Some were injured in combat, but most are civilians injured by landmines, unexploded ordnance, and other remnants of war. Nafith lost his lower limbs while picnicking with friends.

Nasrin, a 30-year-old woman, was injured at the age of 10. "I kept asking myself: what have I done, what was my crime? I was only an innocent child," she said. Like Nafith, she had to leave school, and is therefore illiterate.

She spends most of her time at home, helping her mother with housework. Even though she still longs to get married and live a "normal" life, Nasrin feels better now that she has been fitted with an artificial limb by the ICRC. "Before, I was limping. Now, nobody realizes I am disabled," she explained. Often, artificial limbs bring people the satisfaction of not looking different.

The ICRC has been providing physical rehabilitation services in Iraq since 1993. It runs its own physical rehabilitation centre (PRC) in Erbil. In addition, through training and equipment donations, it supports the only Iraqi school for prosthetics and orthotics, a workshop that manufactures crutches, 9 PRCs run by the Iraqi Ministry of Health, and one by the Ministry of Defence.

The ICRC also provides grants for disabled people heading households to enable them to start small businesses in fields such as agriculture, crafts and trades. The aim is not only to help them care for their families, but also to help restore their dignity by making them feel useful and needed again.

Between June and August, the ICRC assisted 3,313 amputees and 3,253 non-amputees. Since 1993, the ICRC has provided physical rehabilitation services for some 35,000 people in Iraq. Among the 11 physical rehabilitation centers supported by the ICRC, the one in Nasiriya has just been completed by the ICRC and will receive its first patients in the coming weeks.



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ASSISTING HEALTH-CARE FACILITIES

Health-care services in some rural and conflict-prone areas struggle to meet the needs of the civilian population. The ICRC provides on-site support for selected primary health-care centres, helping renovate premises and train staff.

Between June and August, the ICRC:

- gave two courses on strengthening emergency services in Sulaimaniya attended by 17 doctors and 53 nurses (in all, 801 health-care staff have been trained so far);
- provided on-site support for eight primary health-care centres in the governorates of Ninawa, Kirkuk, Diyala, Babel, and Shanifiya, serving approximately 260,000 people.

For the past 12 years, ICRC has also been providing patients at Al-Rashad psychiatric hospital in Baghdad with occupational therapy support and supplies.

VISITING DETAINEES

Between June and August, ICRC delegates visited detainees held by the Iraqi authorities and various branches of the Kurdish regional government in 48 places of detention in 13 governorates. They monitored the conditions in which detainees were being held and the treatment they received, and shared confidentially their observations and recommendations with the detaining authorities. In some places, the ICRC provided detainees with hygiene and recreational items, such as books and games. Detainees in Baghdad, Najaf, Hilla and Diwaniyah were given dates and baklavas on the occasion of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr.

The ICRC helps restore and maintain ties between people held in detention facilities and their families. Between June and August, some 400 Red Cross messages were exchanged between them, in Iraq and abroad. The ICRC responded to approximately 1,000 enquiries from families seeking information on detained or missing relatives. The voluntary repatriation of five released detainees took place under the auspices of the ICRC.

BRINGING AID TO PEOPLE FACING HARDSHIP



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Basra - With ICRC's help, Intithar started a small business to support her family after her husband was killed.

Many people in Iraq are still struggling to earn a living and support their families. Between June and August, the ICRC:

- organized a cash-for-work scheme involving upgrades to 18 kilometres of irrigation canals and 21 hectares of agricultural land, benefiting 4,100 displaced people and residents of Diyala and Dohuk governorates;
- vaccinated 37,600 animals belonging to 680 farmers in Makhmour district, Ninawa governorate;
- distributed 152 tonnes of fertilizer to 352 needy farmers in Baghdad, Anbar and Salah Al-Din;
- awarded 258 grants to disabled people and women heading households in Ninawa, Kirkuk, Sulaimaniya, Erbil, Baghdad and Basra, enabling them to start small businesses and regain economic self-sufficiency;
- distributed food and hygiene parcels to over 1,800 people displaced by the latest shelling in the Northern border areas;
- distributed food and hygiene items to 6,500 orphans, women heading households and displaced people in Diyala, Anbar, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk, and Ninawa, on the occasion of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr.

