



NEWSLETTER

ICRC

ICRC, Regional delegation for GCC countries, April 2013

Editorial

This latest edition of our newsletter allows us to reflect again on the evolution of the context of the region and on our humanitarian response, trying to tackle the needs of those affected by armed conflict and internal violence, and promoting respect for the rules and principles of international humanitarian law (IHL).

2013 marks the 150th anniversary of the ICRC by Swiss citizen Henry Dunant. The ICRC gave birth to the 'Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement', the largest humanitarian network worldwide, whose mission is to prevent and alleviate, without discrimination, human suffering under all its aspects, to protect life and health, ensure respect and dignity of the human being.

2012 saw us redoubling efforts in the region, with National Red Crescent Societies, to alleviate the plight of the victims of the ongoing conflicts and other situations of violence. The intensification of the confrontations in Syria and the humanitarian effect inside an ever more 'war torn country', as well as in neighbouring states, with hundreds of thousands of displaced persons

and refugees, kept our 'Movement' very busy. GCC National Societies, governments and public at large, showed remarkable solidarity with the victims, sending relief and medical aid or supporting humanitarian action in general. The ICRC pursued its neutral, independent and impartial approach, talking to all parties and calling them to respect IHL.

A matter of key concern remains the protection of medical personnel and services during conflicts and violence. The 'Health care in Danger' campaign aims at raising awareness on all actions hindering the effective provision of health related services, including attacks on medical personnel or installations, refusal to treat wounded enemies, negation of the principle of the neutrality of medical aid, etc...

In the GCC area, our Delegation continued to stand ready to act in case of situations of conflict or violence that would generate humanitarian needs. In Bahrain, following signing of a MoU at the end of 2011, ICRC carried out frequent visits to detention centres, to assess conditions of detention of those arrested in relation with the unrest and

to monitor their treatment. Discussions took place with detaining authorities to address issues of concern, transmitting, as in all similar contexts, confidential reports.

Let me express once again our strongest hope that, when conflicts cannot be avoided or prevented, at least those taking arms, whatever their motives, will commit themselves to a strict observance of humanitarian rules and principles, thus minimizing destructions and unnecessary suffering and allowing safe provision of aid to all those in need.

Gerard Peytrignet

Head of the Regional delegation for GCC countries



ICRC

I. Preventive Action

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was founded a century and a half ago to preserve a measure of humanity in the midst of war.

The ICRC's preventive work is designed to contain the harmful effects of conflict and

to keep them to a minimum. It seeks to promote the whole range of humanitarian principles to prevent – or at the very least to limit – the worst excesses of war.

In this regard, the ICRC's prevention programmes target in particular those

people and groups who determine the fate of victims of armed conflicts or who can obstruct or facilitate the ICRC action. These groups include, for instance, armed and police forces, decision-makers, and opinion-leaders at local and international levels.

1. Armed forces

The ICRC seeks to provide support to the military authorities in their endeavours to disseminate the rules and principles of the international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law as wide as possible within their respective armed and police forces. It also provides support for these authorities to help them integrate the rules of this law in educational curricula and military training programmes.

A. BAHRAIN

In coordination with Bahrain Defence Force, the RD organized an IHL training course for about 50 officers representing Bahrain Defence and Police Forces as well as the National Guards.

The Director of Joint Operations at Bahrain Defence Force attended the opening and closing sessions of the course. In his speeches, he emphasized the importance of IHL training, urged police and national guards officers to organise ad hoc training for their personnel, and thanked the ICRC for its support in this field.

The training was held at the Officers Club in Manama on 11-14 June 2012.

B. OMAN

At the request of the concerned military authorities in Oman, the ICRC regional delegation organised a three-day training for a selected number of officers at the Sultan Armed Forces in December 2012. The training



aims at consolidating the knowledge of the Law of Armed Conflict within the military circles.

Besides, one-day training on the basic rules of the law of Armed Conflict was organised for some 10 high-ranking officers. The training focused on the support the ICRC could offer in the field of IHL dissemination for the armed forces in cooperation with the concerned military authorities in the Sultanate of Oman.

C. SAUDI ARABIA

At the invitation of Nayef Arab University for Security Sciences (NAUSS), the ICRC participated in the First Scientific conference of Red Crescent Organizations that was held at the University on 9-11 January 2012. The Conference was organized jointly with the

International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) and the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization (ARCO).

