



ICRC

# The International Committee of the Red Cross in Iraq

## 2008 Facts and Figures

### Humanitarian Situation

Years have passed in Iraq during which civilians lived under the wing of constant fear, bloody violence stole so many lives and daily life was far from being normal.

2008 brought some hope and in the past months began lifting the dust accumulated over the years. Security has improved in certain areas, noticeably in big cities, and levels of violence fluctuated considerably during the year. Iraqis followed their honed survival instincts, telling where to go and where to definitively avoid. Civilian casualty numbers were the lowest since 2003. Nevertheless, despite certain improvements, the figures remain some of the highest in the world.



A few months of relative calm were not enough to revive the failing infrastructure, which has suffered for almost 30 years. Essentials such as health care, water, sewage, and electrical power remained vastly inadequate to meet the needs of the population. For many Iraqis, these services are today beyond their reach. Unemployment and poverty levels were high and little improvement was seen in the daily life of civilians. Sporadic displacement continued during 2008 and while a limited number of Iraqis returned home from abroad, several hundred thousands are still living as refugees in neighbouring countries or displaced in Iraq. Women found themselves forced to be the sole breadwinners of their families because the men of the house are missing, detained or dead.

Improvements in the security situation allowed the ICRC to expand its geographical presence and humanitarian response capacity in Iraq, in order to provide emergency assistance to more people, especially in the most affected areas. ICRC's policy of developing relations and networking with the different parties to the conflict opened the road to difficult areas and led to an increased acceptance of the ICRC's presence and activities.

Today, the ICRC delegation for Iraq counts 520 staff, out of which 80 are international delegates. Its existing set-up of sub-delegations and offices in Baghdad, Basra, Najaf, Erbil, Sulaymaniya and Dohuk was reinforced by new offices in Ramadi and Khanaqin.

Juan-Pedro Schaerer  
Head of Delegation

### Overview of activities

In May, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) signed a headquarters agreement with the Government of Iraq, which further enhanced the ICRC's ability to provide protection and assistance to the victims of the conflict.

In October, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Geneva between Iran, Iraq and the ICRC outlining the framework for clarifying the fate of persons missing in connection with the Iran-Iraq war. Meanwhile the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-committee continued its work on dealing with cases of persons missing from the 1990-1992 Gulf War.



## Overview of activities

Throughout 2008, delegates of the ICRC visited thousands of detainees and internees held under the authority of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I) in the internment facilities of Camp Bucca, in southern Iraq and in Camp Cropper in Baghdad as well as in temporary internment facilities.

Owing to the improved security situation and the advanced dialogue with the relevant Iraqi authorities, the ICRC started visiting several prisons under the control of the Iraqi Central Government. As for the last 17 years, ICRC delegates continued to regularly visit people detained under the authority of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Assistance to hospitals remained a key feature of ICRC action, and despite a reduction in overall levels of violence, the toll of wounded remained high overloading hospitals and blood bank services. Selected physical rehabilitation centres were supported throughout Iraq and a new centre, built and equipped by the ICRC, was opened in Falluja.

In 2008, ICRC water and sanitation activities concentrated on the rehabilitation of existing infrastructures, whose poor condition put the supply of safe drinking water or the quality of life of the population at risk. While comprehensive development plans are starting to be implemented by the authorities, the maintenance of old and derelict existing facilities remains crucial. Therefore, most of the projects concerned the rehabilitation of water treatment plants and boosting stations as well as supplying pumps, chlorinators and other electromechanical wares.

The ICRC worked to develop or improve existing health facilities, constructing new buildings for hospitals or primary health care centres, alongside the rehabilitation of the water, sewage and electrical systems.

During the past year, two major relief assistance programmes were implemented. The first was in favour of internally displaced people (IDP), who had moved within the border of their home governorates and resettled in host communities, camps or group settlements. The second programme came as specific response to the drought that affected Iraq, especially northern parts of the country. In addition, the ICRC continued to respond to specific emergencies by providing relief commodities to cover immediate needs. With a long-term perspective, livelihood support projects and micro-economic initiatives allowed people to regain or improve their economic security.

