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NEWSLETTERIL/OT/AT

Striving for the respect of the civilian population

Whenever International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is disregarded, the ICRC is concerned and reacts. However, unlike many organizations working towards a similar goal, be they Palestinian, Israeli or international, it does not, as a principle, react publicly. For this very reason, the ICRC is often perceived as indifferent or even one-sided, and hence criticized or misunderstood.

In the Palestinian Territories, the ICRC is known mainly for its protection visits to Palestinian detainees in Israeli places of detention, and for its wide-scale programme to organize family visits of detainees' relatives. In Israel, there are frequent misapprehensions, such as the perception that the ICRC is a medical organization with its own ambulances. Beyond its regular interlocutors, few are aware of the specific and central mandate of the ICRC to strive for respect of the civilian population. This Newsletter is part of an effort to correct these gaps.

In Israel and in the Occupied and Autonomous Territories (IL/OT/AT), the ICRC works towards ensuring the faithful application of IHL, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians in times of war and occupation. The ICRC has a mandate from the international community to do just that: while acceding to IHL instruments, all

the States, including Israel, have committed themselves to respecting these rules and agreed to let the ICRC monitor this respect. It should be emphasized that non-State actors such as Palestinian armed groups are also bound by customary rules of IHL.

The uniqueness of the ICRC lies not only in its role as "guardian of IHL" or in its objective to ensure protection and provide assistance to the victims of conflicts. It lies also in its key working principles. As a result of its long-term experience, the ICRC believes fundamentally in the virtues of dialogue; persuasion is its preferred mode of action. Therefore, its well-documented representations are always submitted in a confidential manner to the authorities concerned.

Civilians living under occupation must be allowed to lead their lives as normally as possible. Here, the ICRC maintains a constant presence in areas where the population is particularly at risk, and reacts to any abuse to which civilians are subjected. As an illustration, in the period between January and September 2005, the ICRC submitted over 50 written interventions to Israeli authorities.

But in the minds of journalists, NGOs, academics

and others, many questions remain: Is it good enough to address confidential representations behind closed doors? Does the ICRC deploy specific efforts in terms of prevention? What about assistance to vulnerable civilians? And does the ICRC, in addition to its well-known efforts to improve the protection of the Palestinian population, do anything in favour of Israeli civilians, who also suffer from the effects of this conflict? The following pages attempt to provide some answers to these questions from different angles and by highlighting various humanitarian issues faced by civilians.

Beyond its capacity to solve concrete problems in specific situations on the ground, the ICRC also recognizes the difficulties of having a definite impact, especially on issues with a strong political dimension. However, although it cannot on its own solve major problems such as indiscriminate attacks against civilians (including suicide bombings), the West Bank Barrier deviating into Palestinian lands, or the settlements and their expansion, it does have clear positions on each of these topics. This Newsletter thus also provides an opportunity to remind the readers of these ICRC positions, which are always governed by one aim: strengthening respect for the civilian population.

November 05 : focus on protection



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ICRC

FOCUS ON PROTECTION

A day in the field with the ICRC delegate in Bethlehem

Inah is a French delegate involved mainly in the protection of the civilian population. She has worked in the ICRC office in Bethlehem since January 2005.

The phone rings for the fifth time this morning, and I know immediately what it is about: Georges Nassar is calling to know whether the ICRC team will visit his house today. My colleague, Ata Manassrah, a Palestinian Field Officer is ready, but I am waiting for the green light from the Israeli Civil Administration Liaison Officer before going to Georges' house. It is no ordinary house.

Georges lives in Bethlehem, in a house located directly across from Rachel's Tomb and next to an Israeli military post. His house has been occupied by the IDF, temporarily since 1996 and permanently since 2000.

After receiving a positive feedback from the Israeli Liaison Officer, we head down to Georges' house, an imposing building that dominates all the others in the area. The unfinished building still carries signs of what its owner had planned: it was meant to be an 80-bedroom hotel, with a restaurant on the first floor. When the restaurant first opened it was one of the most popular ones in Bethlehem. However, since 1996, the family has been unable to operate it.

The occupation of this house has undermined all the family's plans. Their social life has been affected as well: friends and family are reluctant to visit an occupied house and some of them have even been denied access to it in the past. This situation has also taken a toll on the family's morale: because of the increased difficulty in reaching or leaving the house, Georges' wife and their five children have moved out to make the daily trip to school easier. Georges and his mother still live in the house, as they are afraid to lose it.

Our car is loaded with food parcels that constitute the ad hoc assistance the ICRC has come to distribute to this family. The aim is to minimise the impact of the house occupation on the Nassar family's ability to cater to its basic needs.

At Georges' house

Georges' mother welcomes us at the gate and while the car is being unloaded she tells me about the latest developments in their situation: the IDF is still occupying the top floor of the building. Her main concern is that, since the beginning of the occupation of their house, their income has plummeted while at the same time they have incurred additional expenses because of the need to find alternative housing for the children. I take note of the concerns raised by Mrs Nassar and ask questions in order to better understand how the occupation of their house is affecting their lives. Among the issues discussed with George and his mother are their additional financial burden, the loss of their source of income, problems with the soldiers' behaviour, their difficulty in carrying on with their social life, and their access to different parts of the building.

