

# IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF



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.

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

### In 2013:

- ▶ Iranian and Iraqi authorities made progress in clarifying the fate of persons missing in relation to the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war, notably by recovering/repatriating, with ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary, 406 sets of human remains
- ▶ with ICRC technical and training support, local experts honed their forensic skills by, for instance, participating in a regional workshop on forensic anthropology co-organized with the Legal Medicine Organization
- ▶ the Centre for Comparative Studies on Islam and IHL in Qom promoted IHL and its compatibility with Islamic jurisprudence by organizing events specifically for Iranian scholars and publishing resource materials
- ▶ while working to enhance its family-links services and emergency preparedness, the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted an international experts' workshop on health care delivery during armed conflict
- ▶ thousands of individuals, including refugees, became less vulnerable to the effects of weapon contamination through initiatives undertaken by the ICRC-supported Iranian Mine Action Centre and the National Society
- ▶ certain activities to assist vulnerable groups of people were postponed pending final approval from the authorities

## EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)

Protection	1,567
Assistance	-
Prevention	1,799
Cooperation with National Societies	449
General	-

**3,815**

of which: Overheads 233

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>82%</b>
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## PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	6
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	39

## YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

**MEDIUM**

PROTECTION	Total
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)	
Red Cross messages (RCMs)	
RCMs collected	139
RCMs distributed	79
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	79

## CONTEXT

Despite measures implemented by the country's government and its new president, who was elected in June, to ease economic difficulties, Iranians continued to feel the effects of sanctions imposed by the international community. In November, the Iranian authorities agreed to a deal that promised relief from some of these sanctions in exchange for the suspension of parts of the country's nuclear programme.

Tensions persisted between the country and its neighbours, in particular with member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, over diverging positions on the armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Pockets of violence were reported on border areas and in the west.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to host several million Afghan refugees and migrants, most of whom were undocumented and often without access to social services.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC delegation in the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to: help address the humanitarian consequences of the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war in relation to the issue of missing persons; promote IHL and its compatibility with Islamic jurisprudence; develop its cooperation with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran; support local efforts to minimize mine-related risks; restore family links; and foster acceptance of humanitarian principles. Challenges encountered in securing authorization from the national authorities and in implementing activities with local actors delayed or impeded some ICRC-proposed humanitarian initiatives.

Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC contributed to the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq to clarify the fates of persons still missing in relation to the past conflict. It helped facilitate, within the framework of agreements signed by the two countries, joint exhumations and the exchange of related technical information. It chaired the two tripartite committees created by the agreements, which were merged into one mechanism for missing persons to help streamline the process. Joint excavations by Iranian and Iraqi experts, with ICRC support, led to the recovery and repatriation of hundreds of human remains. More broadly, to help boost forensic capacities in the country, the ICRC worked with local institutions: for example, co-organizing a regional forensic course with the Legal Medicine Organization (LMO) and providing its staff with technical support.

Cooperation with and support for the national IHL committee, the Iranian Red Crescent and the Centre for Comparative Studies on Islam and IHL in Qom (Qom Centre) helped promote IHL and its compatibility with Islamic jurisprudence and strengthen acceptance of the ICRC among different stakeholders. Activities carried out with these organizations facilitated dialogue with the authorities and influential religious and academic leaders. Events co-organized with them and other local organizations, as well as the publication and distribution of resource materials, helped boost public awareness of IHL, humanitarian issues and Movement activities. Adaptation of Exploring Humanitarian Law modules to be included in textbooks was ongoing, as per an agreement reached with the Ministry of Education in 2012. Direct contact with the military on IHL matters did not take place.

Within the framework of a 2012 partnership agreement, the National Society and the ICRC continued their cooperation in restoring family links, helping address weapon contamination, promoting IHL and humanitarian values, physical rehabilitation, and the Health Care in Danger project. They co-organized a regional workshop on improving Movement family-links services for migrants and, as part of the Health Care in Danger project, an international experts' workshop on the role of National Societies in providing medical care during conflict.

Cooperation with the Iranian Mine Action Centre (IRMAC) and the National Society helped raise awareness of the risks of weapon contamination and the safe practices people should adopt to minimize exposure to these risks. IRMAC and the ICRC reinforced their partnership through a new cooperation agreement and an ongoing project to identify mine victims not covered by existing national assistance programmes. An assessment of the needs of the families of missing persons was postponed.

Iranian families, Afghan detainees and Afghan and Iraqi refugees restored/maintained contact with their relatives living or detained abroad through RCMs and tracing services provided by the National Society/ICRC. Vulnerable Afghan migrants received basic health care services through a project implemented by a local NGO and the National Society, with ICRC support.

