

# IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF



ICRC / AR, 2011  
 ◆ ICRC mission + ICRC office

## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	1,594
Assistance	128
Prevention	2,014
Cooperation with National Societies	400
General	-

► **4,135**

of which: Overheads 252

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	59%
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## PERSONNEL

Expatriates	6
National staff (daily workers not included)	44

## KEY POINTS

### In 2011, the ICRC:

- chaired the second meeting of the tripartite committee tasked with clarifying the fate of those missing or presumed killed in the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war, facilitating a first joint mission to exhume more than 100 sets of human remains
- facilitated the repatriation of 128 sets of remains of soldiers killed during the armed conflict to Iraq and of 20 to the Islamic Republic of Iran
- strengthened forensic capacities in the Islamic Republic of Iran through training, the upgrading of equipment and the signature of an agreement with the Iranian Legal Medicine Organization on ante/post-mortem database management
- reinforced efforts to address weapon contamination by strengthening the role of the Iranian Mine Action Centre as the main coordinator of such activities and boosting the capacities of the National Society and other organizations in this field
- signed an agreement with the national IHL committee and the National Society to work more closely with the Centre for Comparative Studies on Islam and IHL, formerly the Qom Secretariat on IHL

The ICRC has been in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with some interruptions, since 1977. It seeks to clarify the fate of POWs registered during the Iran-Iraq war or identified through RCMs. It works in partnership with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the fields of tracing, physical rehabilitation, international relief efforts and IHL promotion, for which the national IHL committee is also an important partner. It is engaged in a dialogue about IHL and Islam. The ICRC supports mine-risk education. It also maintains a logistic supply base in support of its operations in the region.

## CONTEXT

Relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Western countries remained strained owing mainly to sharp disagreement over the country's nuclear programme and human rights record. Despite ongoing international sanctions, Tehran vowed to continue the development of its nuclear capacities, feared by Israel and Western governments to have a military dimension, and dismissed the appointment of a special rapporteur by the UN Human Rights Council to scrutinize the country's human rights record. In November, tensions boiled over when crowds stormed the British embassy compound in Tehran, leading to the severing of diplomatic ties between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

An explosion in November at a military base outside the capital left 17 people dead, including a commander of the Revolutionary Guard reported to be the architect of the country's missile programme. There was widespread speculation about the cause of the blast, with other military installations suffering similar incidents during the year.

Periodic disagreements between the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad resurfaced in April when the ayatollah refused to accept certain changes in the structure and composition of the cabinet. There were also different interpretations of the unrest sweeping the region, with the ayatollah describing it as an "Islamic awakening" and the president as a "people's awakening".

In June, around 5,000 Iranian troops were deployed on the border with Iraq to fight Kurdish militants.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to host one of the world's largest refugee/migrant populations, mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued to focus on addressing the humanitarian consequences of the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war, enhancing cooperation with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, promoting IHL and acceptance of neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action and restoring family links.

With the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary, there was significant progress in efforts to clarify the fate of thousands of combatants and civilians on both sides still unaccounted for in relation to

Main figures and indicators	PROTECTION	Total		
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>				
RCMs collected		27	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs distributed		52		
Phone calls facilitated between family members		4		
<b>Reunifications, transfers and repatriations</b>				
Human remains transferred/repatriated		128		
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons<sup>1</sup></b>				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		169	Women	Minors
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		46		
	<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	1		
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2011 (people)		236	58	94
<b>Documents</b>				
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		21		
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Restoring family links</b>				
RCMs collected		193		
RCMs distributed		133		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		1,278		

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. not including people missing as a consequence of the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war

the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war. Chaired by the ICRC, a second meeting of the tripartite committee tasked with clarifying the fate of those missing or presumed killed in the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war enabled hundreds of outstanding cases to be cleared up. It paved the way for a first joint probing mission in November, which resulted in the exhumation of sets of human remains of both nationalities. Earlier in the year, separate missions carried out under ICRC auspices had facilitated the exchange of some other sets of human remains between the two sides. In all, operations carried out under the auspices of the ICRC enabled the repatriation of 128 sets of remains of soldiers killed during the armed conflict to Iraq and of 20 to the Islamic Republic of Iran. To ensure further progress, the ICRC extended its support to Iranian forensic experts, providing training and upgrading essential equipment, while signing an agreement with the Iranian Legal Medicine Organization on ante/post-mortem database management.

