

# BRUSSELS

**COVERING:** Institutions of the European Union (EU), NATO, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and specific armed forces in Western Europe, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Belgium

The ICRC has been working in Brussels since 1999, building strong institutional and operational relations with European Union institutions, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, NATO and its Parliamentary Assembly, key armed forces based in Western Europe and Belgium. It aims to make the ICRC's mandate better known, to mobilize political, diplomatic and financial support for its activities and to ensure that relevant military decision-makers in Western Europe view the ICRC as the main reference point for neutral and independent humanitarian action.

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

### In 2013:

- ▶ dialogue, including high-level meetings and briefings, with institutions of the European Union (EU) encouraged the incorporation of IHL/humanitarian considerations in the decisions, policies and activities of EU bodies
- ▶ privileged dialogue, centring on IHL/humanitarian concerns relating to military operations, expanded with NATO's Strategic Commands, with ICRC input included in a lessons-learnt paper on the transition in Afghanistan
- ▶ coordination with the Brussels-based Red Cross/EU Office strengthened Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy with European institutions, including on issues relating to migration
- ▶ public awareness of issues facing health care delivery in armed conflicts/other situations of violence grew through a communication campaign implemented jointly with the EU and National Societies in 7 European countries
- ▶ the Belgian authorities and the ICRC maintained dialogue on IHL-related issues and ICRC operations in major humanitarian crises

## YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)	
Protection	62
Assistance	-
Prevention	2,537
Cooperation with National Societies	166
General	-
	<b>2,765</b>

*of which: Overheads 169*

IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>95%</b>

PERSONNEL	
Mobile staff	2
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	15

PROTECTION	Total
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>	
<b>ICRC visits</b>	
Detainees visited	2
Detainees visited and monitored individually	2
Number of visits carried out	2
Number of places of detention visited	2

## CONTEXT

While facing an economic crisis, the European Union (EU) maintained its involvement in crisis management and conflict resolution worldwide through political mediation or other means, and remained a major global humanitarian donor. The EU expressed particular concern about the conflicts in the Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria), and continued to follow developments in Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Israel and the occupied territories, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, the South Caucasus and Yemen. A total of 16 EU field missions within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy were in progress at year's end.

EU member States and institutions continued to implement the provisions in the Lisbon Treaty for developing a common European foreign and security policy, in particular by establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS), headed by the high representative for foreign affairs and security policy. In this regard, the Political and Security Committee remained a key body.

The rotating bi-annual presidency, held in 2013 by Ireland and Lithuania, chaired certain working groups of the EU Council. The Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) under the European Commission remained the primary EU body handling humanitarian affairs.

NATO continued to make arrangements for the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan in 2014, while preparing to shift from a combat to a training and advisory role in support of Afghan forces.

Council of Europe bodies and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) continued to address issues associated with migration and missing persons and with certain contexts in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The Brussels delegation continued to foster relations with EU institutions and NATO, and contributed to ICRC headquarters' dialogue with the Council of Europe and the OSCE, to ensure that IHL and humanitarian issues were given due consideration in the decisions, policies and programmes of these bodies. It highlighted specific humanitarian issues, such as safe access to health care in armed conflict or other situations of violence, with a view to aiding European efforts to protect and assist people affected by such situations worldwide.

Discussions with EU institutions – including both presidencies, the EU Council, the European Commission and ECHO, and the EEAS – centred on IHL concerns and the humanitarian situation/ICRC response in crises in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, particularly in Afghanistan and Syria. Dialogue also tackled issues relating to migration and missing persons; the goals of the Health Care in Danger project; the Arms Trade Treaty; the implementation of the EU guidelines on promoting compliance with IHL; concerns relating to EU data protection reforms; and the ICRC's mandate and working procedures. During high-level meetings, the ICRC's president discussed pressing humanitarian issues with the president of the European Commission, the commissioner for international cooperation, humanitarian aid and crisis response, the EU special representative for human rights, and senior officials

of the EEAS. A declaration by the high representative for foreign affairs and security policy on behalf of EU member States, on the 150th anniversary of the ICRC, reaffirmed the EU's support for the Movement.

Interaction continued with NATO headquarters, while privileged operational dialogue and coordination with NATO's Allied Command Operations (ACO, in Mons, Belgium) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT, in Norfolk, Virginia, United States of America) and their subordinate elements expanded, following the revision of a tripartite memorandum of understanding in 2012. Talks covered operational issues in contexts of common interest, the specific role and mandate of the ICRC and other IHL/humanitarian concerns related to military operations. Notably, ICRC recommendations were incorporated in a lessons-learned paper on the transition in Afghanistan that focused on the humanitarian aspects of redeployment. ICRC participation in NATO conferences, and presentations on IHL and the ICRC during NATO training activities, including predeployment exercises, enhanced dialogue and mutual understanding at field and central levels.

Besides the information it regularly circulated among its wide network of contacts, the ICRC promoted IHL, humanitarian principles and Movement activities at events held in Brussels by think-tanks, NGOs and other humanitarian organizations. Events co-organized with the College of Europe enabled academics and civil servants to learn more about these matters and to discuss current humanitarian challenges. A large-scale public communication campaign implemented in partnership with ECHO and National Societies in several European countries broadened awareness of the issues raised by the Health Care in Danger project.

Continuous contact with the Red Cross/EU Office ensured the coherence of Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy, particularly of efforts to clarify the strictly humanitarian objectives of the Movement's family-links activities for vulnerable migrants. The ICRC maintained regular dialogue with the Belgian authorities and cooperation with the Belgian Red Cross on IHL-related and other humanitarian concerns.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

People transferred to Belgium from elsewhere, including detainees serving their sentences in the country following their conviction by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (see *Europe*) and former internees resettled in Belgium following their release from the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, were visited or monitored by the ICRC.