The opening session included speeches by the deputy secretary general of ICDO, Mr. Vladimir Kuvshinov, the President of NAUSS, Professor Abdulaziz ben Sagr Alghamdi, and the secretary general of ARCO, Abdullah Al-Hazzaa. The audience included representatives of Red Crescent societies in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, and Bahrain in addition to representatives of Arab civil defense institutions, ministries of interior, social affairs and municipal affairs.

The Conference was designed to be a tool for exchanging experience and new ideas to promote peace and security at the local and international levels. The three-day conference's sessions focused on the role of the civil organizations in economic and social development plans and in volunteering projects, environmental protection, crisis management, the legal framework for the humanitarian activities of civil society and the training needs of the youth.



2. Media

The ICRC is keen to maintain and develop its relationship with the media in the Gulf region in order to ensure proper coverage of the humanitarian issues of concern, but also to provide relevant training for the

media personnel in order to introduce the basic rules of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and to initiate a dialogue about the best ways that help in ensuring proper implementation of IHL.

In this regard, three journalists from the Gulf region (UAE, Kuwait and Qatar) participated in the regional journalist's workshop that was held in Beirut beginning of 2012.

A. OMAN

In its efforts to raise awareness about the basic rules of the international humanitarian law within the academic circles, the ICRC Regional Delegation organized an IHL training workshop for the students of Media and Journalism at the Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat on 13 – 14 November 2012.

The holding of the training came upon request of the Head of the Media Section at the University, Dr. Obeid Al-Shaqsi. The request was based on the positive feed back received by the students who attended last year's training. More than 35 students attended the training in addition to few faculty instructors.

The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Abdullah Al-Kindi, attended the opening and closing sessions of the training. In his speech, he stressed on the importance of such training since it helps the students in widening the horizons of their general knowledge as well as familiarizing themselves with a specific knowledge about the basic rules of IHL and the role of the ICRC in situations of armed conflicts and other situations of violence. Open and frank discussions featured the entire training.



B. QATAR

b.1. In cooperation with Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), a two-day IHL training for local journalists has taken place in Doha on 12-13 February 2012.

In his opening speech, the Executive Director of QRCS, Mr. Saleh Al-Muhannadi, stressed the role of the NS in promoting IHL but also in providing assistance for those who are in dire need in various parts of the world.

Mr. Jordan Ryan, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery at the UN Development Programme in New York, has made a presentation too. He stressed on the need for partnership with NS's as well as other

humanitarians to serve the victims whom we "must put at the focus of our attention". He also mentioned that IHL needs to be supported by the UN as well as by all other influential circles, including the media.

About 15 journalists participated in the training that was held at the premises of the QRCS. The participants represented various local media in Qatar News.

The program included presentations about the QRCS activities, ICRC activities, introduction to IHL, IHL and media, conflict situations, mechanisms of IHL implementation, and the protection of journalists in conflict situations.



b.2. At the invitation of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) in Qatar, the ICRC participated in the international conference on the protection of journalists in dangerous situations that was held in Doha on 22 - 23 January 2012.

The main objective of the conference was an attempt to gain support for adopting a new convention related specifically to the protection of journalists.

In addition to journalists from various countries (about 100 participants), the conference gathered representatives of local and regional journalists' syndicates, International Federation of Journalists, UNESCO, and other NGO's.

The ICRC deputy director for the Public Relations Unit in Geneva, Mrs. Dorothea Krimitsas, presented a working paper about the protection of journalists on dangerous situations under international humanitarian law and the ICRC's hotline for journalists.



Upon request, several media interviews, including Al-Jazeera TV Channel, were made to further elaborate on that important subject thus reflecting the interest of media in that topic as well.



b.3. Within the framework of the cooperation agreement between the International Committee of the Red Cross and Al-Jazeera channel in Qatar, the channel in collaboration with the ICRC organized a training course on the protection of journalists working in crisis areas on 18-19 March 2012.

The workshop took place at the premises of the JSC in Doha and was attended by about 15 journalists representing various Arabic channels of Al-Jazeera in addition to journalists from Al-Jazeera Turkey and Al-Jazeera Balkans.



The training focused on the importance of raising the journalists' awareness about the rules of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the challenges that media are facing to cover in situations of armed conflicts and other situations of violence. It also introduced the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, protection for journalists under IHL, and the role of the ICRC in assisting them in addition to the safety and security of media professionals.

3. International organizations, NGOs and charities

The International Committee of the Red Cross seeks to maintain and develop a working relationship and coordination with international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charities.