The Iranian Red Crescent continued to develop its relationship with the ICRC, participating in relief efforts for conflict-affected civilians in Libya and sending a number of senior staff to Geneva, Switzerland, to enhance operational cooperation. A planned project to meet the needs of vulnerable migrants to be carried out with the ICRC was cancelled owing to the lack of a formal agreement with the authorities.

In the field of mine-risk education, the ICRC signed an important agreement with the Iranian Mine Action Centre (IRMAC) with the aim of supporting it in becoming the main coordinator of all activities relating to weapon contamination in the country. A workshop where all the main actors, including the National Society, were represented enabled participants to assess needs in eight provinces bordering Afghanistan and Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people learnt more about the risks of living in or transiting mine-infested areas through awareness campaigns conducted with ICRC support by the Iranian Red Crescent, the Welfare Organization or local NGOs.

Iranian families and refugees restored and/or maintained contact with their relatives detained/interned abroad through the ICRC's tracing and RCM services, managed jointly with the Iranian Red Crescent. Afghans detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran also used these services.

The Iranian authorities took part in sustained dialogue with the ICRC, during which they were reminded of their obligations under IHL when conducting operations against Kurdish militants in the north-west of the country. There were also ongoing negotiations about formalizing the ICRC's presence in the country. The national IHL committee worked with the ICRC to organize a number of IHL promotion events with different stakeholders, including religious and academic circles, aimed at building mutual understanding. The media demonstrated a heightened interest in the ICRC both as a neutral intermediary between the Islamic Republic of Iran and other States and with regard to its operational activities in other countries such as Afghanistan.

Logistic support for ICRC operations in the region continued as necessary through the ICRC base in Kermanshah.

## CIVILIANS

### Families receive information about the fate of persons unaccounted for from the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war

During the year, there was significant progress on the implementation of the joint memorandum of understanding signed by the Iranian and Iraqi governments in 2004 and 2008, which involved the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary. Under the terms of the agreement, two tripartite committees had been established, the first to cover cases of former and presumed POWs still unaccounted for and the second to discuss cases of persons missing or killed in combat.

In January, the ICRC chaired a second meeting of the latter tripartite committee, enabling hundreds of cases to be clarified and agreeing on a designated area for joint exhumation work to take place. After lengthy three-way technical discussions to agree on the proper procedures, the mission to Al Fao in southern Iraq went ahead under ICRC auspices in November, resulting in the exhumation of the remains of 103 soldiers (100 Iraqi and 3 Iranian). In December, the remains of the three Iranians were repatriated in a simultaneous operation that saw 90 sets of remains of Iraqi soldiers sent back to Iraq. At year-end, preparations were under way for a further round of exhumations to be carried out in the same area early in 2012. Prior to this joint mission, separate work by both sides had enabled the repatriation by the Iranian authorities in February of 38 sets of human remains while, in April,

17 sets of human remains exhumed in Iraq were transferred to the Islamic Republic of Iran (see *Iraq*). In all, operations carried out under the auspices of the ICRC enabled the repatriation of 128 sets of remains to Iraq and 20 to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Institutions involved in identifying human remains drew on ICRC support to improve their services. For example, the Iranian Legal Medicine Organization signed an agreement with the ICRC on ante/post-mortem database management and co-organized a forensic training course, with practical elements, for specialists from all over the country. Individual specialists further honed their skills at courses abroad. Furthermore, equipment used to manage DNA samples was upgraded thanks to ICRC funding. The Tehran-based Islamic Countries Organization for Forensic Medicine – an umbrella group for governmental and non-governmental forensic scientists working in Islamic countries – signed a cooperation agreement with the ICRC to strengthen worldwide cooperation on forensic issues.

During the year, the Janbazan Medical and Engineering Research Centre (JMERC) and the ICRC held various meetings to prepare the ground for an assessment of the needs of the families of missing persons. The ICRC proposed a questionnaire for that purpose which it had translated into Farsi.