Contacts with ICRC teams are one of the only opportunities this family, once self-reliant, well connected and industrious, has to discuss its problems. Words pour out, problems are explained, questions are answered and, more importantly, Georges and his family feel that someone is listening and is concerned. I clarify a few points, cross-check and ask Georges and his mother whether the issues raised during this discussion can be mentioned in the meeting planned for that same afternoon with the Israeli Civil Administration Liaison Officer in charge of the district of Bethlehem.

Another isolated family

As much as we would like to continue the discussion with Georges and his mother, we have to go: a phone call has just informed the ICRC team that Fuad Jadou has had problems accessing his house. Fuad lives in a house located nearby, but in an area that is now separated from the municipality of Bethlehem by the West Bank Barrier. As they have to make a long detour to the checkpoint, it is difficult for Fuad and his family to have access to basic services such as health care and education available inside the city.

The ICRC delegates based in Bethlehem regularly cross over to the other side of the West Bank Barrier to monitor Fuad's living conditions and ensure that he has access to basic services. The ICRC team arrives as Fuad's children are returning from school, so they have the chance to see the detour the children now have to make to get to their house.

During the hour we spend on the spot, we discuss with Fuad the problems he has in travelling between his house and Bethlehem. He asks the ICRC delegates to make an intervention to the Israeli authorities so that his living conditions can be preserved despite the erection of the West Bank Barrier in the area. After this discussion, we go around the house to see for ourselves the barrier's impact on access to the grazing land for Fuad's cattle and to his olive fields.



Meeting with the Israeli Liaison Officer

The Liaison Office is located inside the Gush Etzion compound, the base of the Israeli Civil Administration in Bethlehem. I usually come here once a week. After having been briefed about the situation in the district, I ask the Liaison Officer whether he has answers to some issues raised in previous meetings: investigation started on a particular incident, instructions given in relation to another one to avoid its re-occurrence, measures taken to mitigate the impact of the construction of the West Bank Barrier in a particular area or to ease restriction of movement...

After clarifying a few points, it is my turn to raise the latest issues of concern to the ICRC: access to land, the imperative of showing respect for civilians during military operations as well as particular cases, including those of the Nassar and Jadou families. The Liaison Officer listens attentively and marks the places concerned on a map in order to better understand the problems. He takes notes. Asks more questions. He will have to refer this to the IDF before he can provide me with a feedback. But he is aware of Fuad Jadou's case, which has already been raised several times, and is surprised to hear that the family is still experiencing problems. He assures me that he will check and get back to me.

I also ask questions and when necessary point out issues that merit particular attention. The Liaison Officer takes good notes of these remarks. He knows he will hear them again and again. The delegate will keep in close touch, by phone as well as through these weekly meetings until answers are obtained, solutions found and instructions given so that Fuad, Georges and other Palestinian civilians can carry on with their lives in the best possible conditions. ■

An interview with Lt. Abraham Rutenberg, Liaison Officer for the Israeli Civil Administration, Nablus District



ICRC: Can you explain what the Civil Administration is?

Lt. Abraham Rutenberg (A.R.): "The Civil Administration is the liaison unit of the Israeli army in charge of the relations with the Palestinians and the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as per the Oslo agreements. We consider coordination between the Israeli and the Palestinian sides to be beneficial to both societies."

We strive to ensure that the civilian population is as little affected as possible by military activities and that the daily life of the Palestinians goes on as normally as possible. It is important to maintain a balance between IDF operational objectives and the humanitarian needs of the population. This is done in coordination with the Palestinian authorities, in particular regarding health and economic issues."

ICRC: What kind of concerns do the ICRC delegates share with you?

A.R.: "Delegates raise cases in which they think that international humanitarian law has been breached and where they consider that the balance between military operations and humanitarian needs was not adequate. For instance, they submit to us cases of alleged misbehaviour of soldiers, or of military operations during which they feel that the civilian population was not sufficiently taken into consideration. The delegates do also report to us about friction between the Palestinian population and the Israelis."

ICRC: What follow-up do you give to ICRC's concerns?

A.R.: "We listen carefully to ICRC's concerns and take note of all the cases. We then transmit the information to the senior commanders of the IDF, who will check on them and conduct an investigation. Once informed about their findings, we give feedback to the ICRC during our regular meetings. The ICRC also discusses cases directly with the Sector Commander."

The investigations are taken very seriously and in some cases we have even made a "replay" of a whole situation by relocating forces in the fighting area and analyzing the soldiers' shooting directions. For instance, this was the case after the alleged killing of an 11-year-old girl by the IDF in Nablus' old city. According to us, she was not killed by IDF fire.

If the information provided by the ICRC proves to be true, the situation will be corrected. There are several steps, such as disciplinary measures against a soldier found to be guilty, and changes in the operational briefing orders. If the cases presented are found to be inaccurate, we give the ICRC our own version of the events.

In any case, it has a big significance for the IDF to check whether or not there has been a breach of international humanitarian law, as we consider ourselves a moral army. Every soldier has to respect international humanitarian law as it is part of our code of ethics and the State of Israel is bound to it.