Finally, the ICRC carried out activities with academic circles, arm carriers, journalists and community leaders, to inform them of the neutral, impartial and purely humanitarian character of ICRC's work and to raise knowledge and respect for international humanitarian law (IHL).

## Visiting people deprived of their freedom

The aim of all such visits is to assess and discuss with the relevant authorities the conditions of detention and the treatment of detainees and to help people deprived of their freedom keep in touch with their families.

In 2008, ICRC delegates:

- made repeated visits to 10 places of detention under the authority of the MNF-I. A total of 33,000 internees and detainees were visited and 3,500 followed up individually
- made repeated visits to 8 places of detention holding 9,500 detainees under the authority of the Iraqi Government
- made repeated visits to 26 places of detention holding almost 3,000 detainees under the authority of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

In order to prevent the transmission of scabies between inmates, the ICRC carried out a scabies control campaign in Fort Suse prison in Sulaymaniya. This campaign was implemented by the prison's medical staff with the support of the ICRC; all cells were disinfected and all clothes, mattresses and objects treated.

The ICRC distributed blankets and clothes in prisons when the weather conditions were especially harsh.

In northern Iraq two detention centres in Erbil and Sulaymaniya were improved by the construction of a visitor's hall, allowing detainees and their families to have a proper place to meet.

Representatives of the detaining authorities, representatives of the Directorates of Health, and doctors and medical assistants working in detention facilities attended a medical workshop in northern Iraq. Workshops were also organised on judicial guarantees in Erbil, Sulaymaniya and Dohuk.

## Restoring and maintaining family links

Thousands of people deprived of their freedom and visited by the ICRC were able to restore and maintain contact with their families by receiving visits from their next of kin or exchanging news through Red Cross messages (RCM) and Salamat Plus, a shorter version that could also be transmitted by phone.

- almost 311,000 messages were exchanged with the support of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS)
- 20,550 internees in Camp Bucca, Basra, received 69,600 visits from members of their family, who could travel from all over the country with the financial support of the ICRC
- 29 detainees released from detention were repatriated to their country of origin under the auspices of the ICRC and at their request





- 286 people, mostly foreign refugees in Iraq, were issued an ICRC travel document and were able to go to a third country
- 581 official documents were relayed between family members
- 805 detention certificates issued to former detainees/internees, enabling them to qualify for social welfare benefits
- the ICRC helpline received an average of 1,800 calls every week from families concerned with locating a detained relative or sending a Red Cross message
- in March, four Iraqi children whose parents had died in a bomb attack were reunited with their relatives in New Zealand, through the joint efforts of the ICRC, the IRCS and the New Zealand Red Cross.

## Support to medico-legal structures

With the help of the ICRC, the Iraqi Medico-Legal Institute enhanced its capacity to deal with the daily caseload of dead bodies.

- 18 DNA practitioners received specialized training
- new mortuary refrigerators coupled with generators were supplied and installed in Al-Yarmouk Hospital and Al-Nuaman General hospital in Baghdad, for a total capacity of 12 corpses each
- the sewage system for mortuary refrigerators and yards, and the electrical system were upgraded in the Medico-Legal Institute of Baquba
- 5 existing mortuary refrigerators were replaced in the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad, in order to upgrade their capacity from 84 to 114 corpses. Two generators were supplied and the mechanical incinerator was repaired

## Clarifying the fate of the missing

The ICRC chaired four meetings of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-committee, dealing with cases of people missing from the 1990-1991 Gulf war.

- 10 cases were positively closed
- remains of 63 Iraqis who had been buried in Saudi Arabia during the conflict were repatriated and 18 families were located, which meant they could retrieve their loved ones and give them a proper burial



In October, a memorandum of understanding aimed at clarifying the fate of people missing in connection with the 1980-1988 Iran Iraq war was signed in Geneva by the Governments of Iraq and Iran and the ICRC. In November, the remains of 200 Iraqi soldiers, 27 of whom were identified, and of 41 Iranian soldiers were repatriated in the presence of ICRC delegates.