With respect to POWs, a technical meeting was held in the framework of a joint mechanism agreed upon by the Iranian authorities and the ICRC in 2004. This resulted in the handover to the Iranian authorities for further investigation of updated lists of former Iraqi POWs released in the Islamic Republic of Iran who remained unaccounted for. In addition, the ICRC issued former Iraqi POWs still in the Islamic Republic of Iran with detention certificates qualifying them for State allowances.

### **Separated family members restore and maintain contact**

The authorities and individuals, including children, in the Islamic Republic of Iran sought the ICRC's assistance in tracing people with whom they had lost contact. Others, including refugees from Afghanistan or Iraq, restored or maintained links with relatives detained/interned abroad in Afghanistan, Iraq or the US internment facility at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba (see *Afghanistan, Iraq* and *Washington*) through tracing and RCM services managed jointly by the Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC. Afghan nationals detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran were able to contact their families in Afghanistan by the same means. During the year, discussions were held with the National Society and the Ministry of the Interior about holding an international conference to improve the coordination of the Movement's family-links services for migrants across the region. Meanwhile, the Iranian Red Crescent worked to strengthen its family-links services in this regard. During two presentations, participants in a disaster response team training event held by the National Society and the International Federation learnt more about the ICRC's perspective on and approach to restoring family links, as well as human remains management during mass-casualty disasters. Furthermore, the National Society attended a meeting bringing together all NGOs working with Afghan refugees in the country to enable them to share experiences and improve coordination. The Afghan embassy representative responsible for the issue of migrants also met with the ICRC and the National Society with the same aims.

Ten Iranian nationals were voluntarily repatriated from Camp Ashraf in Iraq in operations facilitated by the ICRC (see *Iraq*) and,

once home, received periodic follow-up visits organized through a local returnees' association, if they so wished.

### **Civilians made aware of mine risks**

In the framework of an agreement signed in April between IRMAC and the ICRC, efforts were stepped up to heighten civilians' awareness of the dangers posed by weapon contamination in Iranian provinces bordering Iraq and Afghanistan. A workshop attended by IRMAC and other key stakeholders, including the Ministry of the Interior, the Iranian Red Crescent and local NGOs, enabled participants to assess a wide array of needs, from demining to mine-risk education, in the five western provinces and the three bordering Afghanistan. Although mine-risk education was not integrated into the Iranian Red Crescent's first-aid training programme, the National Society appointed an experienced staff member to oversee all activities relating to weapon contamination.

During the year, through ICRC training and technical advice, capacities to inform civilians about weapon contamination were strengthened, while coordination between the different actors working in this field was enhanced. As a result, hundreds of thousands of civilians living in or transiting these provinces were safer after learning of the risks and the appropriate behaviour to adopt. More than 240,000 Afghans travelling back and forth across the border attended briefings given by National Society volunteers at checkpoints, while 166,000 farmers as well as students living in the western provinces of Ilam, Kermanshah, Khuzestan and Western Azerbaijan learnt of the dangers of mines and unexploded munitions in briefings given by the Welfare Organization with ICRC support. Furthermore, visitors coming to these areas to celebrate the Iranian New Year were alerted to the risks through 20,000 brochures distributed by the National Society and by 2,000 banners relaying safety messages along main roads. ICRC maps showing the worst-affected areas supported effective planning. In Kurdistan, some civilians were reached by a local NGO, which received ICRC support before having to bring its activities to an end. Work with JMERC to address the medical needs of landmine victims was on hold. Five animated films were produced with the aim of getting the message across to particularly vulnerable audiences.

Through these activities, IRMAC was able to cement its role as the main coordinator among the different stakeholders in the field of weapon contamination.

### **Migrants' needs go unmet**

A planned assistance project to meet the needs of the most vulnerable migrants living in the Islamic Republic of Iran was cancelled owing to the lack of an official agreement with the authorities. The proposed tripartite project between the ICRC, the Iranian Red Crescent and the Ministry of the Interior was based on a survey of needs carried out in 2010 and aimed to include measures to provide surgical services, medical treatment, physical rehabilitation services, health education and training. The ICRC stood ready to support the National Society in meeting migrants' needs, although any future activities would have to be based on an updated assessment.