Finally, in addition to giving feedback on the cases presented by the ICRC, there are daily phone conversations with the delegates – even at 4:00 in the morning! – about urgent matters such as road closures, coordination of ambulances, ongoing operations, opening of checkpoints, or coordination of buses for the Family Visit Programme to detainees. I remember the case of a baby who was rescued during an arrest operation in Nablus thanks to the coordination between the ICRC, the DCL liaison officer and the troops on the ground. It was a matter of life and death. We probably saved the baby that day."

ICRC: Can you give us examples of situations solved successfully following ICRC intervention?

A.R.: "There are several examples of changes introduced following ICRC interventions. At Huwara checkpoint, we deployed more soldiers in order to reduce the waiting time of the population. Another case is the olive harvest. Following ICRC's request, the IDF made a big effort to facilitate the whole process. We aimed at ensuring that the Palestinians would have access to their lands – in particular those lands located close to the settlements. Troops were sent around the settlements to calm down the situation and avoid possible clashes. We also coordinated our efforts with the Palestinian authorities."

ICRC: How does the coordination with the Palestinian authorities take place?

A.R.: "There is regular coordination with our Palestinian counterparts from the Civil Affairs Coordination and Cooperation Committee. We meet regularly;

we have the same aim, which is to enable the situation to be as normal as possible. We discuss issues such as access to water, education and health care. IDF Sector Commanders also meet with their Palestinian counterparts."

ICRC: In your view, how does the ICRC differ, or not, from the other humanitarian organisations?

A.R.: "I would say that the ICRC is very professional. The cases submitted are well documented; the information is cross-checked by delegates who go to the field themselves. As far as we are concerned, we are expected to provide serious feedback to ICRC's concerns."

However, not all the cases submitted are correct. Part of the information might be true, part might be untrue. The Palestinian version does not always match the IDF version. It is sometimes arguable. However, even if many cases are not well founded, it is enough for us to have one confirmed case to try and change the situation in the field.

Another element is ICRC's confidentiality, which is unique and appreciated. It helps build up the trust. The ICRC is the only organisation to work this way. It does not aim to change public opinion and this makes a big difference."

ICRC: How is your relationship with the ICRC?

A.R.: "It is a sincere, frank and open relationship. We tackle very complicated issues together and we check on them. We often reach a mutual understanding even if we sometimes "agree to disagree." The working meetings are useful; it is good to meet on a regular basis."

We are definitely not bothered to see the ICRC coming to us over and over again. The IDF values its cooperation with the ICRC and makes sure that its interventions reach the highest level, in the Districts and above. It is important for us to give feedback, to have a say in all the cases – well founded or not – and be able to explain the IDF perspective."



ICRC: Do you know the Palestine Red Crescent Society? What is your relationship with them?

A.R.: "Yes, I know them and acknowledge the importance of what they do, especially as I volunteered for Magen David Adom when I was a student. I understand that it is essential for ambulances to be able to move around. Free access should be facilitated as much as possible, as the Palestine Red Crescent Society provides a life-saving service."

ICRC: Do you perceive the ICRC as neutral?

A.R.: "The ICRC is more balanced than other international organisations. However, it tends to listen too much to the Palestinian view of things – their version is taken for granted in most of the cases even if it differs from ours. The ICRC could show more understanding of the Israeli side. The feedback provided to the ICRC is not always accepted and we are requested to check again. The ICRC keeps on questioning. We sometimes feel that our efforts are not acknowledged even though we understand that ICRC's role is not to judge but to ask." ■

An overview of ICRC Protection activities

An interview with Laetitia de Radiguès, head of the ICRC Protection programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from November 2003 to November 2005.

Can you explain what the ICRC calls “Protection activities”?

The aim of ICRC’s Protection activities is to ensure respect for the civilian population. Obviously, the ICRC cannot physically protect people. However it aims at preventing violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) as regards the civilian population and is based on the role that the States party to the Geneva Conventions have given to the ICRC. In other words, the ICRC monitors the respect of IHL and reports violations to those responsible for them. This is something the ICRC does all over the world.

In this context, the Israeli Government, as the Occupying Power according to the Fourth Geneva Convention, has certain obligations towards the Palestinian population. The ICRC reminds the Israeli authorities about them on a regular basis.

Protection activities also include ICRC visits to Palestinian detainees, both those in Israeli and in Palestinian hands, as well as the efforts to re-establish family links between separated relatives. *(These other Protection activities are not addressed in detail in this Newsletter).*

What kinds of problems do civilians face?

On the Palestinian side, the answer varies according to area. Globally, one can say that the main problems are related to restriction of movement, improper behaviour by Israeli soldiers or Border Guard (during operations or at checkpoints), and acts of violence committed by settlers. Some of these problems, such as restriction of movement, affect not only the daily life of the Palestinians but have longer-term consequences, including economic ones linked, for instance, to the difficulty of transporting and marketing locally produced goods.

On the Israeli side, the civilian population faces indiscriminate attacks such as suicide bombings. These constitute a violation of IHL, as do attacks against settlements, as settlers are civilians. The use of minors in the conflict and extra-judicial killings of alleged collaborators are other violations committed by some Palestinian groups.

Can you describe what the ICRC’s Protection work in the Palestinian Territories actually consists of?

