



ICRC

NEWSLETTER

of the ICRC Regional Delegation Belgrade,
covering Serbia, Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro

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EHL Programme handover session held on November 28 at the Macedonian Red Cross

MACEDONIA FIRST TO TAKE OVER EHL PROGRAMME

After six fruitful years of joint implementation of the Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) programme, the ICRC is now starting its planned handover to the ministries of education in the region.

This international educational programme, tailor-made for teenagers, is designed to help both teachers and students to develop a basic understanding of humanitarian law and respect for human dignity in situations of armed conflict and violence, and encourage their humanitarian engagement for the benefit of the community. After it was introduced in the Western Balkans in the early 2000's, it is now at very developed stages of integration into regular school curricula across the region.

The Balkan countries were among the first to recognise the need for this kind of a programme, to start testing it in schools and to consider where to place it in the regular school curricula. That decision having been reached (final years of primary schools in Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, secondary schools in Serbia), several significant steps were undertaken in order to

ensure the programme's smooth integration. One of them was the creation of context-adapted handbooks for future EHL teachers, which not only laid out the details of how to plan and execute the programme, but also gave explanation of the basic rules of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which lies at the core of EHL, and offered abundant resource material.

Yet another step has been the training of teachers for successful classroom imple-

EHL was created by the ICRC and the Education Development Centre from Boston, USA. It introduces adolescents, 13-18 years of age, to the basic rules of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In 2003, the European Union accepted a pledge, urging all its members and prospective candidates to implement IHL in their formal school curricula. EHL was then proposed as a possible tool for such implementation. The programme is also run in more than 90 countries worldwide.

mentation. To that effect, the Civic Education/Culture teachers across the region have been trained to explore humanitarian law with their students - this education has been completed in Macedonia and Montenegro, while teachers seminars are in full swing in Serbia and in Albania.

An important aspect in achieving the programme's sustainability is the academic training of future teachers of Civic Education/Culture. With this in mind, the ICRC organized in October a regional academic meeting, where possibilities of offering EHL education in university settings were explored. As a result, the Faculties of Philosophy in Macedonia and in Montenegro have started developing the corresponding syllabi, following suit of the Belgrade Faculty of Political Science.

Having been the first to complete all these steps, and with nine school hours of EHL being already taught in the final year in primary education as of 2007/08, the Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science has now formally taken over the EHL programme.

Working Group on Missing in Kosovo

PRISTINA AND BELGRADE CONTINUE DIALOGUE

On November 7, Belgrade was the venue of another session of the Working Group (WG) on persons unaccounted for in relations to the events in Kosovo between 1998 and 2000. As before, the session was chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in its capacity of a neutral intermediary. Given the political complexities related to Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence of February 17 this year, the mere fact that the WG dialogue was able to continue unhindered was a positive sign.

This was the third time that the Belgrade and Pristina delegations met this year - twice in Belgrade and once in Pristina. The participants reconfirmed their belief that the problem of the missing is above all a humanitarian issue that, as such, requires maximum efforts on all sides to provide the much needed information to the families of the missing.

As has become customary procedure, the WG reported on the progress made this year in clarifying the fate of the persons still missing after the 1999 conflict. Since January 2008, 60 more cases have been closed - 59 of them due to positive identification (followed by handovers of remains to their families), while one person, up to that time list-



(PHOTO: © ICRC)

Representatives of the Pristina Delegation and a Belgrade family association shake hands before the briefing.

ed as missing, was located alive. The total number of those still unaccounted for in Kosovo now stands at 1919 - more than four thousands down from the original figure of nearly 6000 missing persons.

Despite the progress, the pace of clarifying the fate of missing persons remains slow.

The participants agreed that more has to be done in locating yet unidentified gravesites and whereabouts of missing persons in order to achieve more concrete progress and meet the growing expectations of the families.

After the session, a briefing was held for the Serbian families, with whom the two delegations shared information on their plans and activities and answered questions.

Soon after that, a similar briefing for Kosovo Albanian families was also organised on the sidelines of the session of the Sub-Working Group on the Missing in Kosovo held on December 5, in Pristina.

Of the original number of more than 34,000 persons reported missing throughout the territory of former Yugoslavia, there remain nearly 17,000 missing persons - most of them in Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H) - whose fate remains unknown to their families following the 1990s conflicts in B-H, Croatia and Kosovo. The ICRC continues to address the authorities throughout the region, urging them to fulfil their responsibilities in providing answers to families, and speeding up the search for the mortal remains of their loved ones.

EHL TEACHERS GET TRAINED

Towards the end of the year 2008, Serbia's Ministry of Education, the Red Cross of Serbia and the ICRC carried out initial training in Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) for teachers of Civic Education in secondary schools.

On the basis of previous testing and evaluation of this international education programme, the Ministry had recommended that its contents be included in the subject of Civic Education.

In the course of intense one-day training, the teachers have been introduced to the

programme itself - its contents, rationale, interactive methodology, evolution of the programme in Serbia, teaching materials adapted to the Serbian context as well as the basic principles of IHL.

They have also received the hot-off-the-press teachers' manual, together with further resource materials, including the "Examples of Chivalry" video stories from Serbian history illustrating respect of IHL.

This first round of training will be followed by other workshops in the months to come.



