

BRUSSELS

COVERING: Belgium; Institutions of the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, NATO, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and key armed forces in Western Europe

The ICRC has been working in Brussels since 1999, building strong institutional and operational relations with European Union institutions, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and NATO and its Parliamentary Assembly. It is expanding its sphere of activity to include key armed forces based in Western Europe. Its aim is to make the ICRC's mandate better known, to mobilize political, diplomatic and financial support for its activities and to ensure that relevant military decision-makers in Western Europe view the ICRC as the main reference point for neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.

CONTEXT

The European Union (EU) remained involved in crisis management and conflict resolution worldwide and was a major global provider of humanitarian aid.

The EU expressed particular concern about the uprisings in Arab countries and the armed conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Yemen. It continued to monitor other major armed conflicts or situations of violence and pursued efforts to help find a settlement to the 2008 conflict over South Ossetia, primarily by co-chairing the "Geneva Talks" with the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), 13 EU field missions were under way; after being agreed, an EU military mission to support humanitarian operations in Libya was not requested by OCHA, a pre-condition for its activation.

While Hungary and Poland held the EU presidency in 2011, EU States and institutions continued to implement the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, notably with the European External Action Service (EEAS), chaired by the high representative for foreign affairs, playing a pivotal role in the implementation of the EU foreign policy and the CSDP. The EU Council's Working Group on Public International Law continued to work on IHL-related issues, while the Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid and the European Commission focused on implementation of the plan of action of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (ECHA). The European Commission also worked on setting up the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE regularly addressed issues with a humanitarian dimension, especially in relation to the conflicts in the Caucasus and the arrival of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the Mediterranean region.

NATO's International Security Assistance Force began a troop reduction process aimed at ending its combat role in Afghanistan by the end of 2014. NATO took the lead in the UN-endorsed coalition intervention in Libya. In Kosovo¹, the NATO-led international peacekeeping force pursued its peace-support operation, in cooperation with the UN, the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and other actors. NATO also pursued its operation to counter piracy off the Somali coast.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	67
Assistance	-
Prevention	2,395
Cooperation with National Societies	181
General	-

► **2,642**

of which: Overheads 161

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	89%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	2
National staff (daily workers not included)	10

KEY POINTS

In 2011, the ICRC:

- discussed with European Union institutions major humanitarian issues, the integration of IHL into their decisions and policies, and the availability of ICRC expertise and experience to help in that process
- president exchanged views on pressing humanitarian issues during 4 meetings with the European commissioner for international cooperation, humanitarian aid and crisis response
- as an acknowledged key neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian actor with specific expertise and capacities, strengthened operational dialogue with NATO command structures, facilitating ICRC operations in Libya
- briefed NATO military personnel on the ICRC and IHL during military exercises or predeployment training
- together with the Belgian Red Cross and the Network on Humanitarian Action, organized an introductory seminar on IHL for the first time for EU and NATO staff, Belgian civil servants, diplomats and NGO representatives
- coordinated activities with European National Societies and the International Federation through the Brussels-based Red Cross/EU Office

1. UN Security Council Resolution 1244

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The Brussels delegation continued to foster relations with NATO and EU institutions and contribute to the ICRC's dialogue with the Council of Europe and the OSCE to ensure that IHL and humanitarian issues were given due consideration in their decisions, policies and programmes. It also drew attention to specific humanitarian issues with a view to contributing to European efforts to protect and assist conflict victims worldwide.

Discussions with EU bodies centred on situations requiring humanitarian action and ICRC operations in major contexts such as Côte d'Ivoire and Libya, particularly relevant in light of the CSDP and the implementation of the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with IHL. Dialogue also touched on thematic issues such as migration, missing persons, civil-military relations and the ICRC project to strengthen legal protection for victims of armed conflict.

Dialogue with the EEAS expanded, notably following developments linked to the CSDP, through new contacts with relevant civilian and military bodies. Discussions on pressing humanitarian issues between the European commissioner for international cooperation, humanitarian aid and crisis response and the ICRC president reinforced the close contacts maintained with the EU Commission and the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) in particular.

Interaction with NATO headquarters, NATO's Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) developed, in the last case notably after NATO operations in Libya began. Exchanges covered immediate operational issues there and in other contexts, in particular in Afghanistan, the specific role of the ICRC and other common humanitarian concerns. ICRC participation in NATO conferences and presentations on IHL and ICRC working methods provided during NATO training activities, including predeployment exercises, enhanced dialogue and mutual understanding at field and central level. Contacts similarly developed with the US European Command (EUCOM) and African Command (AFRICOM).

In addition to regular information provided electronically to its wide network, the ICRC promoted humanitarian principles and action and IHL during events run by think-tanks, NGOs and humanitarian organizations based in Brussels. Likewise, events co-organized with various partners enabled students, academics, representatives of international organizations and NGOs to learn more about IHL and ICRC activities and to debate current humanitarian challenges, as was the case for peacekeeping operations during the 12th Bruges Colloquium on IHL.

To ensure the coherence of Movement humanitarian diplomacy, the ICRC remained in continuous contact with the Red Cross/EU Office in Brussels.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detainees and released detainees/internees transferred to Belgium from abroad, including from the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, or detained in Belgium (see *Europe*) following their conviction by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia were monitored or visited by the delegation.