ICRC delegates spend most of their time in the towns and villages of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. When they are informed about an alleged violation of IHL, they go to the spot in order to document the case by collecting testimonies from different sources (mainly the victims and the neighbours) and listening to different versions of the events. The collected information is then presented to the Israeli authorities, specifically to the Liaison Officers of the Civil Administration. The latter will cross-check the information with the battalions and the soldiers who were present during the events, and then report their findings to the ICRC. The whole discussion is confidential. In some cases, written interventions are sent to higher military authorities.

The aim is to ensure that such events do not happen again and that clear orders are issued in this regard. ICRC’s main message is that the civilian population has to be spared.

On a more practical side, ICRC delegates are in constant contact with the Israeli authorities at district level to try and solve individual problems.

What is the impact of your efforts?

It is difficult to evaluate the impact of ICRC’s efforts towards fostering increased respect for IHL. It is not like concrete assistance projects, which bring visible results. If a military operation is carried out according to the rules, how can we know how much the ICRC contributed to it? There is definitely a certain “restraint” effect. It is, however, much more difficult to assess the impact at the policy level, such as the decision to build the West Bank Barrier, or its routing. On the other hand, when it comes to concrete problems, there are results such as the opening of gates in the West Bank Barrier and the smooth passage of ambulances through the checkpoints.

What means does the ICRC have to ensure respect for IHL?

As explained before, the ICRC reports violations of IHL to the relevant authorities. It is not the ICRC’s role, however, to act as a policeman or as a prosecutor taking measures against those who disrespect the law.

ICRC’s main tool is its ongoing dialogue with the authorities in order to persuade them that it is in their interest to respect IHL. States are legally bound by these rules (Israel ratified the Geneva Conventions in 1951) and I see at least two practical reasons why they should respect them: to avoid an escalation of violence and to facilitate reconciliation at the end of the conflict.

The ICRC might also consider sensitizing embassies and other influential international actors about worrying humanitarian issues.

What is the added value of the ICRC?

Everybody’s contribution is important. I think the more people who work to raise awareness of humanitarian problems, the better. However, the ICRC has some specific strong points, such as a significant field presence that allows it to react very quickly. It also has a good network of contacts with all those involved in the conflict, who can be alerted whenever a problem arises. Let me give you an example: suppose an ambulance from the Palestine Red Crescent Society is blocked at a checkpoint. The ICRC, once informed, will get in touch with the Israeli Liaison Officer, who will forward the information to the Operational Command, who will in turn contact the checkpoint commander. In 85% of the cases, the ambulance is allowed through.

Why did the ICRC decide to work confidentially?

The ICRC is confident that dialogue is an effective means of persuading those people in charge to assume their responsibilities. Working in a confidential way is a tool, not an end in itself. The ICRC generally has access to sensitive places such as prisons and detention centres based on the idea that it will not expose what it has seen to the world. It has proved to be an effective way of working. Confidentiality tends to increase the acceptance of the ICRC by the authorities; this is important because the fate of those afflicted by armed conflicts depends also on the fact that humanitarian agencies have access to them.

In practice, the ICRC’s discreet approach is complementary to the efforts made by advocacy organisations.

When confidentiality does not work, do you change your policy?

Yes, the ICRC does sometimes speak out about severe violations of IHL! And we believe that the fact that this is a rare occurrence gives ICRC’s public statements particular weight.

In order to ensure a coherent approach worldwide, however, certain criteria must pertain before the ICRC resorts to denunciation. First, the violation of international humanitarian law must be repeated and have been confirmed by credible sources. Second, interventions must have already been submitted, in vain, to the responsible authorities. Finally, a denunciation can only be made if it is in the interest of the victim - meaning that there is no risk of retaliatory measures.

In this context, recently, ICRC’s main public statements to denounce a violation of IHL include press releases about the illegality of the West Bank Barrier deviating into Palestinian land and the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks against civilians on both sides. ■



The difficult way home

It is around 2:30 p.m. Abu Halawe is driving back home in his specially equipped car. When he reaches the checkpoint located 50 metres from his house, he turns off the engine and honks to attract the attention of one of his children. He needs help to get the permission allowing him to drive further.

Mohammad, Abu Halawe's 12-year-old son, waves to his father and walks towards the soldier. The latter raises his hand as a sign for Abu Halawe to drive slowly in the direction of the checkpoint. After his ID and the special permit allowing him to drive into this restricted area are checked, Abu Halawe is allowed to proceed. He turns left and parks his car just outside his home.

Abu Halawe was in his mid thirties when he lost the use of his legs and one of his arms following a shot in his spinal cord. This was in 1994, in Hebron. Since then, his life has dramatically changed. At the time of this tragic incident, his youngest son was two and Abu Halawe was the only provider for his family of six.

The area where Abu Halawe lives is surrounded by two settlements, Kiryat Arba and Givat Avot. In 2001, following tensions between settlers and local Palestinian residents, the IDF decided to restrict access to the Palestinian areas and prevented the residents from using the main road, be it on foot or by car. The only option remaining was for them to use improvised paths

in order to get to and from their homes. The only way was often through the neighbours' courtyards and over the fences surrounding the houses.

As the area was closed and access by car prohibited for the Palestinian residents, Abu Halawe was unable to leave his home without someone carrying him in his wheelchair. "While my children were at school, I used to ask passers-by to carry me through the muddy roads to reach the medical centre where I receive daily rehabilitation treatment. Sometimes, I had to pay the people so that they would agree to help me." Abu Halawe remembers these humiliating moments and looks at the sky asking God to give him strength.