BELGRADE HOSTS ANOTHER REGIONAL IHL COURSE

Fifth Regional Course on International Humanitarian Law held at Belgrade's Faculty of Political Science



As has already become a tradition, in the last week of September, the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade played host to students and professors from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia in the fifth annual Regional Course in International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The Course aims at providing an opportunity for interested advanced students of law, political science, security studies and military and police academies to upgrade their understanding of IHL. To that effect, this year's lecturers, coming from Universities of Geneva, Warsaw, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Mostar, Belgrade and Nis, as well as from the Red Cross milieu, presented the fundamentals of IHL in the light of issues and challenges arising in contemporary conflicts, such as the "war on terror", "unlawful combatants", private military companies and others. The questions of state responsibility for the implementation of IHL and of individual criminal responsibility were



PHOTO: © ICRC

The very diverse audience included students of military and police academies.

also of utmost interest, given the region's recent history.

The students put their legal skills to practice by analysing "real-life" situations arising in an imaginary armed conflict, culminating in the simulation of a trial before a criminal court set up in order to sanction

IHL violations committed in the course of the conflict. It was precisely this combination of theory and practice, the experience of immediately putting the acquired knowledge to a very realistic test, that was particularly appreciated by the students.

This year's Course was co-organised by the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Belgrade, the Red Cross of Serbia, the Regional Delegation of the ICRC, and the OSCE Mission to Serbia.



IMPORTANCE OF IHL

International Humanitarian Law is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare.

In 2006, the Geneva Conventions, of which the ICRC is the principal and official guardian, became the first international treaties in modern history to attain universal ratification. However, attaining universal compliance with this important set of legal norms is a challenge for which we all bear responsibility.



Student's Impressions:

"This sort of a seminar is very important for young people, because they are at an age when they still believe in high ideals and justice. This is the right place for them to learn more about law and its rules, so that in a couple of years they can do their best to make better rules that can contribute more to having justice served in the best way possible," says Ema Vidak-Gojkovic, Zagreb Law School.

News in Brief

EHL IN MONTENEGRO

Elementary school "Olga Golovic" in Niksic is one of Montenegro's schools in which the programme of Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) is offered as an elective subject. Last year, the subject was taken up by 98 students, this year 108 have opted to build an in-depth understanding of humanitarian values and rules. The students go on displaying great creativity, cooperation, research initiatives and, together with their teacher, Snjezana Boskovic, organize humanitarian actions. This autumn, they have reached out to their 22 Roma classmates, putting their EHL values to practice in the best possible way.

IHL IN MONTENEGRO

Continuing the fruitful cooperation between the Law Faculty of Montenegro and the ICRC, the Faculty has started a Legal Clinic in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as part of the mandatory International Law Clinic for fourth-year students. The methodology employed is interactive, with the student in the focus of the education process. The classes include lectures, case studies and simulations of court trials. The Clinic has demonstrated that there is a great interest in IHL among students, and has once again confirmed the importance of practical exercises for the successful learning process.

ICRC TAKES PART IN ARMY DRILL

In November 2008, the ICRC and the Red Cross of Serbia (RCS) took part in the *Safe Path 08* military exercise held near Bujanovac in southern Serbia. Norway, Macedonia and Serbia participated in the exercise, during which a military field hospital, which Norway donated last year to the Serbian Army, was put to practical use for the first time. The ICRC's role was to simulate a visit to persons detained in relation to armed conflict, while the RCS was assigned with the tasks of setting up a camp for internally displaced persons and assisting military medical personnel with their First Aid Teams.

MISSION: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

What the ICRC does in the region:



Missing Persons: Collects and consolidates information that might help the responsible authorities to clarify the fate of persons gone missing during the conflicts in the region, and to recover their remains. Offers legal advice to the governments on how to legislate in favour of the families of missing persons so that the legal obstacles caused by the absence of a missing person can be overcome, allowing the family to get on with their lives.



Detention: Visits persons deprived of freedom held in relation to a conflict or internal violence to ensure that their conditions and treatment meet relevant international standards. It establishes a dialogue with the concerned authorities, to whom it submits its observations and appropriate recommendations.



Promotion of IHL:

Promotes the knowledge and implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), especially with the armed and security forces, and national authorities responsible for integrating IHL into national legislation.

Introduces IHL as well as humanitarian values into the curricula of public education with its Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) and Promotion of Human Values (PHV) programmes for adolescents.

Supports academic institutions in promoting IHL and international exchange of IHL experiences.



Cooperation with National Red Cross Societies:

Contributes to building and maintaining the capacity of the National Red Cross Societies to promote IHL, the principles and humanitarian values of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Consolidates the National Red Cross Societies' capacity to restore family links as part of the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent tracing network. Strengthens the National Societies' capacity to respond to the humanitarian needs arising from armed conflict or internal strife.

Assists the National Society in coping with other humanitarian activities, such as dealing with problems posed by the still present risk of mines and explosive remnants of war.



ICRC

www.icrc.org

International Committee of the Red Cross

Regional Delegation Belgrade

Vladimira Popovica 38-40, "19. avenija";
11070 New Belgrade, Serbia

T+ 381 11 228 55 45; F+ 381 11 228 55 50

E-mail: belgrade.bel@icrc.org

Skopje Mission

(covering Macedonia & Albania)
Bulevar Koco Racin bb; 1000 Skopje;
Macedonia

E-mail: skopje.sko@icrc.org