## CIVILIANS

### Some 400 sets of human remains recovered in joint Iranian-Iraqi efforts

The Iranian and Iraqi governments continued their joint efforts to ascertain the fate of persons missing in relation to the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war, in line with agreements they signed in 2004 and 2008, which had the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary and chairing the two tripartite committees – one covering cases of former and presumed POWs still unaccounted for and another for cases of persons missing or killed in combat – created by the agreements. In June, the signing by both countries and the ICRC of documents officially merging the two committees into one tripartite committee on missing persons fulfilled an agreement reached in 2012.

Five joint excavations in the Al Fao peninsula and the Majnoon oil fields in Iraq, facilitated by the tripartite committee, led to the exhumation of 324 sets of human remains. These were handed over to the Iranian authorities through efforts by both States and under the auspices of the ICRC. Meanwhile, 82 sets of human remains exhumed from Iranian sites were repatriated to Iraq. Besides regularly exchanging technical information on the exhumations, Iranian experts helped the Iraqi authorities clear excavation sites of mines/explosive remnants of war. Based on discussions during ICRC-chaired technical meetings and on past experiences, the two countries agreed to develop a plan of action for future excavations and establish formal working procedures in line with ICRC technical recommendations.

### Iranians hone forensic expertise

Institutions involved in identifying recovered human remains improved their services, partly by drawing on ICRC expertise and training support. LMO staff enhanced their abilities to use the ICRC's ante/post-mortem data management software, including by translating it into Farsi. Eighteen local experts and nine from neighbouring countries honed their skills in forensic anthropology

and identification of human remains at a regional course co-organized with LMO. Preparations were ongoing for a meeting of the region's medico-legal institutes. At an ICRC-conducted workshop, members of the Islamic Countries Organization of Forensic Medicine shared best practices in forensics during conflict and disasters.

Within the framework of a mechanism agreed on by the Iranian authorities and the ICRC in 2004, Iranian officials received an updated list of Iraqi POWs still unaccounted for. Meanwhile, over 600 Iraqi former POWs could apply for State allowances after receiving attestations of captivity.

A planned assessment of the needs of the families of missing persons, in cooperation with the Janbazan Medical and Engineering Research Centre (JMERC), was put on hold in light of election-related changes.

### **Separated family members keep in touch**

Iranian families restored/maintained contact with their relatives detained in Afghanistan, Iraq or the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba (see *Afghanistan, Iraq and Washington*) through RCMs and oral messages relayed by delegates. Afghan and Iraqi refugees, as well as Afghans detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran, exchanged news with their families using the same tracing services. The processing of family reunifications for some Afghan minors had yet to bear results.

Although requests by former members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) to return home from Iraq were submitted to the authorities, no repatriations took place. The authorities had put on hold the provision – through a local NGO – of psychological support to previously repatriated former PMOI members.

### **National Society staff better equipped to provide family-links services**

Migrants and refugees stood to benefit from the National Society's initiatives to enhance and expand its family-links services with ICRC support. Selected branch officers explored solutions to professional challenges and refreshed their knowledge of the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the Movement at a National Society/ICRC-organized workshop. The Iranian Red Crescent hosted an international conference where representatives of various National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC discussed ways to better coordinate and strengthen family-links services for migrants. Efforts were ongoing to help the National Society raise awareness of its services and enhance its capacity to manage human remains, with activities planned for 2014.

Irregular Afghan migrants living in Mashhad received basic health services, such as vaccinations, as part of a project launched by a local NGO, the National Society and the ICRC, which provided financial support.

### **IRMAC launches initiative to assist civilian mine victims**

People reduced their vulnerability to the effects of weapon contamination thanks to the concerted efforts of IRMAC, the National Society and the ICRC. They conducted mine-risk awareness and other activities, with the ICRC providing technical advice and support in line with existing agreements, including a new one signed with IRMAC in March. IRMAC, for example, received medical kits for 70 field personnel.

Hundreds of thousands of Iranians living in, and Afghan refugees transiting weapon-contaminated provinces in the east and the west learnt how to reduce their exposure to mine-related risks during first-aid training and dissemination sessions conducted by ICRC-trained National Society volunteers/staff. A review, led by the National Society itself, of its training needs in mine-risk education was under way.

Civilian mine victims not covered by national programmes participated in ongoing identification processes, led by IRMAC in Kurdistan province and by JMERC in Kermanshah, and aimed at referring those identified to a National Society physical rehabilitation centre.