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

### EEAS chief reaffirms EU support for Movement

Meetings with the EU Council, the European Commission, both EU presidencies, and the EEAS encouraged the incorporation of IHL/humanitarian perspectives in EU decisions, policies and programmes. These included high-level meetings with the president of the European Commission, the commissioner for international cooperation, humanitarian aid and crisis response and the special representative for human rights; briefings with the Political and Security Committee and the Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid; a session on humanitarian access organized by the latter; and an EEAS conference on managing international crises.

Discussions centred on the humanitarian situation and operational priorities in conflict-affected countries (see *Context*); the ICRC's mandate and working procedures and the potential implications for humanitarian activities of EU data protection reforms; issues related to migration and missing persons; the Health Care in Danger project; the Arms Trade Treaty; and implementation of the EU guidelines on promoting IHL compliance. A briefing before the Working Group on International Law tackled the "Strengthening IHL" process, pledges made at the 31st International Conference, extraterritorial use of force and an ICRC report on the use of force in armed conflicts.

Such dialogue buttressed field operations and working relations with ECHO, and enlisted/reinforced support for the ICRC. On the organization's 150th anniversary, the EU's foreign affairs and security policy chief declared, on behalf of member States, full support for the Movement's mission.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE received advice on IHL/humanitarian issues through dialogue led by ICRC headquarters with the delegation's support.

### **Privileged dialogue with NATO Strategic Commands expands**

Dialogue with NATO and European armed forces fostered respect for IHL and understanding of the ICRC's mandate.

Headquarters-level interaction with NATO encompassed the eighth annual staff talks and a high-level meeting with its secretary-general. Military-level discussions were held with the Military Committee, International Military Staff, the ACO and the ACT (see below); the ICRC also participated in Allied Reach, a high-level seminar. Dialogue addressed IHL, the protection of civilians and medical personnel/infrastructure, and operations in Afghanistan/other contexts; it also touched on concerns regarding women and war, private military and security companies in armed conflicts, the use of chemical weapons in law enforcement, and health care access in conflicts/other emergencies. Three NATO representatives attended a Health Care in Danger workshop in Australia (see *Suva*). The ICRC participated in the spring session of NATO's Parliamentary Assembly.

The revision in 2012 of a memorandum of understanding among the ACO, the ACT and the ICRC paved the way for operational dialogue on humanitarian concerns with both commands and their subordinate elements. Bilateral and tripartite meetings were held throughout the year, including at ACO and ACT headquarters, and an engagement plan signed, consolidating coordination. Engagement with both Joint Force Commands, the Naval Striking and Support Forces and the Rapid Reaction Corps contributed to this dialogue. The Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre incorporated ICRC recommendations – provided in 2012 – in its draft paper on the transition in Afghanistan, with a focus on humanitarian issues related to redeployment. Discussions on a possible NATO-ICRC lessons-learned project on 10 years of ISAF operations continued. Contacts were established with the NATO Standardization Agency to discuss doctrines pertaining to humanitarian issues.

Working-level dialogue with Europe-based US forces continued through meetings with the US Africa and US Europe Commands and with US Army Europe.

### **More NATO bodies involve ICRC in IHL training**

NATO officers, including ISAF troops preparing for deployment, learnt more about IHL and the ICRC through courses at NATO schools/training centres or military institutes of member States, and during military exercises, including the main NATO Response Force exercise, Steadfast Jazz 2013.

An agreement signed with the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany, enabled expansion/diversification of the ICRC's role in teaching IHL. Likewise, contacts with European special forces and NATO's Special Operations Forces led to involvement in IHL instruction at NATO training centres in Belgium and Germany. Cooperation on virtual IHL learning was envisaged with the ACT and NATO's Modelling and Simulation Centre of Excellence.

### **The public learns about issues facing health care delivery**

Dialogue with the Belgian authorities covered IHL promotion, development and implementation and ICRC operations in crisis contexts, with an emphasis on access to health care, in preparation for an experts' meeting in 2014.

Meetings with Brussels-based humanitarian actors, including UN agencies, strengthened humanitarian coordination in the field and with the European Commission. Events organized by think-tanks, NGOs and other humanitarian organizations provided opportunities to exchange views on IHL/humanitarian issues and updates on each other's activities. Representatives from the European Commission, OCHA and the VOICE NGO network attended a panel discussion organized by the Swiss Mission to the EU, at which the ICRC's president spoke about the challenges facing humanitarian work.

Academics and civil servants discussed the vulnerabilities of people affected by armed conflict at the 14th Bruges Colloquium on IHL, co-organized with the College of Europe. Post-graduate students enriched their knowledge of IHL in ICRC-run courses at College of Europe campuses in Belgium and Poland.

Operational updates and press releases kept EU and NATO contacts, European media and the general public informed of the ICRC's work. A poster campaign implemented with ECHO and National Societies in seven European countries drew attention to and mobilized public opinion on the issues raised by the Health Care in Danger project.

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

Coordination with the Red Cross/EU Office ensured the coherence of Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy with European institutions, particularly of efforts to clarify the strictly humanitarian nature of the Movement's family-links activities for vulnerable migrants (see *Europe*). It also helped in monitoring progress in pledges made by EU member States/National Societies at the 31st International Conference.

The Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants and the European Legal Support Group drew on the ICRC's IHL expertise. The ICRC attended meetings of the International Federation's Disaster Management Working Group as an observer.

The Belgian Red Cross and the ICRC maintained dialogue on IHL-related issues and humanitarian concerns and participated in IHL events.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
ICRC visits <sup>1</sup>				
			Women	Minors
Detainees visited		2		
Detainees visited and monitored individually		2		
Number of visits carried out		2		
Number of places of detention visited		2		

1. Belgium