

KUWAIT (regional)

COVERING: member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates



ICRC regional delegation

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	925
Assistance	-
Prevention	708
Cooperation with National Societies	497
General	204

► **2,335**

of which: Overheads 142

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	75%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	4
National staff (daily workers not included)	19

KEY POINTS

In 2011, the ICRC:

- responded to the unrest in Bahrain by supporting the National Society, calling for unrestricted access to medical care and signing an agreement to resume visits to detainees, including to those held in relation to the disturbances
- broadened access to security detainees held by the Kuwaiti authorities
- contributed to progress in clarifying the fate of persons missing from the 1990–91 Gulf War, including by facilitating a joint probing mission to northern Kuwait and the transfer to Iraq of the remains of 32 Iraqi military personnel
- co-organized with the Qatar Red Crescent Society and the University of Calgary, Canada, the first Health Emergencies in Large Populations seminar to be held in the Middle East
- strengthened its relationship with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation during a three-day high-level meeting in Saudi Arabia
- welcomed Oman's accession to the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention on Cultural Property and Saudi Arabia's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The ICRC has been in Kuwait since the 1990–91 Gulf War. It focuses on humanitarian needs remaining from that war or arising from current armed conflicts and situations of violence in the greater region. Its work also includes activities for people deprived of their freedom in the countries covered and the promotion of IHL and its own role as a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organization, among governments and other circles. Strengthening partnerships with the Red Crescent Societies of the region is another priority, along with resource mobilization and coordination with other humanitarian actors.

CONTEXT

With the exception of Bahrain, the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) remained relatively stable in the face of the social and political unrest sweeping the region. The intervention of troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) under the terms of a regional common defence pact eventually put an end to protests and violence that left several people dead in Bahrain's capital, Manamah, at the beginning of the year. In November, an independent commission into the protests set up by the government of Bahrain reported severe shortcomings in its response, including allegations of ill-treatment and abuses. Elsewhere, notably in Oman and Saudi Arabia itself, governments managed to head off major disturbances through a combination of strict security measures, promises of political and social reform, and increased social benefits.

Meanwhile, Qatar and the UAE joined the international coalition to apply UN Security Council resolution 1973 regarding Libya. GCC States also remained concerned about other threats to regional stability, including ongoing violence in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and international tensions caused by the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear programme.

There were significant internal political developments in some GCC States. In Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Sultan died in October and was replaced as heir to the throne by Prince Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, interior minister and a half-brother of King Abdullah. This occurred in the middle of a challenging reform process. In Kuwait, there were strong disagreements between the government and parliament, leading to the resignation of the former and the dissolution of the latter. Elections were due to take place early in 2012.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The unrest in Bahrain at the beginning of 2011 was a major concern for the ICRC. It supported the National Society in administering first aid to those injured in street clashes, called for all people to have safe and unimpeded access to medical care and reminded the authorities of their obligation to use appropriate force during law enforcement operations. In light of the disturbances, it renewed its offer to resume visits to detainees and, following lengthy discussions, an agreement in this regard was signed in December, with initial visits planned for early 2012.

A longstanding priority for the ICRC in the region was helping deal with unresolved humanitarian issues from the 1990–91 Gulf War

Main figures and indicators	PROTECTION	Total		
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Red Cross messages (RCMs)				
RCMs collected		360	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs distributed		360		
Phone calls facilitated between family members		158		
Reunifications, transfers and repatriations				
Human remains transferred/repatriated		32		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons¹				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		16	Women	Minors
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		8		
	<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	6		
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2011 (people)		82	5	3
Documents				
People to whom travel documents were issued		1		
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		4		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)²				
ICRC visits				
Detainees visited		88	Women	Minors
Detainees visited and monitored individually		74		
Detainees newly registered		44		
Number of visits carried out		6		
Number of places of detention visited		3		
Restoring family links				
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		7		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		4,924		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. not including people missing as a consequence of the 1990–91 Gulf War

2. Kuwait, Qatar

and others arising from the regional consequences of armed conflict in Iraq. This work continued to take place within the framework of the Tripartite Commission set up in 2001 by the parties concerned, namely Iraq, Kuwait and the coalition States (France, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America). Building on progress made in 2010, a second joint operation in northern Kuwait took place early in 2011 leading to the exhumation of the remains of 32 Iraqi soldiers and their repatriation to Iraq with the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary. In addition, a high-level consultation meeting was held in Baghdad for the first time in May, paving the way for joint exploratory missions on Iraqi territory.