AUTHORITIES

To encourage the integration of IHL and humanitarian perspectives into EU activities and decisions, dialogue was fostered with EU institutions, in particular the EU Council, the EU presidency, the EEAS and the EU Commission.

Topics broached included: major contexts such as Côte d'Ivoire and Libya; EU military missions; thematic issues, notably migration and missing persons; the ICRC's study on the current state of IHL; implementation of the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with IHL; the ECHA and the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps; and follow-up to the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and preparations for the 31st International Conference.

Within this framework, the European commissioner for international cooperation, humanitarian aid and crisis response and the ICRC president met four times. These meetings directly supported ICRC field operations and regular working relations with ECHO dealing with financial support to the ICRC. The EU Council's Political Security Committee twice invited the ICRC president to address its members. A European Parliament committee welcomed ICRC input during a debate on civil-military cooperation, while developments in the CSDP led to extended contacts with relevant EU civilian and military entities, aimed primarily at promoting independent humanitarian action. Members of Council working groups made use in their debates of ICRC operational briefings or input on IHL.

Council of Europe bodies and the OSCE also benefited from ICRC expertise and advice on humanitarian issues and IHL integration during debates, as appropriate.

Interaction with NATO headquarters and NATO's ACT and Civil-Military Fusion Center in Norfolk, Virginia, United States of America, was extended (see *Armed forces and other bearers of weapons*). A meeting with NATO's assistant secretary-general for political affairs and contacts with participants in the spring and autumn sessions of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly resulted in exchanges on IHL-related matters and the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and Libya. Other conferences and bilateral meetings provided opportunities to share views on various issues such as civil-military relations and nuclear, radiological, biological and chemical threats and cyber warfare.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The ICRC president and NATO's SHAPE agreed to strengthen mutual dialogue.

Operational dialogue with SHAPE in Mons (Belgium) and its three subordinate Allied Joint Force Commands in Brunssum (Netherlands), Lisbon (Portugal) and Naples (Italy) intensified after NATO operations in Libya began in March, resulting in the establishment of a dedicated communication channel with the relevant NATO command structures to discuss issues of mutual concern (see *Libya*).

Numerous NATO officers attended briefings on IHL and ICRC activities during military exercises or while attending courses at the NATO School and Defence College, as well as in military academic fora of member States. Military officers at NATO's Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger (Norway) and at its Joint Forces Training Centre in Bydgoszcz (Poland) benefited from

specific briefings on ICRC activities in Afghanistan during pre-deployment events. The annual NATO legal conference held in Lisbon received ICRC input on various IHL-related issues relevant to NATO operations, and first contacts were established with NATO's Joint Analysis Lessons Learned Centre there. For the first time ever, NATO's Military Committee members attended a presentation on the ICRC's mandate, activities and neutral, impartial and independent approach to humanitarian action.

Two NATO-organized conferences contributed to strengthening dialogue with NATO's ACT in Norfolk. These conferences, respectively in Helsinki and in Warsaw, served as fora for discussion of issues such as information sharing and NATO's comprehensive approach to crisis management, integrating political, civilian and military components.

Further high-level contacts established with the US EUCOM and AFRICOM notably helped facilitate ICRC access to the operational chain of command when needed, as during the Libyan conflict.

Nordic Red Cross Societies and the ICRC broadened discussions on the Societies' relations with their national armed forces, notably with regard to their role during military exercises.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Brussels being an ideal forum for dialogue on IHL and related humanitarian issues, numerous events organized by think-tanks, NGOs and humanitarian organizations provided opportunities to relay information to participants about ICRC activities and views on humanitarian issues.

In coordination with ECHO, the Belgian Red Cross and the Network on Humanitarian Action, the ICRC organized a first introductory seminar on IHL for EU and NATO institutions, diplomatic representations to these organizations, Belgian civil servants and NGO representatives. Participants provided positive feedback on this initiative.

In Bruges, the 12th Colloquium on IHL, co-organized with the College of Europe, was dedicated to issues related to the legal framework of peacekeeping operations conducted by international organizations. It brought together some 120 researchers, university lecturers and experts from governments and international organizations. The EU Institute for Security Studies in Paris, France, and the ICRC published a report on their 2010 first colloquium and started to prepare a second colloquium on urban violence.

Postgraduate students familiarized themselves with IHL during ICRC courses at College of Europe campuses in Bruges and Natolin (Poland).

Regular meetings between major NGOs/NGO networks and the ICRC on operational issues and other topics of common concern helped strengthen humanitarian coordination at field level and in their relations with the European Commission.

European media services and the large network of ICRC contacts in EU institutions and NATO received regular electronic information from the ICRC, including news releases and operational updates, which they drew on in their work. Joint ECHO/ICRC communication activities continued and included an IHL seminar (see above) and the production of a new audiovisual spot featuring the Health Care in Danger project.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Coordination between the Red Cross/EU Office and the ICRC, as well as regular meetings of the Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants and of the European Legal Support Group, facilitated coherence in Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy with European institutions. They also notably helped in sharing operational best practices, for example regarding unaccompanied/separated migrant children, following up the pledges made by member States and National Societies at the 30th International Conference and preparing the 31st International Conference.