

# TASHKENT (regional)

COVERING: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan



Opened in 1992, the regional delegation in Central Asia combines operational functions in Tajikistan with regional functions. With the Tajik Red Crescent Society, it works to protect and assist vulnerable populations affected by past conflicts and current violence. In Uzbekistan, it endeavours to protect and assist people detained for security reasons. It helps build the capacities of the region's National Societies, particularly in the fields of emergency preparedness and restoring family links. In all the countries covered, it promotes implementation of IHL and other norms relevant to the use of force, and fosters understanding of the ICRC's mandate and work.

## CONTEXT

Central Asia continued to be affected by the global economic downturn, particularly in terms of reduced remittances from migrants abroad. Despite the region's abundance of natural resources, unemployment and poverty remained widespread, exacerbated by rising food prices, particularly in Tajikistan. Kazakhstan continued to attract labour migrants from other Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan and China.

Tajikistan ratified a protocol on the demarcation of its common border with China, ending a territorial dispute between the two countries. In eastern Tajikistan, particularly in the Rasht Valley, the security situation, disrupted by violent incidents in the second half of 2010, stabilized in 2011. Security operations against armed groups in the region ended in July.

Both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan sought to forge closer links with the European Union. Turkmenistan presented its first-ever report to the UN Committee against Torture. Uzbekistan adopted a law reducing the presidential term of office from seven to five years. Tensions persisted between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan over railway transportation, energy and water-related issues.

Kazakhstan's president secured a third term in office after winning over 95% of the vote in elections held in April. The country had to deal with a series of violent attacks against security forces and armed clashes between suspected members of armed groups and law enforcement bodies. In western Kazakhstan, a six-month strike by oil workers degenerated into unrest in mid-December. Clashes between protesters and police forces reportedly left at least 17 people dead and over 100 injured, leading the authorities to declare a state of emergency in the affected region.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The Tashkent delegation focused on developing activities for people deprived of their freedom in the countries covered. In Uzbekistan, delegates continued to visit people detained under the authority of the Interior Ministry, including those in penal colonies and pre-trial facilities. They monitored detainees' treatment, health and living conditions, paying special attention to the needs of vulnerable individuals and to detainees' general need for family contact. The detaining authorities received confidential feedback on delegates' findings. In an encouraging move, Turkmenistan's authorities solicited ICRC advice on specific issues linked to penitentiary reform and showed delegates round a penitentiary medical facility, prompting the ICRC

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)	
Protection	2,605
Assistance	991
Prevention	2,235
Cooperation with National Societies	1,341
General	-

► **7,173**  
of which: Overheads 438

IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	92%

PERSONNEL	
Expatriates	21
National staff (daily workers not included)	77

## KEY POINTS

### In 2011, the ICRC:

- helped reinforce the emergency medical response in Tajikistan, training 50 surgeons in weapon-wound treatment and providing medical facilities in the Rasht Valley with equipment and infrastructure upgrades
- with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, provided emergency supplies to 22 households affected by armed violence and security operations in 2010 and early 2011
- pursued detention-related activities, visiting detainees in Uzbekistan, conducting a first tour of the premises of a penal medical facility in Turkmenistan, and resuming discussions with Tajikistan's authorities on access to detainees
- working with the respective Interior Ministries, held 2 joint seminars in Uzbekistan on rules governing law enforcement, attended by 50 police officers, and 2 similar events for 71 police officers in Tajikistan
- facilitated dialogue between Turkmenistan's Inter-Agency Commission on Human Rights and the Belarus IHL committee during a study trip to Belarus, resulting in the extension of the commission's mandate to IHL matters
- built its partnerships with the Red Crescent Societies of Central Asia, strengthening their legal bases and emergency preparedness, family-links and IHL programmes and, in Tajikistan, weapon contamination-related activities

Main figures and indicators	PROTECTION	Total		
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)<sup>1</sup></b>				
<b>ICRC visits</b>				
Detainees visited and monitored individually		986	118	11
Detainees newly registered		597	47	11
Number of visits carried out		38		
Number of places of detention visited		25		
<b>Restoring family links</b>				
RCMs collected		239		
RCMs distributed		209		
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC support		7		

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children 1. Uzbekistan

Main figures and indicators	ASSISTANCE	Total	Women	Children
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)<sup>2</sup></b>				
<b>Economic security, water and habitat</b>				
Food	Beneficiaries	110	55%	15%
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	60	55%	15%
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	4,053	35%	35%
<b>Health</b>				
Health centres supported	Structures	13		
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)<sup>1</sup></b>				
<b>Economic security, water and habitat</b>				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	66		
<b>WOUNDED AND SICK<sup>2</sup></b>				
<b>Hospitals</b>				
Hospitals supported	Structures	5		
Water and habitat activities	Number of beds	221		

1. Uzbekistan 2. Tajikistan

to confirm its readiness to foster further dialogue, including on the possibility of visits to detainees. In Tajikistan, discussions resumed regarding a possible agreement on such visits.