Delegates continued to visit people deprived of their freedom in Kuwait and Qatar to assess their treatment and living conditions, sharing their findings and recommendations confidentially with the authorities. In Kuwait, increased numbers of security detainees were registered after the ICRC was granted access to them. For the third consecutive year, those detained in Kuwait since the 1990–91 Gulf War were able, with ICRC assistance, to receive visits from their relatives coming from Iraq. Red Crescent Societies in the region and the ICRC also enabled families in GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, to communicate with relatives detained/interned abroad through RCMs and video calls.

The region's National Societies and the ICRC reinforced their cooperation to boost Movement capacities. All Movement components worked to improve coordination of regional and international operations, while the ICRC supported training courses on disaster management and, for the first time, Health Emergencies in Large Populations (H.E.L.P.), held in the UAE and Qatar respectively, and on restoring family links, held in Saudi Arabia.

The ICRC continued to promote the incorporation of IHL into national legislation, university education and the training

programmes of armed forces in GCC countries, including by running training events and offering expertise. Ties were also strengthened with the Jeddah-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), formerly the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and its Parliamentary Union with the aim of promoting IHL to wider audiences.

CIVILIANS

Violence-affected civilians in Bahrain obtain assistance through the National Society

As anti-government protests degenerated into violence on the streets of Manamah, injured civilians received first-aid treatment from the Bahrain Red Crescent Society using materials donated in part by the ICRC. During the crisis, high-level talks took place between the ICRC and the authorities, which were reminded of their obligations to ensure appropriate use of force in line with international standards and to respect the right of the wounded to unimpeded access to medical care. In light of the disturbances, the ICRC also renewed its offer to resume visits to detainees (see *People deprived of their freedom*).

Separated family members restore and maintain contact

Families in GCC member States, including migrants, continued to use the family-links services run by National Societies in the region and the ICRC to restore or maintain contact with their detained/interned relatives visited by the ICRC in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon (see relevant chapters) and the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba (see *Washington*). Services offered included the collection and delivery of RCMs and the facilitation of telephone or video calls between inmates and their relatives. Discussions continued with the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society on pursuing efforts to facilitate visits by Saudi families to relatives detained in Iraq. Palestinians and migrants resident in a GCC State and needing to travel were provided with ICRC travel documents.

Families learn the fate of relatives unaccounted for from the 1990–91 Gulf War

Some families discovered the fate of missing relatives after modest progress was made in efforts to clarify the fate of civilians and military personnel still unaccounted for from the 1990–91 Gulf War. The process was facilitated by the ICRC-chaired Tripartite Commission composed of Kuwait, Iraq, and the former coalition allies (France, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America).

A significant step forward was made in May, when a high-level consultation meeting took place in Baghdad, paving the way for future joint probing missions inside Iraq. This led to two joint missions in southern Iraq, one in June and another in September/October, lasting a total of five weeks, although no evidence of human remains was found. In November, however, ministers and ambassadors came together in Geneva, Switzerland, for a meeting of the Tripartite Commission to look at ways to facilitate the location of mass graves in Iraq, thereby allowing for the possibility of more successful recovery missions in the future. The Tripartite Commission's Technical Sub-committee also met five times during the year to ensure momentum was maintained.