## **AUTHORITIES, ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPON, AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

Although no progress was made in formalizing the ICRC's legal status in the country, contact with the authorities in this regard was enhanced. Furthermore, efforts to strengthen acceptance of and support for IHL and the ICRC's activities and presence in the country continued. Based on input from the authorities, the national IHL committee finalized a study of IHL implementation in the Islamic Republic of Iran that outlined guidelines or model laws for incorporating ratified treaties in domestic legislation, and recommendations for treaties the country had not yet ratified.

Cooperation with Defence Ministry officials continued regarding people missing in relation to the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war (see *Civilians*), but direct contact with the armed forces was limited and did not allow for the implementation of IHL-related activities.

The Iranian Red Crescent, the national IHL committee and the Qom Centre remained key partners in facilitating the ICRC's dialogue with the authorities and promoting IHL and its compatibility with Islamic jurisprudence. Although some courses/events were postponed owing to constraints in implementing these with local institutions, key stakeholders deepened their understanding of IHL and related norms during international conferences. Diplomats, for example, shared ideas about the protection due to people detained during armed conflict at a workshop held as part of the "Strengthening IHL" process (see *International law and cooperation*). Alongside national IHL committee and National Society members, some diplomats also refreshed their knowledge of IHL at the South Asian Teaching Sessions held in Bangladesh (see *Bangladesh*) and Nepal (see *Nepal*).

### **Scholars/researchers consider similarities between Islam and IHL**

Religious scholars and researchers contributed to the dialogue on the similarities between Islamic jurisprudence and IHL through initiatives of the Qom Centre, the focal point for studies on the topic, which received ICRC technical and financial support to host and attend events. Notably, scholars of Islamic jurisprudence deliberated on the subject during a workshop co-organized by the Qom Centre and a local research institute. More broadly, scholars and researchers found themselves with greater access to resource materials, following the launch, including in electronic formats, of the Qom Centre's English and Farsi publications on Islamic jurisprudence and IHL.

### **Experts discuss health care delivery during emergencies**

Local and international health and disaster management specialists shared their expertise in addressing medical needs during

armed conflict at a workshop co-organized with the National Society as part of the Health Care in Danger project. Participants, among them representatives of the Iranian Red Crescent and other National Societies, explored ways to address challenges that could prevent them from fulfilling their responsibilities.

### Civil society raises awareness of IHL and humanitarian concerns

Academics, NGOs, and other members of civil society discussed IHL and humanitarian concerns at meetings/fora organized with and by local institutions, including groups that had signed agreements with the ICRC to help it secure support for IHL. These events covered topics such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the international law of the sea.

The general public enhanced its awareness of IHL and neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action through the media's broad coverage of Movement activities and humanitarian issues – thanks partly to ICRC information campaigns, National Society-facilitated meetings with media representatives, and ICRC-sponsored participation by journalists in international workshops.

### Lecturers express interest in offering IHL courses

Integration of the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme into the national curriculum advanced; the adaptation/integration of modules in 10 textbooks was under way, as per an agreement signed by the Ministry of Education, the national IHL committee and the ICRC.

Some university lecturers expressed interest in teaching IHL courses, following regular dialogue with the ICRC and their participation in international courses. Students improved their knowledge of IHL at specific events, for example, by interpreting pertinent IHL rules during an exercise simulating a non-international armed conflict and at a workshop on nuclear weapons. They demonstrated their aptitude at international competitions (see *Bangkok* and *New Delhi*). Scholars embarked on IHL studies, and universities received IHL resource materials.

## RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

In line with their 2012 partnership agreement, the Iranian Red Crescent and the ICRC worked together in restoring family links, helping address the humanitarian consequences of weapon contamination, promoting IHL and humanitarian values, physical rehabilitation and the Health Care in Danger project (see above).

Cooperation within the framework of a separate agreement on physical rehabilitation continued through joint initiatives abroad, including training in orthotic services in Iraq and workshops on making orthopaedic shoes in Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania.

National Society staff/volunteers increased their capacity to assist vulnerable people, respond to emergencies and raise awareness of the Movement after attending ICRC-hosted courses on topics such as promoting the Fundamental Principles, providing family-links services and handling nuclear, radiological, biological and other emergencies.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total		
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>				
RCMs collected		139		
RCMs distributed		79		
<b>Reunifications, transfers and repatriations</b>				
Human remains transferred/repatriated		82		
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons<sup>1</sup></b>				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		153	37	67
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		79		
	<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	13		
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		296	65	117
<b>UAMs/SCs*, including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</b>				
UAM/SC cases still being handled by the ICRC/National Society at the end of the reporting period		5	2	
<b>Documents</b>				
Official documents relayed between family members across border/front lines		13		
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Restoring family links</b>				
RCMs collected		53		
RCMs distributed		111		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		623		

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

<sup>1</sup> not including people missing as a consequence of the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war