In partnership with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, the ICRC further consolidated its presence in the country, particularly in the tension-prone Rasht Valley, to enhance its ability to monitor the humanitarian situation and respond to current and potential humanitarian needs. Families left destitute as a result of the 2010 clashes thus received emergency aid to help them cope. The ICRC and the National Society jointly conducted mine-risk education and first-aid training for inhabitants of weapon-contaminated villages and engaged in dialogue with the authorities on the specific urgent need for mine-clearance so that local people could resume normal livelihood activities. To help reinforce hospitals' emergency preparedness, the ICRC trained surgeons from across Tajikistan in the treatment of weapon wounds and mass-casualty management, refurbished infrastructure and provided medical equipment and materials.

Representatives of the region's governments and the ICRC met regularly to discuss implementation of IHL treaties, respect for other norms applicable to situations of violence, and legislation to strengthen the National Societies and protect the Movement's emblems. To contribute to meeting the needs of the families of thousands of people unaccounted for in relation to past conflicts, Tajikistan's authorities and the ICRC worked towards assessing existing national legislation on missing persons. In Kazakhstan, an ICRC/National Society offer to assist in the medical response to mid-December's unrest was turned down by the authorities.

Kazakhstan's authorities and the ICRC signed an agreement on the establishment of an ICRC presence in the country and the development of humanitarian diplomacy and IHL-promotion activities. The agreement was awaiting ratification.

The ICRC pursued its dialogue with the respective Defence Ministries on ways to ensure the permanent integration of IHL norms into military decision-making processes. In Tajikistan, joint Ministry of Interior/ICRC working group recommendations were in the process of being implemented through a programme of dissemination events relating to the use of force for officers in Dushanbe and the Gharm region. In Uzbekistan, for the first time, two seminars were held for senior Interior Ministry officials on international standards applicable to law enforcement.

The ICRC continued to network with university students, lecturers and management and with journalists and fostered interest in IHL and humanitarian action by organizing events such as national and regional IHL competitions.

The region's National Societies and the ICRC worked to develop their operational partnerships, particularly in Tajikistan. In parallel, they strengthened coordination with the ICRC and the International Federation, drawing on their continued support to strengthen their legal bases and to develop their emergency preparedness, family-links and IHL-promotion activities.

## CIVILIANS

Weapon contamination in some parts of Tajikistan, especially in certain villages in the Rasht Valley, had an adverse impact on communities' livelihoods. Mines/explosive remnants of war (ERW) killed or injured a number of people and caused casualties among cattle and wildlife. Dialogue with the national authorities focused on priority areas for de-mining, while regular cooperation was pursued with the Mine Action Centre of Tajikistan. Three communities in the conflict-prone Rasht Valley benefited from mine/ERW-risk education and first-aid training organized jointly by the Tajik Red Crescent and the ICRC. Year-round, communities in the affected areas learnt about safe behaviour in information sessions run by the National Society, while children in Soghd

province were able to play safely in eight secure playgrounds renovated with ICRC technical input. To foster knowledge of IHL and the Movement's action and Fundamental Principles among young people, law and history teachers working in the Rasht Valley studied these topics at a joint National Society/ICRC seminar.

In addition, 22 families (110 people) facing destitution because their breadwinners had been killed or seriously wounded during the 2010 armed violence and security operations in early 2011 received emergency relief to cover their most urgent needs for two months. Assistance mainly took the form of food; 12 families (60 people) also received essential household items. In Shule village, the health centre serving some 2,000 people had safer water thanks to the renovation of its water abduction system.

To boost the Tajik Red Crescent's operational capacity and infrastructure, its warehouse in Gharm was extended to make room to stock emergency relief for 2,000 people.

### **Needs of missing persons' families to be addressed and legislation strengthened**

Thousands of families in Tajikistan were still living with the anguish of not knowing the fate of relatives unaccounted for from Tajikistan's 1992–97 non-international armed conflict, the 1979–89 Soviet-Afghan armed conflict and the Second World War. They lacked recognition of their status and, having lost their breadwinners, often found it hard to meet their basic needs.

Tajikistan's authorities had expressed interest in addressing this issue and acknowledged the need to amend certain aspects of national legislation to bring it in line with the spirit and provisions of the model law on missing persons, formulated with ICRC input and adopted by the Commonwealth of Independent States Interparliamentary Assembly in November 2008. At end-2011, the National Legislative Centre, under the authority of the Presidency, and the ICRC were finalizing an agreement providing for the centre to study the compatibility of national legislation with the provisions of that model law. An ICRC assessment of the needs of missing persons' families was postponed in view of operational priorities in the Rasht Valley.