In northern Kuwait, following 2010's first joint operation by forensic experts along Highway 80, a second such operation, in early 2011, led to the exhumation in June of the remains of 32 Iraqi military personnel. Repatriation to Iraq took place in July under ICRC auspices, with eight sets of remains immediately identifiable thanks to identification papers/tags. Families living abroad with relatives unaccounted for in relation to the 1990–91 Gulf War had the opportunity to provide ante-mortem data to the ICRC for use in attempts to identify missing relatives among the dead. A further probing mission in Kuwait took place in November but had to be abandoned after concerns about the safety of the site.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

In Kuwait, security detainees, both Kuwaiti and foreign nationals, including a number of people seen for the first time and registered during the year, as well as Iraqi nationals, Palestinians and stateless persons held in the central prison or in the deportation centre, received visits from the ICRC, conducted according to its standard procedures. Delegates checked on inmates' treatment and living conditions, including respect for their judicial guarantees and for the principle of *non-refoulement* with regard to deportees. After the visits, the authorities received confidential reports on their findings and recommendations. Iraqi detainees held in Kuwait's central prison since the 1990–91 Gulf War received visits by relatives travelling from Iraq, organized for the third consecutive year by the ICRC and the Kuwaiti authorities.

Security detainees and other inmates in the central prison were consulted during an overall assessment of conditions by the ICRC, particularly of medical facilities and infrastructure, to help the

authorities improve living conditions. The central prison's hospital director discussed with the ICRC the possibility of holding a training seminar in 2012 for health staff on current trends and challenges related to health in detention.

The seven detainees still held in Qatar in relation to the failed coup attempt of 1996 received an annual visit from ICRC delegates. After the visit, the authorities received confidential reports with delegates' findings and recommendations. Efforts to obtain formal notification of the 2010 release and repatriation to Saudi Arabia of the remaining 21 people previously held in connection with the incident were inconclusive.

Following the unrest in Bahrain, the authorities engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the ICRC about the resumption of visits to detainees, including to those held in connection with the disturbances. An agreement in this regard was signed in December, with a first visit due to take place early in 2012. Following signature of the agreement and by year-end, 35 Ministry of Interior staff and prison personnel in several facilities had learnt about the ICRC's standard working procedures and what they could expect from its detention-related activities.

The ICRC continued to seek access to Saudi nationals held by the Saudi authorities after their transfer or release from detention/internment in Afghanistan, the Guantanamo Bay internment facility or Iraq, with the aim of assessing and responding to any needs. An initial meeting with officials from the Ministry of the Interior responsible for managing the facility holding them took place in this regard.

Former detainees, in particular Iraqi POWs previously held in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia who had been visited and registered by the ICRC in the past, or their families, were issued with certificates of detention on request. In many cases, this entitled recipients to receive State allowances.

AUTHORITIES

The national IHL committees in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE maintained regular contact with the ICRC to plan training events, share expertise and discuss national implementation of humanitarian instruments. Oman and Qatar took additional measures to establish their own IHL committees, while Bahrain was still considering this step. Oman acceded to the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention on Cultural Property and Saudi Arabia to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Bahrain established an interministerial committee on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. To encourage further progress, 10 officials from GCC countries were invited to a regional IHL course in Beirut (see *Lebanon*), where they exchanged experiences of and learnt more about IHL implementation. A further 14 GCC State officials strengthened their skills in teaching the subject to their peers during two regional

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	KUWAIT	QATAR
ICRC visits		
Detainees visited	81	7
Detainees visited and monitored individually	67	7
Detainees newly registered	44	
Number of visits carried out	5	1
Number of places of detention visited	2	1
Restoring family links		
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support	7	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	4,924	

courses, also in Beirut (see *Lebanon*). While the region's governments were encouraged to accede to additional weapon-related treaties, no seminar on such instruments took place.

Judges in Qatar increased their understanding of IHL at a seminar at the Qatar Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies, also attended by the justice minister and National Society officials.

