

# LONDON

COVERING: Ireland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland



Set up in 2003, the London mission focuses on pursuing humanitarian diplomacy and facilitating ICRC operations in the field. Through contact with the British government, armed forces, members of parliament, think-tanks, the media and international NGOs, it seeks to improve understanding of and secure broad support for IHL and ICRC and Movement operations. It works with the Irish authorities on the incorporation of IHL into national legislation. The London mission operates in partnership with the British Red Cross in a wide range of areas of common interest and cooperates with the Irish Red Cross Society.

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

### In 2013:

- ▶ the British authorities received input on IHL/humanitarian considerations for military policies and operations through formal evidence submitted by the ICRC to a parliamentary inquiry on the future of British defence
- ▶ the Department of Justice and penitentiary authorities in Northern Ireland received, through confidential reports and dialogue, ICRC findings and recommendations on the humanitarian situation of detainees there
- ▶ people affected by sectarian violence/past conflict in Northern Ireland accessed mediation, counselling and other types of support from 9 ICRC-supported community groups working to mitigate the consequences of the violence
- ▶ a series of targeted events engaged policy-makers, legal, humanitarian and academic circles, diaspora groups, the media and the general public in discussions on a broad range of operational and thematic humanitarian issues

## YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

### EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)

Protection	810
Assistance	-
Prevention	1,377
Cooperation with National Societies	414
General	-
	<b>2,601</b>

of which: Overheads 159

### IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>114%</b>
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### PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	3
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	0

## CONTEXT

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (hereafter UK) continued to exert influence internationally, as demonstrated by its participation in military operations in Afghanistan and Mali; international aid programmes; permanent membership of the UN Security Council; and leadership on key issues, including humanitarian support in the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria), peace initiatives for that country, and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, on which the G8 adopted a declaration under the UK's presidency. Emerging crises elsewhere – in the Central African Republic (hereafter CAR) and South Sudan, for instance – were also on the UK's international agenda.

Preparations continued for the withdrawal of British forces from Afghanistan. Following the handover of people held at the Parwan detention facility to the Afghan authorities by the United States of America, the UK became the sole foreign entity holding detainees in the country.

Domestic security-threat levels were downgraded elsewhere in the UK, but remained at 'severe' in Northern Ireland, where sectarian violence, fuelled by intercommunal tensions, the 2012 flag protests and the legacy of past conflict, persisted.

In March, in a referendum held by the government of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, the majority voted to remain an overseas UK territory. The referendum for Scottish independence in 2014 was the subject of debate throughout the year.

Ireland held the presidency of the European Union (EU) for the first half of 2013.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued to develop its position as a key reference on IHL and humanitarian issues. Contacts with lawmakers, academics, the media and others enabled the ICRC to: communicate key messages and influence operational/policy decisions based on IHL and humanitarian principles; raise awareness of the needs arising from armed conflicts and other situations of violence, including in Northern Ireland; and enlist support for the Movement's humanitarian endeavours worldwide.

Through bilateral meetings, high-level visits and briefings by ICRC representatives, parliamentary committees, government bodies and international organizations learnt more about the humanitarian situation and ICRC operations in contexts of military or diplomatic interest to Ireland and the UK. Irish authorities also drew on ICRC input for shaping the humanitarian agenda during Ireland's EU presidency. Continuing to serve as a major source of reference on IHL, the ICRC submitted, for the first time in its history, formal evidence to a UK parliamentary inquiry aimed at reviewing the UK's defence framework and shaping its future military policies. Notably, it advised parliamentarians on the applicability of IHL in future military operations and urged them to consider the legal and humanitarian implications of the development and use of new weapons, means and methods of warfare. It also encouraged the further development of military doctrine on the protection and provision of health care in armed conflict. Dialogue with the Ministry of Defence on operational and policy concerns related to British military operations in Afghanistan continued.

