



ICRC

# Operational Update

## Iraq: ICRC activities in February and March 2009

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) HAS BEEN WORKING IN IRAQ ON A PERMANENT BASIS SINCE 1980, RESPONDING TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF ARMED CONFLICTS.

### Overview

*After a few months of relative calm, a new wave of bloody violence claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians in Iraq over the past two months, especially in March.*

*"Indiscriminate attacks continue to leave dozens of people killed or injured on a daily basis despite improvements in the security situation in many parts of Iraq," said Jakob Kellenberger, the ICRC's president, during a visit to the country from 15 to 20 March. The aim of Mr Kellenberger's visit last month was to gain a first-hand impression of the humanitarian situation and to meet with senior political and religious leaders.*

*Determining what happened to people missing as result of armed conflict remains one of the ICRC's priorities in Iraq. During his meetings, the ICRC president encouraged the authorities to press ahead with their efforts to clarify the fate of these missing people.*

*In March, the ICRC organized a course on forensic anthropology and archaeology for 80 staff of the Medico-Legal Institute and the Ministry of Human Rights. "The aim of this course is not only to update participants on technical and scientific tools," said Andres Patino, an ICRC forensics adviser. "It should also spur them on to serve the community and alleviate the suffering of many families that cannot have closure without knowing what happened to their loved ones."*

*At the end of March, the Technical Sub-Committee of the Tripartite Commission met in Kuwait to continue to investigate cases of persons still missing in connection with the 1990-91 Gulf War.*

### Reintegrating disabled people into society

"I am so happy that this motorbike is mine. Now, I can work and feed my family. I simply feel useful again," said Hassan Majid, a regular patient of the orthopaedic centre and of the 160 patients benefiting from a programme to help disabled people return to society and rejoin the workforce. The motorbike he received from the ICRC in February allowed him to go to the market and sell chicken.

In February and March, the ICRC monitored the progress of a pilot programme to help disabled persons launched in 2008. "Our aim is to enable these people to regain their financial independence and to be reintegrated into society," said Aslan Tukhuzhev, the ICRC delegate in charge

of the programme in Erbil. "A physical disability is not only a handicap in itself, but very often it also hampers a person's ability to earn a living and support his family."

The psychological impact of a sudden disability is usually devastating not only for the individual but also for his family. Some 65% of the patients are the main breadwinners in their families. While physical rehabilitation is the necessary first step towards a return to normality, reintegration into society and the working environment is equally important.

The ICRC helps disabled people get back on their feet economically by providing livestock (in 53% of the cases), supplies for small businesses such as barber shops (32%) or for crafts such as tailoring (14%), or seed and tools for agriculture (1%).



## Supporting physical rehabilitation centres

The ICRC has made its quarterly donation to eight physical rehabilitation centres and one crutch workshop run by the Ministry of Health. The donation included most of the items needed to produce quality prostheses, orthoses and crutches for around 3,000 physically disabled people from all over Iraq. The Prosthetic and Orthotic Department in Baghdad Technical Medical Institute, run by the Ministry of Higher Education, also receives regular support from the ICRC. Under the guidance of their teachers, the institution's 40 students manufacture orthopaedic devices to meet the needs of actual patients.

## Providing emergency assistance for explosion victims

In response to the numerous explosions that caused many civilian casualties in February and March, the ICRC delivered emergency assistance to hospitals to help them cope with the flow of mass casualties.

- 5 tonnes of medical disposables and drugs sufficient to treat 250 wounded persons were delivered to Al Musayab General Hospital and Al Hashimiya General Hospital in Babil governorate, Abu Ghraib General Hospital and Al Imam Ali General Hospital in Baghdad governorate, and Kalar General Hospital in Suleimaniya governorate.
- Dressings, sutures and infusion supplies were also delivered to Kalar General Hospital in Suleimaniya and to Jalawla General Hospital in Diyala governorate.

## Improving water supplies in governorates and health structures

The ICRC is continuing its efforts to improve water supplies and health care. The authorities have made significant efforts in these areas, but more work is required to ensure that basic needs are met. The scale of the needs exceeds the emergency aid the ICRC can provide.