"Late in 2003, while discussing my case with some neighbours, I was advised to contact the ICRC office in Hebron and explain my problem to them." Abu Halawe called, and soon three representatives of the ICRC visited him at home. After checking all the information, the ICRC submitted an urgent intervention to the Israeli authorities asking for Abu Halawe to be granted free access to his home by car. The ICRC stressed the specificity of this humanitarian case and the importance of preserving Abu Halawe's dignity. Four days later, the ICRC informed Abu Halawe that the Israeli authorities had agreed to issue a special permit allowing him to drive on the main road. "Without the ICRC intervention, I might have had no choice but to move to a more accessible area and abandon my house," says Abu Halawe. ■

Settlements, settlers and IHL

Any transfer by the Occupying Power of its own civilian population into occupied territory is prohibited by IHL. Hence, settlements in occupied territory are contrary to IHL. Any measure designed to support, expand or consolidate settlements is equally illegal.

Settlers are considered civilians under IHL. Consequently, they must not be attacked. They lose the immunity granted to civilians - and thus become "legitimate targets" - only if and for the time that they directly take part in hostilities.

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Ongoing construction in the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, east of Jerusalem

Q & A on the Israeli Disengagement Plan

Is/was the ICRC in favour of or against the Israeli Disengagement Plan from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank?

The ICRC welcomes any development that may lead to an improvement in the living conditions of the civilian population and a reduction in the level of violence. In particular, the removal of Israeli settlements established in violation to the Fourth Geneva Convention certainly went in that direction.

Has the ICRC been involved in assisting settlers evacuated from their homes?

Evacuated settlers are being taken care of by the Israeli authorities.

Will the implementation of the Disengagement Plan improve the lives of the concerned Palestinians?

As settlements, settlers' roads and checkpoints have been removed, the lives of the Palestinians may have improved significantly in terms of freedom of movement inside the Gaza Strip, though less so in the relevant areas in the northern West Bank. However, in the Gaza Strip the ICRC monitors the crossing of borders (persons and goods) with Egypt and Israel through the respective terminals, which remain problematic. Several other issues require continued follow-up, such as access to the sea for the fishermen.

Will the Disengagement Plan bring about the end of occupation of the Gaza Strip or not?

Facts on the ground determine which law applies as well as the extent of responsibilities of each authority (whether Israeli or Palestinian). At the time of printing, the factual situation is still evolving, so the ICRC reading will need to be adapted accordingly. However, for the time being (November 2005), the law of occupation continues to apply to the Gaza Strip, yet with a significant reduction of Israeli responsibilities.

Furthermore, regardless of the current or future legal status of the Gaza Strip, IHL continues to apply, meaning concretely that:

- Gazans held by Israel or falling into Israel's hands continue to be protected by relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention;
- families have the right to visit their relatives held in Israeli places of detention;
- access to basic services - notably medical care - and to essential goods should always be ensured.

Obligations imposed by IHL on Israel as the Occupying Power

The Fourth Geneva Convention defines the role of an Occupying Power as a temporary authority, and aims to protect the civilian population from arbitrary use of military and administrative power in situations of occupation. As an occupying power, Israel has the duty to properly administer the territory under its control as well as the right to take necessary security measures. However, this right is not unlimited and must in any case be compatible with IHL obligations.

The Israeli authorities, as the Occupying Power, must respect several IHL requirements, including in particular:

- to treat the civilian population humanely at all times and allow it to lead as normal a life as possible under the given circumstances, in accordance with its own laws, culture and traditions;
- to ensure that the basic needs of the civilian population are met, including access to food, water, health care, education and work;
- to refrain from any unjustified requisition, damage or destruction of the civilian population's property and land not expressly authorized by IHL instruments;
- to allow the PRCS to pursue its activities in accordance with the principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



Irrespective of its status of occupier, the State of Israel, when using force in combat action, must comply with IHL provisions regulating the conduct of hostilities. ■

IDF Operations and IHL

“Targeted killings” by Israeli armed forces and IHL

Members of Palestinian factions lose the immunity granted to civilians as long as they directly take part in hostilities. In this case, they become “legitimate targets” under IHL for the time of their direct participation in the hostilities.

Outside of this framework, “targeted killings” are tantamount to wilful killings of protected persons, which constitute a clear violation of IHL.

House occupation and IHL

Even though IHL authorizes soldiers to occupy houses or other civilian facilities under strict conditions such as military operations, the IDF should at all times respect the principle of precaution clearly outlined in IHL. This means that the IDF must avoid using civilian property as much as possible since this may seriously endanger civilians. In addition, the house occupation should not impede access of the house owner's family to food, water, health care and education.

Reaching out to the Israeli armed forces

As part of its efforts to ensure respect for the civilian population at times of armed conflict and/or occupation, the ICRC runs specific programmes for arms carriers worldwide. Such programmes are also implemented vis-a-vis the Israeli armed forces, with a main focus on the operational units in the field.