Networking among the authorities in Belfast, Dublin and London, as well as among stakeholders from various groups, enabled the ICRC to raise awareness of the needs engendered by sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and to clarify its neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian response. The ICRC supported nine organizations that helped communities cope with the consequences of such violence, which included paramilitary practices, and residual effects of the past conflict. Contacts among stakeholders also enabled the ICRC to develop an analysis of the humanitarian situation of detainees in Northern Ireland, particularly in Maghaberry Prison. It submitted two reports to the Department of Justice and the penitentiary authorities on its findings and recommendations, which paved the way for further dialogue on the issue. Efforts to help resolve the cases of people still unaccounted for in connection with the past conflict continued, although little progress was made.

The ICRC sought engagement with circles of influence in Ireland and the UK, including policy-makers, the legal, academic and humanitarian communities, the media and diaspora groups. It organized/co-organized a series of tailored events that covered operational and IHL-related issues, including humanitarian access in Syria, women in armed conflict, the Health Care in Danger project and the Arms Trade Treaty. These events drew attention to the plight of conflict-affected people worldwide, engaged experts and others concerned in discussions, communicated key messages aimed at fostering decision-making that took stock of IHL and humanitarian principles, and secured support for the Movement's activities. Multimedia content disseminated via traditional and social media relayed these messages to a wider audience.

Partnership with the British Red Cross continued both locally and globally, covering promotion of IHL and the goals of the Health Care in Danger project, institutional cooperation and international activities. The Irish Red Cross Society and the ICRC continued to develop their working relationship, with the former receiving support for its communication and IHL dissemination programmes.

## CIVILIANS

In Northern Ireland, communities continued to be divided by the legacy of past conflict, intercommunal tensions and sectarian violence, including paramilitary practices, in which young people were often involved. Nine community-based organizations working to mitigate the effects of such violence received ICRC support, mainly through funding. For example, through these organizations, former prisoners and members of armed groups received support for their psychological/social needs born of the past conflict; and vulnerable youth accessed individual counselling, advice on safe behaviour and employment opportunities. Through the intercession of one organization, young men who had been driven out of their community by threats of paramilitary attacks were able to return home.

Six of the 16 people officially known as "the disappeared", who had gone missing during the conflict, were still unaccounted for; their cases remained under investigation. Dialogue with key stakeholders – the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR), the British and Irish authorities, family members of those missing, the victims' organization WAVE Trauma Centre, and armed groups – aimed to facilitate the

exchange of any information that may help in locating the bodies. During a round-table co-hosted by Queen's University in Belfast, the ICLVR, WAVE and the ICRC outlined their work on the issue, focusing on the humanitarian consequences for the families, and discussed ways to move the remaining cases forward. The ICRC explored the possibility of further efforts in this regard.

Broad networking among representatives of various groups, and among authorities in Belfast, Dublin and London, helped enhance understanding of the ICRC's neutral approach and humanitarian activities in Northern Ireland.

### **PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM**

Confidential dialogue with the British authorities, including the Permanent Joint Headquarters under the Joint Forces Command of the Ministry of Defence, focused on military policies and practice, particularly with regard to people held by British forces in Afghanistan and the imminent handover of security responsibilities to the Afghan authorities; the ICRC provided input on policy and legal analyses.

Discussions on ICRC visits to security detainees in the UK were ongoing. Meanwhile, having formalized its extramural role with regard to detention in Northern Ireland, the ICRC engaged with various stakeholders to gain an insight into the situation of detainees, particularly those housed in separate wings in Maghaberry Prison. On this basis, it shared its independent findings, humanitarian concerns and recommendations confidentially with the Department of Justice and the Northern Ireland Prison Service in two formal reports, which were received positively and paved the way for further dialogue with penitentiary authorities.

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

#### **Authorities consult ICRC on operational concerns and humanitarian agenda**

Bilateral meetings, supplemented by high-level visits and briefings from ICRC representatives, kept the relevant authorities and international organizations up to date on the humanitarian needs and challenges in contexts such as the CAR, South Sudan and Syria, as well as in Northern Ireland (see *Civilians* and *People deprived of their freedom*), and, where pertinent, encouraged them to take action.

