



Jon Björgvinsson/ICRC

ICRC activities for migrants in Greece

What is the ICRC?

Created in 1863, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the oldest international humanitarian organization in the world. It is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*. The ICRC's exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect and assist victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. The institution can, however, offer its services to authorities in any humanitarian crisis if the need arises and if it can offer assistance of specific operational added value. It works today in 82 countries.

** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is composed of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the 190 individual National Societies.*

ICRC's approach to migration

The ICRC's work on behalf of vulnerable migrants and their families takes place mostly in areas affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence. We remain available at all times, to provide technical advice and/or operational support to authorities and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies within our areas of expertise, such as restoring family links, activities for detained migrants and other protection-related aspects.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) does not encourage or discourage migration. Rather, our focus is on helping the most vulnerable migrants, regardless of their legal status. We seek to

ensure that migrants receive the protection they are entitled to under international and domestic law, including the special protection afforded to certain categories of people, such as refugees and asylum seekers. We adapt our activities to migrants' needs and vulnerabilities, which vary from one place to another.

In Europe, the ICRC supports European National Societies to address the needs of vulnerable migrants, providing them with technical and operational support, with a specific focus in the field of Restoring Family Links (RFL). The ICRC also conducts forensic and detention activities in collaboration with local authorities.



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ICRC activities

The ICRC coordinates its activities in Greece with the larger emergency response led by the Hellenic Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In March 2016, the ICRC opened its mission in Greece.



Restoring Family Links (RFL) and Forensic Activities

Losing contact with family is a common consequence of migration. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, through the Family Links Network (www.familylinks.icrc.org), works to restore and maintain contact between family members.

• Support to the Hellenic Red Cross Tracing Service

The ICRC financially and technically supports the Hellenic Red Cross' (HRC) Tracing Service, which helps migrants keep in touch with their family or look for their missing family members. The ICRC

provides training and ensures the service is equipped with the best available tools. In cooperation with the HRC, the ICRC provides connectivity along the migratory route to avoid disruption of family links.

• Forensic activities

Many migrants have died when entering Greece (Aegean Sea and Evros River) and many bodies remain unidentified today. Behind each body is a worried family. The ICRC supports local authorities, including forensic authorities and the Hellenic Coast guard, to ensure the dignified management of dead bodies and appropriate identification procedures. It provides training for first responders and material support to relevant authorities. Following a number of shipwrecks, and at the request of the Greek authorities, an ICRC forensic expert currently assists with the identification and burial procedures and the collection of DNA samples.

Detention activities

The ICRC aims to secure humane treatment and conditions of detention for all detainees, regardless of the reasons for their arrest and detention. In a number of countries, the ICRC visits detained migrants to assess the conditions of detention and the treatment they receive, whether they are afforded due process of law, and whether they are able to maintain contact with the outside world. Upon request of the Greek authorities, the ICRC has been visiting detained migrants since 2012. It strives to maintain a constructive dialogue with the authorities concerned. In this framework, the ICRC organizes in cooperation with the authorities, roundtables and workshops on issues of concern. During its visits, the ICRC provides migrants, when needed, with the means to reestablish contacts with their family, including through the distribution of phone cards. It also distributes assistance in kind (hygiene materials and recreational items).

ICRC history in Greece

This is not the first time the ICRC has worked in Greece. During the Turkish-Greek conflict (1919-23), the ICRC visited prisoners of war and civilian detainees on both sides, and launched a large-scale relief operation to assist refugees.

During the Second World War, alarmed by the terrible famine, the ICRC was able to distribute large quantities of food from 1941 to 1944. It also visited political detainees and supported their families during the military junta of 1967-74.



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