During the past two months, the ICRC:

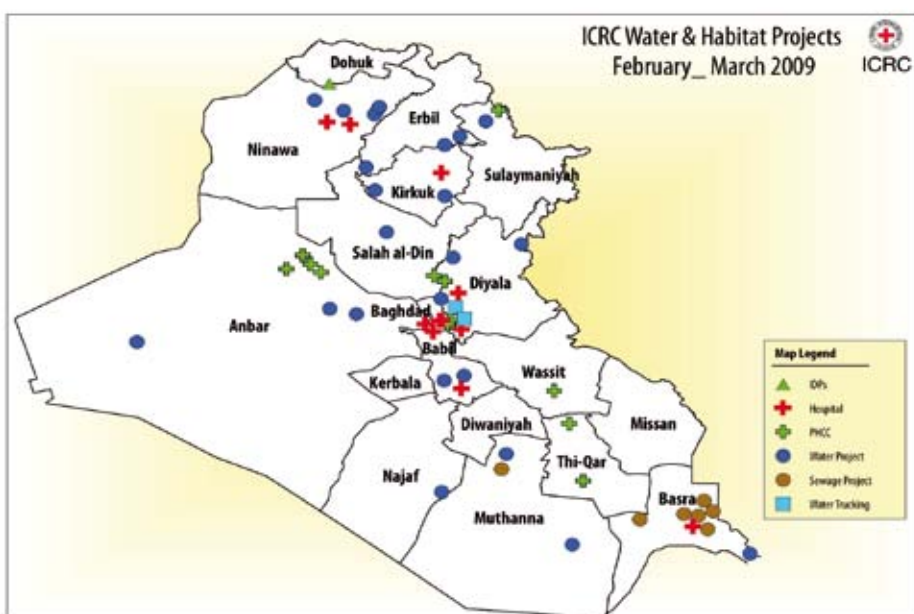
- carried out work to improve the water supply for 3,500 people in Aqra village, Dohuk governorate, in response to the drought;
- drilled a well 200 metres deep, supplied and installed a complete set

of submersible pump and built an operation room in Al-Mnizla village water station, serving 4,000 inhabitants in Kirkuk governorate;

- drilled a well, built an operation room, and supplied and installed a submersible pump and chlorinators in Azadi area water station, serving 2,000 inhabitants in Diyala governorate, and also connected the entire installation to a power line;
- supplied electrical spare parts to Najaf boosting station, Najaf governorate;
- supplied and installed three pumps serving 34,000 inhabitants in Al-Ma'allak boosting station, Muthana governorate;
- supplied new submersible pumps with control panel, to serve around 3,000 people, for installation by the Directorate of Water.

In hospitals and primary health-care centres, the ICRC:

- upgraded the water storage capacity, improved the sanitation system and electrical installations and built a new incinerator both in Al-Hatmiyah primary health-care centre (40 patients per day, 10,000 inhabitants) and in Yathrib primary health-care centre (300 patients per day, 80,000 inhabitants), in Balad district, Salahaddine governorate;
- supplied and installed five new walk-in mortuary refrigerators with a 60-corpse capacity and two generators in the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad;
- increased the water supply, upgraded the electrical systems, supplied basic furniture and carried out other improvements in Albu Hayat, Al-Haqlaniyah, Aloos and Al-Hasa primary health-care centres, which treat 270 patients per day, in Haditha district, Al Anbar governorate.



## Clarifying the fate of missing people

In Kuwait, at the end of March, the ICRC chaired the 59th meeting of the Technical Sub-Committee (TSC) of the Tripartite Commission (TC), investigating cases of persons still missing in connection with the 1990-91 Gulf War. The meeting was attended by the State of Kuwait, the Republic of Iraq and representatives from the Coalition (USA, UK, France, Saudi Arabia).



Out of a total of 1,431 missing-person cases treated within the Commission framework, 304 have been resolved, including 66 involving Iraqi nationals.

The ICRC urged the parties to the TSC and TC to enhance the search for substantive information on all unresolved cases, stressing the need to put an end to the anguish of families still awaiting information on what has happened to their loved ones.

## Visits to detainees

The ICRC regularly visits detainees to assess their treatment and conditions of detention. In February and March, ICRC delegates visited more than 10,300 detainees in nine detention places under the authority of the Iraqi government:

- Al Rusafa, Kademiya and Harithya in Baghdad, Maaqal and Al-Minaa in Basrah, and Fort Suse in Suleimaniya, under the authority of the Ministry of Justice;

- Basra Operational Command, under the authority of the Ministry of Defence;
- Al Shamali Police Station in Ramadi, under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior;
- Tobji Juvenile Correctional Centre, in Baghdad, under the authority of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

In early February, the ICRC carried out a visit to the US internment facility at Camp Bucca, in southern Iraq.

In the three governorates of northern Iraq, the ICRC visited more than 1,960 detainees in seven places of detention.

The ICRC continued to cover the travel fees of families visiting their detained relatives in Camp Bucca. In February and March, the families of more than 9,600 detainees benefited from this aid.

The ICRC, together with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, also distributed 28,000 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families within and outside Iraq.

In addition, the ICRC arranged for the repatriation of an Afghan national after he was released from custody by the Kurdish authorities.

## Spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law



The ICRC carried on its activities promoting compliance with international humanitarian law among armed and security forces in Iraq, which has been party to the Geneva Conventions since 1956. The aim is to remind all weapon bearers of their obligation to spare those not, or no longer, taking part in hostilities.

**ICRC 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.