

## ICRC RESPONSE

## COVID-19 NEAR &amp; MIDDLE EAST

MAY 2020



## RAMADAN AMID CONFLICT AND COVID-19 THREAT

People across the Near and Middle East are marking Islam's holy month this year amid ongoing conflict, seasonal diseases and a worsening economic situation, in a region where the combined impact of protracted conflict and extreme weather has already reduced the access to food, health and education for many.

The novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) adds to the hardship and significantly alters the traditional celebrations by preventing large gatherings and restricting social visits among families and friends.

While frail health systems struggle to cope, people living in the camps for the displaced or in detention facilities, as well as migrants on the move are especially vulnerable.

The ICRC is supporting authorities with preventative measures in places of detention, water and sanitation services and material to boost hygiene standards and access to clean water, and helping supported medical facilities like hospitals, primary health care centers with donations of disinfectant materials and training.



## ICRC Iraq

28.04.2020

Delivery of 21 tonnes of materials to support health facilities and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society

## HUMANITARIAN WORK GOES ON

The ICRC is maintaining its range of activities to support people affected by the conflict, while adapting its way of working to the COVID-19 pandemic and putting every measure in place to protect its staff and those it serves from the disease.

The ICRC has reviewed its humanitarian response in cooperation with Movement partners, and is maintaining life-saving priority activities.

Our large-scale programs in the fields of water and habitat, health, economic security and humanitarian protection continue, not only to address conflict related needs, but also to improve the nutrition, sanitation and health status of vulnerable communities.



**Syria.** Delivering support where it is most needed. Together with the Syrian Red Crescent, we delivered essential medical equipment to Daraa National Hospital. It will help improve care for infants, patients with heart disease & those needing surgery.



## HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY CONTINUES

**27.04.2020**

ICRC's Director for Near and Middle East, Fabrizio Carboni, paid a virtual visit to the UN, meeting with Member States to discuss the ICRC's work in the region, our response to COVID-19, and their concerns during these challenging times





**Iraq.** As the COVID-19 crisis develops, the ICRC in Iraq strives to both ensure that its existing humanitarian programmes are not jeopardized in the mid to long term and adjust responses to address emerging health-related and other needs, including economic ones as a result of movement limitations and other measures implemented to contain the outbreak.



**Israel and the Occupied Territories.** The ICRC donated a consignment of vital intensive care equipment to Gazan hospitals. It includes a ventilator, patient monitors, defibrillators, suction devices, and pumps, which are key tools for treating patients suffering from serious cases of COVID-19. The ICRC also warns that more needs to be done to get Gaza ready to cope with a wider outbreak of COVID-19.

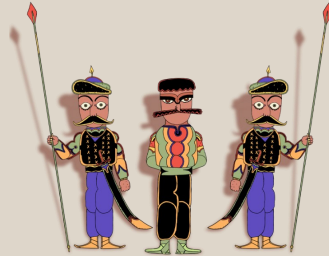
# CELEBRATING RAMADAN TOGETHER

Drama series are a part of Ramadan traditions in the Arab world, where many people tune in to watch their favorite shows right after Iftar. This Ramadan season the ICRC Regional Communication Centre in Cairo has produced a [series of short videos](#), each featuring a story inspired by folktales from the region, promoting the same values that underpin international humanitarian law.

## أخلاق الفرسان: قوانين الحرب في السيرة الشعبية

Do you know the story of Saif Ban Ye Yazan, from Yemen?

He was a knight, a commander who did not accept that water be turned into a weapon of war. In all his campaigns, he made sure civilians had access to drinkable water. Find out more about his story [here](#).



Do you know the story of Abu Zayd al-Hilali?

He was a brave warrior, a general who did not believe that civilians should suffer from war. No matter the fight, he did not let women, children and other non-combatants to be harmed. Check out his story [here](#).

In our time or in any time, according to our laws of war or according to our honour traditions, it is always a crime to strike those who cannot defend themselves.

[Explore these stories](#) with us.





## SPREADING INFORMATION AND PRACTICAL PREVENTION MEASURES WITH PARTNERS

As previous epidemics have shown, having access to timely, reliable information is an essential need in times of crisis. This is why we are working with other members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, as well as with local and international partners, to share reliable preventive messages and tips on how to cope with the situation.

### HELPING CHILDREN FACE THE PANDEMIC

No school, physical distancing and not knowing what lies ahead! The COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on children and parents alike. In addition to dealing with their own stresses, parents have to help children deal with an invisible, threat that has turned their world upside down.

To provide parents with ideas on how to make long periods of home confinement easier on children, the ICRC, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and a team of child psychologists, created a [short animation video](#). The video features a dialogue between a mother anxiously trying to make her reluctant son study, a situation many parents could relate to. Through this framing, the video showcases how parents can approach the topic of the pandemic with children, how it affects them and how they can all prepare to face it together.



### PARTNERING WITH MUSLIM SCHOLARS

Ahead of Ramadan, the ICRC asked five renowned Islamic scholars to help spread information about COVID-19 to Islamic populations in the region ahead of Islam's Holy month.

They talked about physical distancing, the necessary hygiene measures, the management of the dead, preparing for a possible spread of the disease in the places of detention and the respect due to healthcare workers.

### PASSING TIPS ON HOW TO KEEP WHEELCHAIRS COVID-FREE

This pandemic affects everyone. It is therefore important that our messages reflect the different life situations for the people we aim to serve.

As part of our information-as-aid campaign for the patients of our physical rehabilitation programmes, we shared a video with step-by-step information on how to correctly disinfect and sterilize wheelchairs. The video was posted on Telegram and [Facebook](#), resulting in a good level of engagement.

# ENGAGING WITH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Near and Middle East Regional Director of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Fabrizio Carboni, talks to TRT World about the health challenges and the socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19 in countries affected by violence and conflict.



Bi Kasr Al Taa, Al Jazeera's social program which discusses social issues from women's point of view, dedicated an episode to the role of women in fighting the spread of COVID-19. ICRC's Spokesperson Sarah Al-Zawqari, talked about the challenges of fighting COVID-19 in war-torn countries.



## Press conference

In a [joint press conference](#) with the President of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), the ICRC Head of Delegation in Tehran showed appreciation for the amazing work of the IRCS volunteers and medical staff across the country in response to COVID-19.

She emphasized the continued support provided to the IRCS in integrating the COVID-19 risk awareness messages in the education on the danger of mines in Western Iran. By supporting a local NGO in Mashhad, northeast of Iran, and providing personal protection equipment, the ICRC ensures the continuity of essential health and restoring family links services for those in need.

## Social Media

225 water tanks in Eastern Ghouta, serving over 200,000 people are disinfected every 24 hours by SARC volunteers, with the support of the ICRC.

[Twitter](#)





Naseer Shamma, a famous Iraqi musician and oud player, dedicated [this musical piece](#) to all health workers around the world and to the Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers tackling COVID-19. Enjoy the music!



The ICRC in Lebanon [shared a video](#) addressed to frontline workers on the need to take care of themselves too in times of crisis.



ICRC and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society started [Health Care in Action campaign](#) to honour health care workers and encourage support for their work.






In Aden, Yemen Coronavirus prevention messages are [shared in sign language](#), to ensure that all people have access to information and can support in fighting against the pandemic.



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We help people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything we can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering, often with our Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. We also seek to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.