The OIC and the ICRC cemented their relationship during a three-day meeting in Jeddah that provided an opportunity for OIC officials, representatives of member States, and the ICRC to learn more about each other's priorities, discuss the links between IHL and Islam and improve cooperation in areas such as training. Representatives of NGOs and academia also participated in some of the meetings, thus enhancing their knowledge of the two organizations. The Parliamentary Union of the OIC for the first time invited the ICRC to attend its meeting in Abu Dhabi, leading to exchanges on IHL implementation and related matters between parliamentarians from GCC and other States and the ICRC.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Military personnel continued to learn more about IHL and the ICRC through a range of events. At a course in Qatar jointly organized by the Ministry of Defence, the National Society and the ICRC, 25 officers learnt how to teach IHL to other officers and soldiers under their command. In addition, 10 Qatari officers attended an IHL training session organized jointly by the Qatar Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies, the National Society and the ICRC. In Kuwait, 90 officers of various nationalities at the Command and Staff College attended presentations on the role of the ICRC in situations of armed conflict.

However, discussions in the UAE with the national IHL committee and the armed forces on organizing a regional seminar on IHL for military representatives from GCC countries failed to bear fruit, while efforts to hold a first IHL seminar for the armed forces in Saudi Arabia were equally unsuccessful. Furthermore, there was no contact with the GCC Department of Military Affairs during the year, and the two officers from GCC countries invited to attend advanced training abroad did not take up the ICRC's offer.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The media reported on humanitarian issues on the basis of briefings and Arabic-language information supplied by the ICRC. IHL training strengthened journalists' understanding of the ICRC's mandate and activities, contributing to increased accuracy in media reports. Trips for journalists to ICRC operations in the field were postponed owing to their lack of availability because of the regional unrest. Journalists in Kuwait and from the Doha-based Al-Jazeera news channel benefited from separate presentations about the ICRC and the protection of journalists in armed conflict. The Al-Jazeera network and the ICRC signed an agreement to facilitate an exchange of expertise to improve the reporting of humanitarian crises through better knowledge of IHL.

Law students and lecturers across the region continued to learn more about IHL at ICRC presentations. In addition, more than 50 communication students at the Sultan Qaboos University in Oman attended a two-day IHL event – the first of its kind for students of that discipline in the country.

Participants in a regional conference held at the International Islamic Charitable Organization in Kuwait discussed the humanitarian situation in Somalia with ICRC representatives. Other regional events such as the Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development Conference also provided opportunities for the ICRC and civil society actors, including Islamic circles, charities and think-tanks, to better understand each other's roles.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Bahraini Red Crescent responded to the civil unrest in Manamah by administering first aid to the injured and helping public health authorities cope with the crisis (see *Civilians*). Other National Societies in the region continued to strengthen their emergency response capacities, with some 75 volunteers of the Red Crescent Society of the UAE attending a three-week training course on disaster management organized under the 2010 cooperation agreement. Furthermore, 16 participants from the National Societies of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, boosted their skills at a H.E.L.P. seminar organized by the Qatar Red Crescent Society, Canada's University of Calgary and the ICRC. This was the first time that such a seminar had been held in the Middle East. All training courses were backed up by Arabic-language documentation.

With ICRC support, National Societies continued to operate family-links services (see *Civilians*), with the Saudi Red Crescent benefiting from a workshop to boost its skills in this domain and bring activities in line with the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the Movement.

The National Societies continued to promote Movement activities and humanitarian principles. The Qatar Red Crescent Society, in particular, played an important part in reinforcing understanding of IHL and promoting its implementation (see above). Preparations were underway for a regional seminar to boost communication skills among National Society staff to take place in 2012.

During the 38th meeting of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization and the International Federation's 7th Middle East and North Africa Conference, held in Kuwait and Abu Dhabi respectively, Movement components, including GCC National Societies and the ICRC, discussed the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures and ways of improving coordination at regional and international level, for example in their efforts to bring aid to conflict-affected civilians in Libya.