

# ALGERIA



The ICRC has been working in Algeria, with some interruptions, since the 1954–62 Algerian war of independence. Aside from visiting people held in places of detention run by the Ministry of Justice and people remanded in police stations and gendarmeries, it supports the authorities in strengthening national legislation with regard to people deprived of their freedom and promotes IHL. The ICRC supports the Algerian Red Crescent in its reform process and works in partnership to restore links between separated family members.

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

### In 2013:

- ▶ during high-level meetings in Algeria and Switzerland, Algeria's Justice Minister and the ICRC's president discussed the country's long-term commitments on IHL implementation and the ICRC's work for detainees
- ▶ detainees held by the Justice Ministry or the police/gendarmerie, including for security reasons, were visited by the ICRC, which reported its findings on treatment and living conditions confidentially to the authorities
- ▶ families separated by armed conflict, detention, migration and other circumstances contacted their relatives through video/telephone calls and RCMs made available by the Algerian Red Crescent and the ICRC's family-links services
- ▶ people in need of urgent assistance in southern Algeria, particularly Malian refugees, met their needs solely through State services or the National Society, which had strengthened its emergency response capacity with ICRC help
- ▶ the authorities gave the ICRC their approval to open a joint office with the National Society in southern Algeria, paving the way for an enhanced Movement response to the needs of vulnerable people there

## YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

**MEDIUM**

PROTECTION	Total
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>	
Red Cross messages (RCMs)	
RCMs collected	3
RCMs distributed	33
Phone calls facilitated between family members	19
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	17
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	18,191
Detainees visited and monitored individually	411
Number of visits carried out	35
Number of places of detention visited	29
<b>Restoring family links</b>	
RCMs collected	35
RCMs distributed	14
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	210

## EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)

Protection	1,340
Assistance	-
Prevention	747
Cooperation with National Societies	299
General	-

**2,386**

*of which: Overheads 146*

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>103%</b>
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## PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	7
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	10

## CONTEXT

Southern Algeria experienced the spillover effects of renewed hostilities in northern Mali. Following the increase in incidents of violence, such as the attack on the In Amenas gas plant, the authorities deployed troops to secure the country's borders and to counter the alleged threat posed by armed groups to the national interest. In the north, east of Algiers, localized clashes between security forces and such groups reportedly resulted in casualties and arrests.

Life in Algeria went on against a backdrop of social unrest linked to high unemployment, rising living costs and desire for political reform. The closing of the border with Mali impeded travel to and from Algeria, paralyzing commerce in some communities and adding to unrest. Malian refugees remaining in southern Algeria met their needs through State services or the Algerian Red Crescent.

Irregular migrants and other vulnerable foreigners risked detention or deportation. The authorities had built 11 prisons in the last two years and facilitated the release of some 5,000 detainees, reducing overcrowding in prisons.

Algeria's president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, reshuffled his cabinet, which affected the Ministries of Defence, Justice and Foreign Affairs. Algeria became a member of the UN human rights council for a period of three years.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

In 2013, the delegation in Algeria focused on supporting the authorities in improving detainees' treatment and living conditions. People held by the authorities, including by the police/*gendarmerie*, received visits from ICRC delegates, conducted according to standard ICRC procedures. Delegates paid special attention to vulnerable detainees, including people held for security reasons, foreigners, women and minors. Afterwards, the ICRC discussed its findings confidentially with the detaining authorities, which helped the authorities take steps to address overcrowding and strengthen mechanisms for ensuring better treatment of detainees. In the same spirit, magistrates, prison staff and trainee guards built their understanding of international norms in detention and doctors tackled ethical issues concerning the provision of health care to detainees, with ICRC help.

Families separated by armed conflicts in Mali and elsewhere – or by detention, migration or other circumstances – restored/maintained contact through family-links services made available by the Algerian Red Crescent and the ICRC. Families in Algeria stayed in touch with relatives held at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba through RCMs and video/telephone calls. Algerian internees released after their repatriation contacted/rejoined their relatives with additional assistance. Through a network set up by local and international organizations, influential actors and the ICRC, some vulnerable migrants were able to make their needs known to pertinent individuals/organizations and thereby received assistance, including for contacting relatives.

Commemoration of important events common to Algerian history and the development of IHL and the Movement enabled the general public, including people of influence, to enhance their knowledge of IHL, the ICRC and the National Society. At the invitation of Algeria's president, the president of the ICRC attended

a conference celebrating the Algerian national hero, Emir Abdelkader, and his adherence to IHL principles prior to their codification. Following discussions that the ICRC president had with heads of ministries and other State officials during this conference and two other separate occasions at ICRC headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the authorities made long-term commitments in connection with IHL implementation and the ICRC's work for detainees. The Justice Ministry drew up a plan of action for IHL implementation that entailed, *inter alia*, drafting legislation on the protection of cultural property, providing support for the national IHL committee and training for State officials in IHL. However, some planned training events did not take place for administrative reasons.