Families in Tajikistan exchanged news with relatives detained in Afghanistan via video calls facilitated by the ICRC; 15 such calls were made in 2011 (see *Afghanistan*). Those living far away received financial assistance enabling them to travel to Dushanbe or Gharm to make the calls.

## **PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM**

### **Dialogue on living conditions and treatment of detainees in Uzbekistan**

In Uzbekistan, people detained under the authority of the Interior Ministry, including those in penal colonies and pre-trial facilities continued to receive visits from ICRC delegates. Delegates monitored detainees' treatment, health and living conditions, paying particular attention to vulnerable inmates, such as people held on security-related charges, women, minors and foreigners. They shared their findings and recommendations confidentially with the detaining authorities, both at individual prison and central penitentiary level.

During visits, detainees were able to restore/maintain contact with their families through RCMs; seven detainees, including women and minors, received family visits facilitated by the ICRC

through the provision of financial support for transportation and accommodation. With the consent of the authorities, 13 detainees of foreign origin notified their embassies of their detention via the ICRC.

Depending on needs, vulnerable detainees were provided with assistance. This included wheelchairs for four disabled detainees and two other wheelchairs provided to medical units of penitentiary institutions, and baby pushchairs, toys, books and disposable nappies for detained women accompanied by their children.

Dialogue on penitentiary health issues continued. One colony received medical equipment, including a blood monitoring machine. Networking with government organizations, NGOs and international organizations enabled ICRC doctors to contribute to the development of guidelines on TB/HIV co-infection.

### **Dialogue on ICRC visits to detainees in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan**

In Turkmenistan, an agreement authorizing ICRC visits according to the organization's standard procedures had yet to be reached; meanwhile the authorities requested ICRC advice on specific issues in line with ongoing penitentiary reform. The ICRC confirmed its readiness to engage further in a step-by-step process leading to the initiation of visits to detainees. As part of this process, in July the Ministry of Internal Affairs showed the ICRC round a penal medical institution for the first time.

In Tajikistan, discussions regarding an agreement on visits to detainees resumed in July, at the initiative of the authorities, and led to a round-table in August at which representatives of various ministries familiarized themselves with the objectives and standard procedures of ICRC visits. The Tajik Red Crescent continued to collect RCMs from Afghan detainees, which it handed over to the ICRC for distribution to the detainees' relatives in Afghanistan.

## **WOUNDED AND SICK**

The number of casualties resulting from the concluded security operations in eastern parts of Tajikistan was low compared to the toll during the upsurge in armed violence there in 2010. The authorities nonetheless acknowledged the need to boost emergency preparedness in the health sector.

To this end, 50 surgeons from across the country enhanced their skills in the treatment of weapon wounds and mass-casualty management at a three-day seminar in Dushanbe, organized with the Tajik Ministry of Health and conducted by two ICRC surgeons.

In addition to pre-positioned emergency surgical supplies at ICRC offices, 5 hospitals and 13 health centres in the Rasht Valley and Dushanbe and National Society branches in the Rasht Valley received dressing kits to treat up to 50 casualties each.

To further boost health-sector emergency preparedness, among the 5 hospitals, the Gharm hospital (221 beds) and four main district hospitals received specific medical equipment such as oxygen generators, a suction machine, a pulse oxymeter, and surgical instruments and materials. To ensure adequate sterilization of medical equipment, the autoclave room at the Gharm hospital was renovated and equipped with two new autoclaves. Two hospital nurses were trained in their proper use. The hospital's morgue was also fully refurbished.

## Tajikistan increases physical rehabilitation capacities

The physical rehabilitation centre in Dushanbe run by the Tajik Ministry of Labour and Social Protection continued to receive technical and management support from the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled. Technicians at the centre received four weeks' training in the care of polio patients using ICRC materials. However, the centre still lacked trained staff, resulting in long waiting periods for patients requiring treatment. To increase the availability of specialist care, in October three technicians from Tajikistan started a three-year course in Viet Nam.

## AUTHORITIES

Central Asian State authorities received National Society/ICRC advice on the integration of IHL into national legislation and on the ratification of further IHL treaties (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*). In addition, their discussions focused on drafting legislation on the legal status of National Societies and protection of the Movement's emblems.

In Turkmenistan, members of the Inter-Agency Commission on Human Rights discussed best practices of national IHL committees during two round-tables co-organized with the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights. They also saw the work of the Belarusian IHL committee first hand during a study trip to Belarus. As a result, the commission's mandate was extended to cover IHL matters. Within the framework of the dialogue on IHL integration, the authorities received an ICRC proposal to include IHL and human rights norms in the curriculum of the Academy of State Service.