Among other working fields, the ICRC endeavours to disseminate the fundamental rules of the international humanitarian law, to explain the importance of the neutral and independent humanitarian action, and to establish a dialogue as well as to exchange views and information in the field of humanitarian action.



A. KUWAIT

The Regional Delegation participated in the “Third Annual Conference on the effective partnership and Information Sharing for better humanitarian Action” organized by the International Islamic Charitable Organization in conjunction with the United Nations Regional Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) during the period between 12 to 13 September in Kuwait. Several charitable organisations mainly from the Arab World participated in the conference.

The objectives of the conference were to provide a forum that promotes constructive and open dialogue between various stakeholders involved in humanitarian work, and to share the most important achievements and best practices. Besides, it aimed at discussing the challenges facing humanitarian organizations in an effort to improve the efficiency of relief programs and to discuss appropriate mechanisms to overcome those obstacles.

B. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The ICRC participated, along with hundreds of institutions and humanitarian agencies in the Dubai International Exhibition for Human Development (DIHAD), which was held in Dubai - United Arab Emirates - on 1-3 April. This exhibition is an important occasion for humanitarian organizations to display their products that are of interest to aid workers.

C. QATAR

c.1. The UNOCHA regional office for the Gulf has invited the Kuwait Regional Delegation

to attend the launch of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) 2012. The event was jointly organized between OCHA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar.

The event took place at the Diplomatic Club in Doha on 5 April 2012. The speakers focused on the commitment of Qatar to support efforts of the international community in alleviating the consequences of disasters and conflicts on the affected persons, the need for being real partners in the implementation of peace building as well as in the decision-making of peace building.

The aim of the seminar was to shed light on the delicate space between the political and humanitarian spheres as well as to highlight the role of media in addressing this problematic relationship.

The speakers focused on the need to distinguish between the “humanitarian” and the “military” actions since the governments as well as militants are sometimes using the concept of humanitarianism to justify their military actions. They concluded by stressing on the principles of neutrality and independence.



c.2. The regional office of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in the UAE has invited Kuwait Regional Delegation to attend a seminar about “exploring the dynamics between politics and humanitarian action in conflict zones”. The event was jointly organized with the Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies in Qatar. The event took place at the Sheraton Hotel in Doha on 4 April 2012.

c.3. The ICRC Regional Delegation participated in the first Annual Conference for Strategic and Policy Studies in the Arab World that was held in Qatar on 15-17 December 2012. The event was hosted by the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies and was attended by about 200 researchers, politicians and academics from the Arab countries, Iran and Turkey.

4. National Authorities and Academic Circles

The ICRC continues to disseminate the basic rules of IHL as well as the humanitarian principles among the academic circles as well as the government authorities, who are increasingly giving a considerable interest in the humanitarian issues.

A. BAHRAIN



In coordination with the Institute of Judicial and Legal Studies in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the ICRC regional delegation in Kuwait organized a three-day IHL seminar for Bahraini Judges and Prosecutors from 15 to 17 April 2012. More than 30 judges and prosecutors participated in the seminar.

The main objective of the seminar was to train judges and prosecutors on IHL, international criminal law and the ICC statute in order to support the implementation of the IHL provisions as per the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 and the obligations of the Kingdom of Bahrain towards these conventions.

B. UAE

b.1. Within the framework of the cooperation established between the ICRC and the Ministry of Justice and the Institute of Judicial and Legal Studies in the UAE, the ICRC held a two-day IHL seminar for Judges and Prosecutors in the UAE on 13-14 May 2012.

The main objective of the seminar was to train judges and prosecutors on IHL, international criminal law and the ICC statute. More than 30 judges, prosecutors and academic leaders and professors attended the seminar.

b.2. The ICRC held the Ninth Annual Meeting of Arab Governmental Experts in Abu Dhabi from 10 to 12 January 2012. The participants discussed the latest developments in IHL and reviewed each

country's achievements in its application. They addressed also exchanged ideas on adapting national legislations related to the implementation and dissemination of IHL as well as ratification of treaties.

b.3. The ICRC regional delegation in Kuwait held the Fourth Regional Training Course for Arab Diplomats on IHL in Abu Dhabi during the period from 07 to 10 May. This training was held within the framework of the cooperation established between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in the UAE on the one hand and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the other.