The authorities, the National Society and the ICRC met regularly to discuss the humanitarian consequences of the Malian conflict and Movement coordination: for instance, they did so at the conference mentioned above. At year-end, the authorities gave their approval for the ICRC to open a joint office with the National Society in southern Algeria, thereby paving the way for an enhanced Movement response to the needs of vulnerable people there. In the meantime, the Algerian Red Crescent and other National Societies in the region equipped themselves to deal with emergencies, in particular by honing their volunteers' first-aid skills in workshops in Algeria. In Adrar and Tamanrasset, the two regions most affected by the spillover effects of the conflict in Mali, Algerian Red Crescent volunteers safely accessed remote or potentially volatile areas using ICRC-provided four-wheel-drive vehicles and Red Crescent outfits, and aided by their training in the Safer Access Framework.

## CIVILIANS

### Separated family members stay in touch through improved National Society family-links services

With the help of trained Algerian Red Crescent volunteers and other National Societies in the region, families separated by armed conflicts in Mali or elsewhere, detention, migration or other circumstances restored contact. Notably, four unaccompanied minors seeking asylum communicated with their relatives abroad, while 17 people received news of relatives separated from them. Families stayed in touch with relatives being held at the Guantanamo Bay internment facility through RCMs and telephone/video calls. Algerian internees released after their repatriation contacted/rejoined their relatives with additional assistance (see *People deprived of their freedom*). After his release, one former internee saw his aunt and uncle for the first time in 11 years, after they had traveled to Algeria with ICRC help. For the second consecutive year, another former internee was visited by his son living abroad. Though the National Society did not attend the regional workshop on restoring family links (see *Dakar*) as planned, volunteers at branch level developed their family-links capacities with financial and technical support from the ICRC.

People separated by migration or other circumstances, including those seeking asylum in Algeria, also received some assistance and help in contacting their family members through a network, established with ICRC help, that coordinated humanitarian aid from local/international organizations, religious leaders and other influential actors. Migrants and asylum seekers in urban areas made their specific needs known to these organizations/individuals and the ICRC at a workshop organized by UNHCR. The National Societies concerned and the ICRC also discussed organizing telephone/video calls for migrants and other vulnerable foreigners.

The ICRC remained ready to share its expertise in responding to the needs of the families of people unaccounted for from the internal strife of the 1990s.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

### Detaining authorities strengthen training for judicial and penitentiary officials

Nearly 18,200 detainees held by the authorities, including by the police/*gendarmerie*, in 29 places of detention, received visits from the ICRC, conducted in accordance with the organization's standard procedures. Security detainees held by the Justice Ministry and other vulnerable detainees – such as inmates in solitary confinement, foreigners, women and minors – were paid particular attention. During visits, detainees' access to health care and the physical/psychological effects associated with overcrowding and treatment were assessed by an ICRC detention doctor. Detainees in seven prisons were visited more frequently, enabling delegates to highlight issues unique to each prison and structural constraints common to all seven, and therefore to make detailed and specific recommendations to prison directors and the penitentiary authorities. Afterwards, the authorities received ICRC's confidential feedback, which helped them take steps to address overcrowding and improve detainees' living conditions. Regarding detainees' treatment, the Justice Ministry, the penitentiary authorities, magistrates, police/*gendarmerie* station commanders and the ICRC discussed strengthening the complaint and investigation procedures provided for in the Algerian penitentiary code. Dialogue with the pertinent authorities on the situation of security detainees under interrogation was limited.

Following high-level talks with the ICRC's president on the organization's work for detainees, (see *Authorities, armed forces and other bearers of weapons, civil society*) the authorities renewed their commitment to allowing the ICRC access to detainees and to training penitentiary staff, police and magistrates in international norms applicable to their duties. In December, 32 police/*gendarmerie* officers/trainers, magistrates and representatives of ministries concerned learnt more about international human rights law and its application to arrest/detention procedures at a seminar co-organized with the Justice Ministry. Owing to language constraints, penitentiary officials could not attend a course on international norms in detention abroad as planned. They were however provided with French translations of the course materials, which enabled them to strengthen their knowledge of the subject.

Around 30 prison officials and guards in each place of detention visited and another 270 trainee guards studying at two penitentiary training centres also learnt about the ICRC's detention activities in Algeria and abroad, through information sessions. The trainees' instructors and the centres' libraries received additional dissemination materials for use in further training.

The Algerian Medical Board, with ICRC support, continued to increase awareness among its constituents of ethical issues related to providing health care in places of detention. Two of the board's doctors participated in a conference abroad (see *Jordan*). The board's plans to organize a conference on the subject were cancelled for administrative reasons.

### Foreign detainees contact their families abroad

Detainees contacted their relatives during ICRC visits through National Society/ICRC family-links services. Foreign detainees, particularly vulnerable as they often lacked family support and

had no knowledge of local legal procedures, also contacted their relatives abroad; around 180 of these detainees had their situation notified to their consular representatives or the UNHCR, upon their request. The authorities, the National Society and the ICRC discussed setting up mechanisms for foreign detainees in some prisons to contact their families abroad via telephone calls. One foreign detainee was visited by his wife and daughters.