Since the latest visit of the ICRC President, Dr Jakob Kellenberger, in October 2002, the IDF and the Border Guard have opened their doors to ICRC's armed forces programmes. These efforts are commonly two-pronged: one aims to introduce arms carriers to the ICRC, while the other is to strengthen adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL), also known as the “law of armed conflicts”.

Since the ICRC works mostly in conflict-torn areas, its first aim is to obtain the acceptance of all parties to the conflict to ICRC's presence and humanitarian endeavours and to ensure the security of its staff and operations. In 2001, the delegation gave three presentations to approximately 70 IDF soldiers

and officers, while in 2004 there were more than 70 presentations, reaching some 3,000 soldiers and commanders from the IDF and the Border Guard. Some presentations were held at various training camps, while others were given to operational units in the field. This activity is continuing in 2005 and remains a priority.

A typical presentation includes: a historical introduction to the origins of IHL and the ICRC; a review of the evolution of the Four Geneva Conventions; an overview of ICRC's humanitarian operations around the globe; a brief depiction of ICRC's operations in this conflict since 1948; and ICRC's mandate and permanent presence here since 1967. This is followed by a more detailed explanation of ICRC's operations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the cooperation with the two national societies, the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the Magen David Adom in Israel. The participants are then presented with a list of what ICRC “is” and “is not.” The session usually concludes with the screening of a short video on IHL and ICRC activities. Most presentations are conducted in Hebrew, with the participation of a delegate who contributes her or his personal experience in other parts of the world, and tells about her or his work here. Questions and answers are usually interspersed throughout the presentations, which are commonly well received. As one junior officer said: “I always thought that the ICRC was a Christian organization, with a religious agenda. In my line of duty I frequently see ICRC representatives in my district. It's good to finally realize that they are part of an international organization with a humanitarian agenda.”

The second track of ICRC's programmes for Israeli armed forces is ongoing discussions with the top echelons of the IDF and Border Guard, focusing mostly on those involved in doctrine and training. There, the approach is to offer ICRC's experts' support in training commanders to incorporate into their own programmes the provisions of IHL that pertain in particular to the protection of the civilian population.

In all these preventive programmes, the ICRC endeavours to raise arms carriers' awareness of IHL and to emphasize their obligations to it, and through this to enhance the respect of the civilian population. ■



Palestinian factions and respect for IHL

In any given conflict, the ICRC discusses matters related to the protection of the civilian population with the State(s) involved, such as Israel, but also with non-State actors, such as the Palestinian factions, in addition to the Palestinian Authority. The objective is to remind all those concerned of their obligation to respect IHL. The basic principles and customary rules, in particular those relating to the respect for the civilian population during the conduct of hostilities, apply to all those taking part in hostilities, irrespective of their status under international law. Furthermore, the Palestinian Liberation Organization unilaterally declared in 1982 and in 1989 that it would respect the Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols. The Palestinian Authority, since its inception, has regularly reaffirmed this commitment.

One of these basic principles of IHL is to distinguish between military targets and civilian persons or objects. It stems from this principle that all forms of indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. In other

words, civilians, be they Israelis or Palestinians, in the Palestinian Territories or in Israel, cannot be targeted. The ICRC regularly discusses this principle and the imperative need to respect it at all times with the main Palestinian groups in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This is not the only IHL principle/provision discussed with the groups. State and non-State actors have the obligation to allow humanitarian actors to reach those in need. In the last few years, there have been repeated instances of the ICRC discussing with the Palestinian groups ICRC's access to a difficult area within the Gaza Strip. The purpose of such discussions is to ensure that humanitarian actors and assistance reach those in need without the ICRC and/or the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) falling into a cross-fire situation or a security incident.

Another matter put on the table by the ICRC, when necessary, is the use of civilian infrastructure

for military purposes. Yet another point for discussion has been attacks initiated from areas where the civilian population is present. Finally, and importantly, before, during and after the implementation of the Israeli Disengagement Plan, the ICRC reminded the main groups in the Gaza Strip of the need to remove explosive devices from areas which would become accessible to the population after the withdrawal of the IDF.

Asked about the impact of these bilateral discussions, Juan Codere, Head of the ICRC in Gaza, says: "After eight years' field experience with the ICRC in several situations of conflict and on different continents, I have to state the obvious, namely, that I have never seen a conflict in which all IHL provisions and principles are fully respected. But many IHL 'battles' are won, thanks in part to ICRC's patient dialogue and persuasion, and this is of the essence for the civilian population and non-combatants in general." ■

ICRC and the Islamic circles

ICRC's capacity to operate efficiently in the field largely stems from its broad networks of contacts. However, these tend to concentrate on official authorities and faction leaders, who are ICRC's natural interlocutors.

Since early 2005 the ICRC has gone beyond this traditional approach, by developing a systematic programme to reach the Islamic constituency in the Palestinian Territories. In sessions often jointly

organized with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the ICRC explains its role, activities and emblem to imams and religious leaders. Similar sessions are taking place at Shari'a faculties, and a conference on "IHL and Islam" with Shari'a professors is planned for next year.

Initial resistance or misunderstandings do arise, mainly because Islamic personalities are often unfamiliar with the non-religious origins of the Red Cross emblem. Once this point is clarified,

acceptance of the ICRC improves. Eventually, the message that "IHL and Islam are not incompatible" goes through rather well and basic rules protecting the civilian population can be addressed.