## Support to hospitals

- in response to 46 mass casualty events that occurred throughout the year, 99 tonnes of medical and surgical supplies were distributed to hospitals within the first 72 hours of the event. This emergency medical assistance was sufficient to provide treatment to more than 5,400 wounded civilians
- wounded and sick had improved access to functioning emergency and surgical services in all 18 governorates through the provision of 621 tonnes of medical and surgical supplies to 77 hospitals as well as 30,000 blood bags to 9 blood banks
- patients hospitalized in relation to the cholera outbreak benefited from the delivery of infusions and injection material in Anbar, Baghdad and Babil governorates
- patients of the Al Rashad Psychiatric Hospital in Baghdad benefited from basic creative and recreational activities through an occupational project supported by the ICRC



83 surgeons, emergency services doctors and paramedics from all over the country shared their experience and learned how to optimize the management of trauma patients through three seminars conducted in war surgery, emergency room trauma management and advanced first-aid.

## Assistance to primary health care centres

Support to primary health care centres (PHCC) focused on improving health care provision in isolated regions with a high proportion of internally displaced people.

- more than 500,000 people had better access to primary health care and basic emergency services through the provision of medical supplies and equipment to 26 primary health care centres
- 3,500 patients per day benefited from the construction or rehabilitation of PHCCs

## Physical rehabilitation activities

The ICRC continued to support physical rehabilitation centres and crutch workshops run by the Iraqi Ministry of Health in Baghdad, Tikrit, Hilla, Najaf and Basra, in addition to the physical rehabilitation centre of the IRCS in Mosul.

The ICRC built and equipped a new physical rehabilitation centre in Falluja, run by the Ministry of Health, which began to deliver services in November 2008.

- 11 physical rehabilitation centres supported by the ICRC throughout Iraq provided services to 25,244 patients; delivering 2,357 prostheses, 9,706 orthoses and 1,911 crutches
- the ICRC physical rehabilitation centre in Erbil provided services to 4,178 patients; delivering 506 prostheses, 158 orthoses, 720 crutches and 70 wheelchairs

### Advanced training for Iraqi orthopaedic technicians

In 2008, the ICRC financed seven Iraqi orthopaedic technicians to complete a specialised training in prosthetics and orthotics to strengthen their skills. These candidates now attend the Cambodian School for Prosthetics and Orthotics in Asia – known for its excellent training programme – for three years, on the condition they return and work in Iraq after completing their studies.



## Relief assistance

As a response to emergency situations the ICRC

- provided food parcels, rice, hygiene kits and essential household items to 720 people affected by the flood in Erbil Governorate
- provided the Directorate of Health with 9,000 jerry cans to help fight cholera cases in Missan governorate
- provided 12,000 people displaced from Mosul with food parcels and rice
- provided food parcels, rice and hygiene kits to 840 newly displaced people in Pshdar district, Sulaymaniya





### Assistance to internally displaced people (IDP)

- around 68,000 intra-governorate displaced people received monthly food and hygiene assistance
- over 30,000 IDPs in camps and group settlements received monthly food and hygiene assistance

### Response to the drought

Due to the drought which hit especially northern parts of Iraq, farmers in the most affected areas lost more than 90% of their crops. In order to enable them to plant for the next harvest, the ICRC gave seeds and fertilizer at the beginning of the 2008-2009 agricultural season.

9,789 farmers received:

- 2,465 metric tonnes of wheat seeds
- 1,189 metric tonnes of DAP fertiliser

Monthly food assistance was also given to 66,000 people to help them cope until the next harvest.

### Special ad hoc assistance

- during the month of Ramadan, the ICRC carried out a special distribution of food and essential household items to 22,460 vulnerable people. This was distributed through 86 non-governmental organizations and local social-welfare institutions in the governorates of Anbar, Erbil, Babil, Baghdad, Basra, Diyala, Dohuk, Najaf, Salahaddine and Sulaymaniya
- 550 women-headed households in the districts of Kadhimiya and Adhamiya in Baghdad, received food parcels and hygiene kits
- 7,760 people (IDPs and vulnerable residents) in Najaf, Al-Anbar and Diyala, received winter assistance consisting of tarpaulins, blankets, jerrycans, buckets, kitchen sets, thermos, tea pots and kettles

## Livelihood support

35,000 people benefited from different livelihood-support projects such as:

- vegetable gardens and honey production in Ninewa
- concrete block production in Manathera IDP camp, Najaf
- agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers and financial support for ploughing, harvesting and threshing in Erbil, Ninewa and Diwaniya
- livestock vaccination campaign in Erbil
- restocking of small animals such as goats and sheep in Dohuk
- rehabilitation of irrigation canals in Khanakin and Kirkuk

170 orthopaedic patients from Erbil and Dohuk whose disability impaired their capacity to generate an income benefited from material or financial support to help them recover their capacities to provide for their families.