At their request and based on their needs, four Algerians repatriated from the Guantanamo Bay internment facility were followed up by ICRC delegates prior to their repatriation (see *Washington*), upon their transfer to Algeria and during their subsequent release. One former internee met his basic food and shelter needs with ICRC assistance while waiting for the arrival of a relative.

## AUTHORITIES, ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

### Conference on Algeria's national hero spurs broad interest in and appreciation of IHL

Algerians in general, including people of influence, learnt more about IHL and the Movement through widely publicized events in Algeria and Switzerland commemorating the role of the National Society/ICRC in Algerian history. The authorities, military officers, foreign diplomats, representatives of national/international organizations and people influential in academic and religious circles attended an international conference in Algeria, co-organized with the Emir Abdelkader Foundation and the Defence and Justice Ministries, that celebrated Emir Abdelkader, Algeria's national hero, and his adherence to IHL principles prior to their codification. The extensive media coverage of the conference (over 80 articles in major publications and use of conference materials in a televised documentary on the Algerian war of independence), and similar events that took place afterwards, allowed this information to reach people nationwide.

Following the ICRC president's dialogue with heads of ministries during the conference, and with both the former and current Justice Ministers during their visits to ICRC headquarters in Geneva, the authorities made long-term commitments on IHL implementation in the country, the ICRC's work for detainees and Movement cooperation in southern Algeria (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*). The Justice Ministry adopted an action plan that entailed: drafting new legislation, such as laws on the protection of cultural objects/property in armed conflict and on the Red Crescent emblem; providing support for the national IHL committee; and organizing a meeting for national IHL committees from countries in the League of Arab States in 2014. The Defence Ministry, with technical input from the ICRC, produced a report on Algeria's implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, as well as risk-awareness materials for children living near mine-contaminated areas, for publication in 2014. The Foreign Affairs Ministry expressed interest in supporting ICRC operations in Syria and elsewhere.

### Justice Ministry adopts plan of action for implementing IHL

In line with the Justice Ministry's action plan, police/*gendarmerie* officers and penitentiary/Justice Ministry officials learnt more about IHL and human rights issues of pertinence to them (see *People deprived of their freedom*). Civil and military magistrates participated in workshops and briefings and in an annual competition co-organized with the Algerian Magistrates' School. As a result, some 47 newly appointed magistrates and another

25 magistrates from various provinces had a better grasp of international norms in detention when they monitored detainees' treatment and living conditions. Moreover, four magistrates – including the winner of the school's IHL competition in 2012 and a member of the national IHL committee – and an official from the Foreign Affairs Ministry attended regional IHL courses (see *Lebanon*). The Algerian diplomat's school considered incorporating IHL in its curriculum.

Two senior military officers learnt more about incorporating IHL and human rights principles in operational practice at an annual workshop abroad (see *International law and cooperation*). Planned sessions for troops deployed in the Sahel region and trainee officers did not go ahead for administrative reasons and because the Cherchell Military Academy had already included IHL in its curriculum. However, a seminar on international human rights law, postponed since 2011, took place in December; it was attended by police/gendarmerie officers and ministry officials (see *People deprived of their freedom*).

## RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

### In southern Algeria, the Movement coordinates its response for people affected by the Malian conflict

The Algerian Red Crescent, through its Adrar and Tamanrasset branches, responded to the spillover effects of the Malian conflict in southern Algeria. In 2013, the National Society and the ICRC met regularly to discuss the humanitarian consequences of the Malian conflict and coordination of the Movement's response. At year's end, following several high-level meetings, the authorities gave their approval for the ICRC to open a joint office with the National Society in southern Algeria.

The National Society also helped enhance regional emergency response by co-organizing a first-aid workshop at which 26 first-aid coordinators from National Societies in the region honed their skills. Within Algeria, National Society branches in Adrar, Tamanrasset, near the Libyan border and east of Algiers, strengthened volunteers' abilities to administer and teach first aid through a train-the-trainer course and ICRC-supplied training materials.

Volunteers in the Adrar and Tamanrasset branches safely accessed remote or potentially volatile areas using ICRC-provided four-wheel-drive vehicles and Red Crescent outfits that identified them as neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian actors, and aided by their training in the Safer Access Framework.

As the National Society moved on under new leadership, it strengthened its statutes with technical input from the International Federation and the ICRC.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total		
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Red Cross messages (RCMs)			UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected		3	1	
RCMs distributed		33	1	
Phone calls facilitated between family members		19		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons			Women	Minors
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		52	21	16
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		17		
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		37	14	8
Documents				
Official documents relayed between family members across border/front lines		2		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
ICRC visits			Women	Minors
Detainees visited		18,191	261	87
Detainees visited and monitored individually		411	12	3
Detainees newly registered		353	11	3
Number of visits carried out		35		
Number of places of detention visited		29		
Restoring family links				
RCMs collected		35		
RCMs distributed		14		
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		210		
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		1		

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children