C. KUWAIT

c.1. A one-day IHL seminar was organized for law professors and students at the Kuwait International Law School on 24 September 2012. More than 40 students in addition to eight professors attended the seminar. Topics such as the introduction to IHL, its sources, evolution and distinction from the Human Rights law and its implementation mechanisms were introduced.



c.2. In the framework of its planning aiming at diversifying and consolidating the knowledge of its staff, the ministry of foreign affairs requested to hold a three-day training for a selected number of diplomats and staff working at the ministry. The training was attended by about 30 participants and was held at the premises of the ministry during the period 18-20 December 2012.

The training introduced the basic rules of IHL and the Human Rights Law as well as the similarities and dissimilarities between them, the role of the ICRC in situations of armed conflicts, and the grave consequences resulting from targeting the health facilities and personnel on those in dire need for the medical and health services.



D. SAUDI ARABIA

Within the framework of the cooperation between the ICRC and Nayef Arab University for Security Sciences, a one-day IHL Seminar was held on 05 November 2012 for the faculty staff of the College of Strategic Studies at the University.

The main objective of the seminar was to disseminate IHL among the University professors. More than 30 professors, including the dean of the College of Strategic Sciences, attended the seminar.

Besides, more than 30 participants benefited from a presentation about IHL during the course of a three-day seminar organised by the College of Graduates at Nayef University. More than 30 participants (Judges, Prosecutors, Police Officers and Diplomats) representing 12 Arab countries attended the seminar.

E. QATAR

The ICRC took part in a workshop on the Hopefor initiative organised in Doha on 8-9 September. The Hopefor 'Qatari driven' initiative, with co-sponsorship of Turkey and the Dominican Republic, had been endorsed by the UN General Assembly resolution (July 2011) and further developed during an international conference held in Doha in November 2011. The initiative aims at the creation of a permanent humanitarian operations force (HOPEFOR) with military and civil defence equipment for relief operations in 'complex emergencies'.

The workshop concentrated on the tasks of the future Centre of Excellence based in Doha, dedicated to interaction and coordination between military and humanitarian actors. The audience comprised of a number of humanitarian organizations (OCHA, World Vision, ICRC, Qatar Red Crescent Society, etc.) and representatives from other centres around the globe providing a platform for dialogue and coordination between military and humanitarian actors.

II. Protection

1. Detention

The ICRC continues to visit places of detention in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, during which the ICRC delegates enquire about material conditions of detention and conditions of treatment. The organization shares its observations and recommendations with the detaining authorities in a confidential bilateral dialogue aimed at improving conditions of detention when needed.

A. BAHRAIN

Following signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the ICRC and the concerned authorities in the Kingdom of Bahrain in December 2011, the ICRC team started its detention visits to various places of detention. The first visit started in January (March) 2012 and the visiting team normally includes a medical doctor.

During the visits, the team could interview detainees, either privately or in groups, who were arrested during the situation of unrest prevailing since the beginning of 2011. The purpose of the visits is to listen to their needs and assess their living as well as their medical conditions. These needs were regularly shared with the concerned authorities in a confidential dialogue in order to work on improving them whenever needed.

B. KUWAIT

The ICRC regional delegation continued to visit places of detention in Kuwait to monitor the humanitarian conditions. As is the case elsewhere, the ICRC detention team conducts interviews with the detainees. Within the framework of its detention modalities, its representatives met with the

concerned officials in charge of detention in Kuwait to confidentially discuss and share information on how to improve the conditions of detention.

C. QATAR

The ICRC regional delegation in Kuwait carried out its annual visit to the central prison in Qatar. During the visit, the delegates met with the remaining detainees who were arrested in relation to the failed coup late 1990's.

The ICRC delegates were able to hold meetings with the officials at the Ministry of Interior with the aim to discuss and develop cooperation with the ministry in the field of detention.

2. Missing

Determining the fate of the missing persons from the 1990–91 Gulf War is a longstanding priority for the ICRC in the region. For that, both the Tripartite Commission (TC) and the Technical-Sub Committee (TSC) continue to convene their parties to discuss the unresolved cases and explore ways that could put an end to this plight.

Joint digging operations have taken place on Kuwaiti and Iraqi soils in 2012 attempting at finding mortal remains of potential missing persons.

Five TSC meetings have taken place in Kuwait in February, April, June, September and December 2012 respectively in addition

to two TC meetings in June and December. During all those meetings, the members of the two committees, namely Iraq, Kuwait and the coalition States (France, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America), shared and exchanged data on potential places of burial of missing persons in Kuwait and Iraq.