PROVIDING CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Kirkuk - An irrigation canal is rehabilitated in Daquq, with the support of the ICRC.

Access to clean water remains a challenge in much of Iraq. ICRC engineers repair and upgrade water, electrical and sanitary facilities, especially in places where violence remains a concern and in rural areas, to improve the quality of services provided in communities and health-care facilities.

Between June and August, the ICRC regularly delivered water by truck in al-Sadr City, Baghdad governorate, for nearly 5,000 displaced people. In cooperation and with the support of the relevant authorities, it also completed six major projects benefiting over three million people throughout the country. The ICRC:

- upgraded 10 water facilities in Baghdad governorate serving nearly two and a half million people;
- upgraded Mohammed al-Sakran boosting station, Al-Husseiniya sub-district, Baghdad governorate, serving about half a million people;
- supplied and installed a water desalination unit in Adhaim sub-district, Diyala governorate, serving about 20,000 people;
- installed a compact water purification unit in Um Snaim,

Zubaidiyah district, Wasit governorate, serving about 15,000 people;

- upgraded water supply systems in Bazawaya and Snuni, Ninawa governorate, serving about 15,000 people each;
- increased the capacity of and improved the quality delivered by a water unit in Hay al-Askery, al Alam sub-district, Salah al-Din governorate, serving about 13,000 people;
- replaced and extended water networks in Al Ni'aasa and Al Fahham, Shat al-Arab district, Basra governorate, serving almost 4,000 people;
- increased the supply of water in the Rabeea settlement for the displaced, Ninawa governorate, serving 2,500 people.
- renovated and carried out maintenance work on six primary health-care centres, serving a total of more than 900 patients a day;
- renovated the autopsy theatre of the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad;
- renovated the health-care clinic in Rusafa prison, Baghdad;
- upgraded sanitation units and the sewage system in Hilla prison, Babil governorate.

CLEARING UNEXPLODED MUNITIONS

Iraq is littered with more than 25 million mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war, in particular along the borders with Iran and Turkey. As a result, the safety and livelihood of more than 1.6 million Iraqis are at risk. Over the last 12 months, the ICRC has removed over 1,800 pieces of unexploded ordnance in 27 communities inhabited by more than 10,000 people.

Between June and August, ICRC mine clearance specialists performed three assessments in Al Wafeeden camp in Kut, Wasit governorate, where 1,000 displaced people live. More than 2,500 pieces of unexploded ordnance were found.



Amara - A weapon contamination specialist inspects an unexploded ordnance.

CLARIFYING THE FATE OF MISSING PEOPLE

In June, two exploratory missions were conducted, under ICRC auspices to sites where missing persons are reportedly buried, one on Iraqi soil the other in Kuwait. The mission in Kuwait resulted in finding and exhuming human remains of 32 presumed Iraqi soldiers killed during the 1990-1991 war, handed over to the Iraqi authorities in July.

In July, a first joint exploratory mission involving Iraq and Iran took place, under ICRC auspices, in Al Fao Peninsula, with the

aim of locating human remains of soldiers killed during the Iran-Iraq war. The parties agreed to undertake joint excavation in the area later this year.

The ICRC continued supporting the strengthening of capacities of national institutions, enabling Iraqi specialists from Baghdad and Erbil to attend a 10-day course on forensic genetics in the UK, and providing specialized publications to the Medico-Legal Institute's Forensic Department and DNA laboratory in Baghdad.

PROMOTING COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Reminding parties to a conflict of their obligation to protect civilians is a fundamental part of the ICRC's work. The organization also endeavours to promote and strengthen knowledge of international humanitarian law by organizing presentations and training for military and police forces, prison staff, students and professors.

Between June and August, the ICRC held five information sessions for 245 members of the Iraqi army, the Assyrian and the Kurdish police. Together with the Center for Military Values, Principles and Leadership Development, it organized a workshop and a train-the-trainers on international humanitarian law.

MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and

strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



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THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) HAS BEEN WORKING IN IRAQ CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 1980 RESPONDING TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF ARMED CONFLICTS

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