The positive response from Islamic clerics and academics is encouraging the ICRC to pursue and increasingly diversify its efforts to address Islamic circles throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. ■

MDA: Firsthand experience

Yonatan Yagodovsky, Yoni to his friends, is 46 years old, and has spent 30 of those years in the Magen David Adom in Israel (MDA). He started as a volunteer at 16, and rose through the ranks to become MDA's Director of the Jerusalem District. "We treated thousands of wounded, moved hundreds of dead, in dozens of attacks, and yet we never lacked volunteers."

"For me personally, it meant a life apart from my family. My three kids learned very early that dad was someone you could never rely on. Gone at the sound of the beeper, and no one knows when he'll be back. And this is true for everyone in the emergency services, not just MDA."

"During the worst years we all lived in a constant state of anxiety and worry, first for our loved ones. For a period of two to three years, the Israeli Jerusalemites just locked themselves in. People were afraid to leave home, and they did so only when it was absolutely necessary, for work, school, or medical care. Cafes, restaurants, shopping malls, cinemas, bars - everything was closing down since no one came. Tourists, who normally crowd the city, stopped coming. Streets were deserted, and that was eerie. People avoided public transport, and many parents made a point of not going anywhere together, not even shopping, so that if the worst came, one remained alive for the kids."

"We lived in fear. And when an attack took place, the first thing everyone would do, almost instinctively, was reach for the cellphone, and start dialing. Everyone had their own list, and would not stop until they went through it. And the worst was when there was no response. You can imagine."

"For us in MDA the worst fear was going to the site of an attack and discovering someone you know or even love amongst the dead or wounded.



And then you go to the family to give them the bad news, and sometimes tell them the last words of their loved one..."

Yoni, who was recently appointed Director of MDA's International Department, insists on ending on a positive note. "One of our great concerns was that our staff, especially the volunteers, would stop showing up, out of fear, too traumatized by what they have seen - there were plenty of reasons. We were really worried that we wouldn't be able to function. But this never happened, not even during the worst times. Our volunteers, ultra-Orthodox Jews, secular students, Palestinians, high-school kids, they all continued to work, and many more were knocking on our door, wanting to volunteer. This was one of the things that kept me going, and still does." ■

PORTFOLIO



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"The difficulties faced by our ambulances at the West Bank and Gaza checkpoints are relieved through the ICRC coordination, which is very effective. However, this is not the case in Jerusalem, where the specialized hospitals are located. There, the coordination of the ICRC fails in most cases and our ambulances have to go back to their centres without being able to access hospitals."

Dr. Wa'el Kaadan, head of the Emergency Medical Services at the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS)



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"The ICRC proved to be immediately present to help whenever problems with the IDF occurred. It coordinated free passage and especially helped us during the harvest seasons, be it olive harvest or other."

Atef Mahmoud Musa, Head of the Al Asa'sa village council (Jenin District)



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"More than once, ICRC coordinated the opening of the gate of the West Bank Barrier for us and helped us enter or exit the village. The ICRC was always keeping in touch with our needs and trying to help us."

Muhammad Fathi Khateb, resident of Daher Al Maleh village in the West Bank Barrier enclave of the Jenin district and a member of the village council



Rushing through a West Bank Barrier gate near Tulkarem



The West Bank Barrier in Al Ram, north of Jerusalem

"We are socially isolated and the ICRC is the only party that visits us and breaks our isolation."

Abu Khalid, owner of one of the houses isolated by the West Bank Barrier in Ras, a village south of Tulkarem

"I was home alone when I went into labour. Immediately I called the ICRC to coordinate for the Palestine Red Crescent ambulance to pick me up. The whole area was under strict curfew; I was scared to lose my baby but, thanks to the ICRC's efforts, the PRCS ambulance managed to enter the area and provided me with medical care before taking me to the maternity hospital."

Hadeel, resident of the H2 area in Hebron. The H2 neighbourhood, which includes the entire Old Suq and other parts of the old city, has been affected by prolonged curfews and restriction of movement due to the presence of Israeli settlements inside the urban area.



Closed shops in the H2 area of Hebron

On the other side of the gates

For the last 38 years Abu Ammar, his wife and family have been living in a decent house in Jayyous, a village near Qalqiliya in the northern West Bank. With nostalgia, the 68-year-old man remembers the days when he used to go to his land in the early morning and return home after a long day of seeding and cropping. He had little to worry about back then. Three years ago his life changed dramatically: Abu Ammar's house is now isolated from the village and the rest of the West Bank, and his six children are cut off from their school and social environment.

One early morning in September 2002, IDF soldiers visited Abu Ammar's house. After touring the place, they gave him two documents in Hebrew indicating that the area had been confiscated for the construction of the West Bank Barrier and that it was now considered a closed military area. The letter advised Abu Ammar's family to leave the place. They didn't.

The construction of the West Bank Barrier started and three metal gates, one after the other, were placed just 100 metres away from Abu Ammar's house. "They were digging to install the gates as if digging holes of pain and sadness in my heart," Abu Ammar recalls. His life changed. The family's main daily concerns turned to whether that day they would be granted access to their village and whether the children would be able to reach school. The gates used to open at unpredictable hours and sometimes according to the soldiers' mood. "I remember, on a rainy day, on my way back

home from school, I waited for more than three hours in the rain because the soldiers claimed that they had lost the keys of the gate," says Mosa, Abu Ammar's 10-year-old son.