3. Family visits

In November 2012, the regional delegation organised the first ever family visit from abroad (other than Pakistan) for a third country national detained in Bagram -

Afghanistan. The father of the detainee was able to see his son for the first time in years and have a private visit that lasted several hours.

In cooperation with the Saudi Red Crescent Society, the ICRC regional delegation in Kuwait facilitated the visit of a Yemeni family living in Saudi Arabia to their son detained in Lebanon.

4. Restoring family links (RFL)

The delegation is providing services to persons deprived of freedom to re-establish and maintain family links. These services allow families to maintain regular contacts

with their loved ones in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen as well as in US internment facilities.

In cooperation with the Saudi Red Crescent

Society, several rounds of telephone and Video Teleconference Calls (VTC) were arranged, enabling families to watch and talk to their detained relatives abroad live.

Through more than 100 VTC's and 35 telephone calls arranged in 2012, families residing in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were able to talk with their relatives detained at

the US facilities in Guantanamo bay (Cuba) and Bagram airbase (Afghanistan).

Moreover, the ICRC regional delegation in

Kuwait facilitated the exchange of more than 1000 Red Cross Messages (RCM's) between detainees abroad and their families in the GCC countries.

5. Regional events

A high-level official at Saudi Red Crescent Society participated in the Restoring Family Links Implementation Group for 2012-

2015. The Group is tasked to follow on the development of the RFL strategy of the movement worldwide. In addition to the

ICRC, representatives of 17 national red cross and red crescent societies participated in the event.

III. Cooperation with the Red Crescent Societies

The ICRC strives to build a solid cooperation with GCC National Societies particularly in terms of reinforcing their capacities in various levels, in coordination with other Movement partners.

On two different occasions, the ICRC Director of Operations, Pierre Krähenbueh, and

the director of operations for the Near and Middle East, Robert Mardini, visited the national societies in Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The two visits come in the framework of enhancing the cooperation between the

ICRC and the National Societies in the Gulf region. They aim at strengthening the ICRC's support for the national societies in the field of relief operations in situation of armed conflicts as well as in the field of various training programs.

A. KUWAIT

In cooperation with Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the ICRC regional delegation organized a workshop on "Disaster and Humanitarian Crisis" on 08-12 April 2012.

The workshop aimed at developing and supporting the KRCS Emergency Preparedness and Response capacity and structure as well as acquainting its volunteers with knowledge and skills, thus develop their capacities as a first step toward enabling the KRCS achieving its goals and refurbish its disaster management program and structure. About 40 participants took part in the training.

Among other topics presented were the concepts of Emergency Management, Restoring Family Links, International Humanitarian Law, Emergency needs assessment and contingency planning process.

B. UAE

The ICRC was invited as an observer to the 39th meeting of the General Assembly of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organisation (ARCO), which was held in the United Arab Emirates in May 2012. Representatives of various Arab National Societies participated in the meeting which discussed topics related to the humanitarian situation in some Arab countries such as Occupied Palestinian Territory, Yemen, Iraq,



and Syria, and the humanitarian role linked to helping the victims in the countries affected by the armed conflict or other situations of violence. It also tackled the issue of the strategic dialogue between the ICRC and some Arab National Societies.

C. QATAR



The regional delegation participated and supported the QRCS on-site training on Camp and Disaster Management, which took place in Qatar on 1-8 April 2012. This field training was organized by the QRCS with the support of the Federation and the participation of six national societies and more than ten Qatari organizations. More than one hundred volunteers and participants participated in the training.

The ICRC provided training in the fields of IHL, 'Safer Access', ICRC and the Movement, Restoring Family Links and Water and Habitat.

Presentations about the ICRC, IHL and the Health Care in Danger (HCiD) campaign

were presented to more than 25 participants to the second course on Health Emergencies in Large Populations (H.E.L.P.) that was held at the headquarters of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) on 8 – 18 October 2012.

The holding of the course follows the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the ICRC, QRCS and the University of Calgary in September 2012.

D. BAHRAIN

In coordination between the ICRC Regional in Kuwait and the Bahrain Red Crescent Society (BRCS), two workshops on emergency preparedness and response (EPR) were

organized in July and October respectively. About 45 participants representing staff and volunteers of the BRCS took part in the training. The aim of the training was to develop the Society's preparedness and response capacities to help them establishing a national response team.

The training dealt with topics such as the health standards, rapid damage assessment, disaster management, emergency response, coordination mechanisms, family links and safer access. Group work and practical exercises were introduced during the training.