Such dialogue also aimed to encourage decision-making that took humanitarian principles into account and supported IHL and neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. In shaping the humanitarian agenda during Ireland's EU presidency, Irish authorities drew on ICRC input on obstacles to humanitarian activities in Syria, access to conflict-affected people in Somalia and nuclear disarmament. UK parliamentarians consulted the ICRC on policy and defence matters (see below). Both Ireland and the UK supported the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty and completed domestic legal processes enabling them to ratify it on EU authorization. The national IHL committees/National Societies worked on the ratification of Additional Protocol III (Ireland) and the Hague Convention on Cultural Property (Ireland and the UK).

#### **UK parliament taps into ICRC expertise for incorporating IHL in future defence policies**

Interaction with the UK parliament, the Cabinet Office and the Department for International Development increased in breadth and depth, with key parliamentary and governmental committees

drawing on the ICRC's expertise for humanitarian policy-making and IHL-related issues.

For the first time, the ICRC submitted formal evidence to a parliamentary inquiry, part of a series of inquiries carried out by the Defence Select Committee with the aim of reviewing the UK's defence framework and shaping future military policies. In it, the ICRC advised the parliament on IHL applicability in military operations, including those conducted overseas, and called on decision-makers to carefully assess the legal implications and potential humanitarian consequences of the development/use of new weapons, means and methods of warfare. It also encouraged the further development of specific military doctrine relating to the protection and provision of health care in armed conflict.

Operational dialogue continued with the UK's Defence Ministry on the conduct of hostilities by British troops in Afghanistan (see *People deprived of their freedom*). Members of the British armed forces learnt more about IHL and ICRC activities in armed conflict through presentations at military colleges and training institutions. A representative of the Irish armed forces participated as an instructor at an international IHL workshop for senior military officers (see *International law and cooperation*).

Discussions with the Police Service of Northern Ireland tackled its law enforcement policies, and helped enhance police personnel's understanding of the ICRC's work, particularly in Northern Ireland.

#### **Events and media engagements stimulate discussion of humanitarian issues**

Authorities, policy-makers, think-tanks, legal experts, academics, NGOs and other stakeholders exchanged views on a wide range of thematic and operational issues through a series of 20 tailored events organized/co-organized by the ICRC. In December, the Royal Society of Medicine, the British Red Cross and the ICRC co-hosted, as part of the Health Care in Danger project, a conference at which stakeholders were encouraged to implement the recommendations developed at the various experts' meetings associated with the project. At a Chatham House event, the ICRC called on States to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty and shared its views on challenges to the treaty's implementation. In London, a photo exhibition co-organized by the British Red Cross and the Somali Red Crescent Society chronicled the Movement's humanitarian activities in Somalia and provided opportunities to meet with Somali diaspora groups, some of whom retained links back home. Another photo exhibition that ran in Belfast and Dublin drew attention to the particular vulnerabilities of women caught up in armed conflict. Other events covered humanitarian access in Syria; operations in Africa, the Americas and the Middle East; urban violence; nuclear weapons; the law of occupation; and the points of intersection between IHL and international human rights law.

Proactive media engagement provided additional channels to: promote IHL; relay key messages to and garner support for humanitarian action among decision-makers; and broaden awareness of humanitarian principles, the Health Care in Danger project and Movement operations in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. Various audiences – political figures, members of the international community, other humanitarian actors, journalists and the wider public – learnt more about the Movement through articles, videos and updates posted on the ICRC's website and on social media

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platforms. An interview with the ICRC's director of operations on the difficulties confronting humanitarian work in today's conflicts was broadcast on BBC television and reached viewers worldwide.

### **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Partnership with the British Red Cross continued locally and globally. Cooperation on operational and institutional priorities covered, in particular: assistance for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence; capacity-building support for National Societies working in conflict-affected countries; staff secondment/training; mobilization of support for the goals of the Health Care in Danger project; promotion of IHL and the Movement; and application of the Safer Access Framework in the British Red Cross's domestic and overseas activities.

The Irish Red Cross continued its IHL dissemination programme. With ICRC support, it held a conference at which experts discussed challenges to the relevance and applicability of IHL in contemporary armed conflicts. It also mounted a photo exhibition in Dublin (see above), which helped raise its public profile in Ireland.