In eastern Tajikistan, a reinforced set-up and field presence enabled the National Society and the ICRC to strengthen dialogue with the authorities and to brief local officials in Khujand, the Rasht Valley and the Gorno-Badakhshan province on the Movement's action, emblems and family-links services.

In Kazakhstan, the authorities and the ICRC signed an agreement on the establishment of an ICRC presence in the country, which had yet to enter into force. The Academy of Public Administration and the ICRC signed an agreement covering 2012–13, formalizing existing cooperation enabling civil servants to enhance their IHL knowledge through ICRC guest lectures.

Contacts with the international community and regional organizations in Central Asia regarding IHL and ICRC activities were maintained.

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The region's Defence Ministries and the ICRC discussed the integration of IHL into armed forces' decision-making, and throughout the region senior General Staff officers participated in seminars on this topic, as did field units in Tajikistan. Having been equipped with the necessary means and materials, regionwide the authorities were in a position to start assessing by themselves the state of IHL integration. Higher military educational establishments in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan upgraded IHL instruction for cadets thanks to up-to-date reference materials provided by the ICRC, while Kazakhstan sent a high-ranking representative to the Senior Workshop on International Rules Governing Military Operations, held in South Africa (see *International law and cooperation*). No predeployment briefings for troops participating in international operations were required.

As a result of two-year discussions, Uzbekistan's Interior Ministry and the ICRC conducted their first two joint seminars on international rules governing law enforcement, attended by 50 senior police officers. The seminars paved the way for similar activities in 2012.

In Tajikistan, 50 middle-ranking officers based in the Rasht Valley and 21 senior officers from police headquarters in Dushanbe reviewed international rules governing the use of force in two series of round-table discussions, initiated on the recommendation of the joint Interior Ministry/ICRC working group set up in 2010.

In addition, 503 Special Forces police officers received training in first aid, along with first-aid kits, and were briefed on the Movement by the Tajik Red Crescent/ICRC in the Rasht Valley, Soghd province, Khatlon province and Dushanbe.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Thanks to media coverage based on ICRC press releases, fact sheets and e-newsletters, opinion-makers and the general public kept abreast of IHL and humanitarian issues. In Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, journalists participated in contests on "Contemporary Challenges to Humanitarian Action", organized jointly with the National Societies and the International Federation to stimulate media interest in such issues. In Uzbekistan, future journalists learnt about IHL and humanitarian action worldwide through a series of lectures delivered by the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan and the ICRC at the National University's journalism faculty.

Fourteen teams representing ICRC partner universities from across Central Asia participated in the 10th regional student IHL competition in Almaty, Kazakhstan, further promoting IHL teaching and research. The Kazakh Red Crescent Society was instrumental in the integration of IHL into the curricula of 6 leading universities and 11 medical colleges in Kazakhstan.

An ICRC-sponsored event, culminating in a final report, marked the end of a cooperation programme with Uzbekistan's Ministry of Education to include IHL norms in secondary school curricula; educational bodies nonetheless continued receiving ICRC support in organizing two joint events.

## RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

National Societies continued to receive ICRC and International Federation assistance in developing their family-links services, disseminating IHL and knowledge of the Movement's and their respective roles, promoting proper emblem use, strengthening their legal bases and enhancing emergency preparedness. The emphasis gradually shifted from capacity building to forming operational partnerships with National Societies, notably in Tajikistan (see *Civilians, Wounded and sick, Authorities, Armed forces and other bearers of weapons* and *Civil society*). National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC met regularly on the basis of tripartite agreements strengthening Movement coordination. Their representatives attended the annual regional meeting hosted by the Tajik Red Crescent, a partnership meeting hosted by the Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan to mark its 85th anniversary, and the annual regional cooperation seminar.

All four National Societies ran family-links services, including for migrants. The Tajik Red Crescent handled RCM exchanges between detainees and their families. Preliminary results of a

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National Society assessment of family-links needs in Tajikistan confirmed strong demand for this service countrywide.

For the first time, representatives of all four Central Asian governments and National Societies participated in the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. At the conference, the authorities of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan pledged to take further steps to translate IHL into national legislation.

In Turkmenistan, the National Society formally became a member of the Inter-Agency Commission on Human Rights, a step the ICRC had lobbied for.

In Uzbekistan, senior National Society staff studied the Movement's components and Fundamental Principles during a series of seminars, while disaster management staff practised setting up emergency camps and water and sanitation facilities, including an ICRC-donated emergency water unit, during a training session.