### **AUTHORITIES**

Government representatives met with the ICRC throughout the year to discuss matters of common concern. In October, officials were reminded of their obligations under IHL while conducting operations against Kurdish militants on the border with Iraq. Based on its right of initiative, the ICRC offered to visit people detained in connection with the clashes. During such meetings,

including when the minister of foreign affairs was received by the ICRC president in Geneva, discussions were pursued on formalizing the ICRC's presence in the country.

The national IHL committee worked on IHL implementation and on drafting related guidelines for submission to the authorities. To support this process, the head and deputy of the committee attended the third South Asian Regional IHL Conference held in Male, Maldives (see *New Delhi*). The committee was also instrumental in raising awareness of the country's obligations as party to the Hague Convention on Cultural Property at an academic conference.

In December, the national IHL committee, the Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC signed an agreement to work more closely with the Qom Secretariat on IHL, which changed its name to the Centre for Comparative Studies on Islam and IHL. The centre continued to work with the ICRC, organizing round-tables and seminars and publishing books, journals and articles. It also began collating opinions from various religious authorities on IHL-related questions to illustrate IHL's compatibility with Islam and sent a representative to a regional IHL event in Beirut (see *Lebanon*). The ninth edition of the *Qom Magazine on Islam and IHL* was published, including a selection of articles in English for the first time. Meanwhile, religious scholars from Qom and Tehran presented the common characteristics between Islamic law and IHL during two international conferences held, with ICRC support, by the Non-Aligned Movement's Center for Human Rights and Cultural Diversity, based in the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, the centre drafted statutes that included IHL references.

At year-end, the Iranian Medical Council and the ICRC discussed the goals of the Health Care in Danger project, with the council pledging its support.

### ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The ICRC continued to have limited contact with the Iranian armed forces. However, dialogue was maintained with the officer responsible for issues related to the exhumation and recovery of soldiers' remains from the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war (see *Civilians*). Although a round-table on IHL for members of the armed forces was not held, the national IHL committee discussed plans to produce teaching materials for the military.

### CIVIL SOCIETY

The media reported on the ICRC's regional activities drawing on Farsi material available through the institutional website and interviewing key staff. Senior television journalists learnt more about IHL at an ICRC-organized workshop, while another journalist visited Afghanistan to report on ICRC activities there. A documentary based on a book about ICRC visits to former Iranian POWs was broadcast on national television.

Academic institutions and think-tanks prepared research papers and published journals on IHL-related matters. Tehran University published a reference book summarizing the results of joint research with the ICRC. Students participated in IHL events and competitions in their own country and abroad, with the Iranian team winning the regional moot court competition in Nepal. A conference on the protection of cultural and historical property under IHL was organized by Bu-Ali Sina University, the national IHL committee, the Iranian Association of UN Studies, the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO and the ICRC. Some 500 students, lecturers and experts took part, including four participants from Afghanistan.

An official from the Ministry of Education was appointed to pursue discussions on incorporating the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme into school curricula, although little tangible progress was made. Two groups of students nevertheless successfully participated in a trial of the programme conducted with National Society volunteers and the national IHL committee.

### RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC continued to develop their operational partnership in the fields of restoring family links and mine-risk education (see *Civilians*). The National Society also participated in international relief efforts for Libya, while strengthening operational capacities by sending 15 senior managers to Geneva to learn more about Movement priorities and to discuss issues of mutual concern. One staff member attended a course in Geneva on human remains management, so reinforcing the National Society's ability to cope with emergencies. Provincial staff benefited from workshops on IHL and the Movement. The Youth Organization's plans to hold a youth camp, however, were cancelled.

The National Society organized another round of training for technicians working in a physical rehabilitation centre in Tajikistan. With the ICRC and the Iranian Orthopaedic Association, it also hosted a physical rehabilitation course in Tehran. A planned orthopaedic seminar organized with ICRC/National Society support was to take place in Ethiopia in 2012.