A monthly family food parcel consists of:

35 kg rice  
4 kg white beans  
4 kg red split lentils  
2 kg chick peas  
4 litres of vegetable oil  
2 litres of olive oil  
1 kg iodised salt  
2 kg sugar  
2 kg tomato paste  
2 kg tea

Each hygienic kit consist of:

4 kg washing powder  
30 female hygiene pads  
10 disposable razors  
1 shaving cream or soap  
1 shaving brush  
5 toothbrushes  
5 tubes of toothpaste  
10 toilet soaps (200g each)  
1 shampoo (0.5 litres)  
5 bath towels (40 x 90cm)

Essential households items include:

blankets  
jerry cans  
bucket  
kitchen set  
thermos (20 litres)  
tea pot  
kettle



## Ensuring adequate water supply and sanitation installations

2,569,000 people gained improved access to safe water through the upgrading of water facilities throughout the country or by the development of water-supply systems affected by the drought; including:

- 230,000 displaced people living within host communities
- 13,000 displaced people living in settlements benefited from water trucking or from the development or rehabilitation of water-supply systems
- 20,000 residents and refugees in Al Waleed camp benefited from a sustainable water supply thanks to the complete refurbishment of the water treatment plant



Various projects improved the water, sanitation or electrical supply in hospitals throughout the country. Al-Imam Ali Hospital in Sadr City, Al Kindi Teaching Hospital, Al Yar-mouk Hospital and Al Rashad Psychiatric Hospital Emergency in Baghdad, received a total of 190,000 litres of water every day, delivered by water-trucking.

## Cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society

In 2008, cooperation with the IRCS continued in the field of restoring family links. A two-day training for 13 IRCS tracing staff was organised in October. In December, the IRCS attended the Restoring Family Links meeting in Doha, Qatar. This regional meeting gathered National Societies and ICRC delegations from all over the Middle East and Asia.

In response to emergency situations or to special needs, the ICRC provided the IRCS with:

- 3,000 family parcels in Basra
- 12,000 meals ready to eat (MRE) in Erbil
- 6,000 MRE for 1,200 children in orphanages in Erbil and Dohuk
- 12,000 MRE in Kirkuk
- 300 food parcels, hygiene kits and blankets in Kirkuk

## Promoting knowledge and respect for international humanitarian law

The ICRC conducted several activities throughout the year to present its mandate and activities and to remind all parties to the conflict of their legal obligations in times of conflict to spare civilians and all those who do no more participate in the conflict.

- high-level officials of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and police commanders followed a two-day workshop on IHL
- Iraqi officers in Nassiriya attended a presentation on ICRC and IHL
- British and US forces in Basra attended a presentation on ICRC
- an IHL-lecture was held for the command staff of the Iraqi forces in Basra, followed by a presentation on ICRC to the Basra Operational Command
- officers and officials of the Ministry of Defence in Baghdad, followed a two-day lecture on IHL

In November, a staff officer from the Iraqi Army attended a two-week IHL course in Switzerland alongside participants from 60 other countries. This course, jointly organized by the ICRC and the Swiss Armed Forces, encourages participants to promote the integration of IHL in their respective armed forces

Academic institutions in Iraq were supported in their efforts to develop the teaching of IHL in university curricula. Two Iraqi law teachers participated in the 5th annual Arabic Course on IHL held in Tunis. In September, an association for IHL was established and officially approved by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Media representatives were regularly briefed on the ICRC's activities in Iraq. Amman-based journalists covering Iraq attended a workshop on explosive remnants of war and an IHL workshop was organised for Iraqi journalists in Basra.

THE ICRC HAS BEEN WORKING IN IRAQ ON A PERMANENT BASIS SINCE 1980, RESPONDING TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF ARMED CONFLICTS.

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### ICRC 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.



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