When ICRC representatives came to visit Abu Ammar and his family, they asked many questions and looked around thoroughly to make sure they understood the situation. The collected information was compiled into a file that the ICRC delegates presented to the Israeli authorities, stressing the importance of the family being allowed free access to the village. Following several ICRC interventions, the Israeli authorities decided to set fixed opening hours for the gates, three times a day, in order to facilitate the movements to and from the village. It benefited Abu Ammar's family and farmers whose fields are located on the other side of the West Bank Barrier.

A few months later, the IDF paid another visit to Abu Ammar's family, advising them to leave and offering compensation to help them settle in the village, where their daily life would be easier. Otherwise, the IDF would have to build a loop fence around the house – isolating the house even more. "I've lived all my life in this house and I will not quit it at any price. What law on earth says that we can be expelled from our home?" Again, Abu Ammar refused to leave.

His six children all used to attend the village school. Since the installation of the gates, reaching school on time, if at all, has become a daily challenge. Abu

Ammar explains how they had to change their routine to adapt to their new reality: "We wake up the kids early so they can be at the gate by 6:30 a.m. (the official opening hour) and cross over before the gate closes again, 15 minutes later. However, school starts only at 8:00." Abu Ammar takes a deep breath and continues, "My wife drops off the kids every day at the gate and she waits there for them to come back." Abu Ammar's second eldest son, Mohammad, a slim 15-year-old boy with dark brown eyes, does not go to school anymore. He shows his past years' grades pointing out how good he was in school. "I was never lazy or stupid, I was among the 'A' students but after the gates were installed, it became difficult to attend my classes and exams on time. My teachers tried to help me, but it made me feel uncomfortable, as if I were a special case who requires continuous attention." With a face full of pain, Mohammad adds, "I could not take this feeling anymore; I decided to quit school."

The ICRC visits Abu Ammar's family regularly to get updated on the latest developments and ensure that they have access to basic services. Whenever necessary, the ICRC coordinates with the Israeli authorities to facilitate the passage of the truck delivering water to the isolated house or to enable a family member to cross the gates outside the opening hours to attend a medical appointment. In addition, food parcels are regularly distributed to help Abu Ammar's family cope with its difficult and unpredictable situation. ■



Ongoing construction of the West Bank Barrier in Bethlehem

The West Bank Barrier and IHL

There is no general prohibition of the construction of barriers or similar "security measures" as long as they comply with the requirements of IHL. In February 2004, the ICRC publicly stated that the West Bank Barrier, as far it deviates from the "Green Line" separating Israel from the West Bank into occupied territory, is contrary to IHL. In this press release, the ICRC formally called upon Israel not to plan, construct or maintain the West Bank Barrier within occupied territory.

Even after Israel's revisions of the original route, the ICRC remains concerned by the current route of the West Bank Barrier and its impact on the daily lives of Palestinians

Tomato processing across the West Bank Barrier

In Jayyous, northeast of Qalqilia, farming has become increasingly difficult. Seventy-five percent of the village agricultural lands are located on the other side of the West Bank Barrier, as are all the water wells. Access to the fields and greenhouses is an issue, since only a limited number of permits are delivered to the farmers and their trucks. As a result of the increased production costs, several farmers have been forced to abandon their greenhouses where they used to grow tomatoes and cucumbers.

In order to revitalize local farming and support vulnerable families, the ICRC launched a small tomato-processing project in Jayyous. The village is known throughout the whole district for its tomatoes. The project was proposed by the farmers union. "Processed tomatoes can last for months, unlike fresh ones," they explained. Trading fresh goods has indeed become a problem since restriction of movement in the area often prevents the goods from reaching the market in time. Unemployed women with large families were given priority to participate in this "cash for work"

project. They were hired to produce tomato paste by squeezing and cooking the fresh tomatoes.

Twenty similar low-scale cash for work and livelihood-support projects are currently being implemented by the ICRC in rural areas of the West Bank and Gaza. They focus on economically vulnerable villages that also face restriction of movement or are located close to the West Bank Barrier or the settlements. In the coming months, the ICRC will launch 29 new projects throughout the West Bank and Gaza. ■

HIGHLIGHTS

ACTING AS A NEUTRAL INTERMEDIARY

Occupied Golan Heights: The ICRC facilitates the crossing of 500 Druze pilgrims



On 1 September 2005, the ICRC facilitated the crossing of almost 500 Druze pilgrims from the occupied Golan Heights to Damascus. The pilgrims were on their annual trip to the Syrian holy site of Habil. In addition to discussing the usual administrative details with the Israeli authorities, the ICRC negotiated for the pilgrims to be granted an extended visit, more than the 24 hours they had in 2004, so they could carry out their religious duties without restrictions.

"This is the first time we are being permitted to stay for 72 hours in Syria. However, we are looking forward to a time when there will be no more borders between us and our beloved ones from whom we have been separated since 1967," said Abu Yasser, a 65-year-old, whose siblings all live in Damascus.

The ICRC has been working in the occupied Golan Heights since 1967, focusing mainly on maintaining the family links between the 20,000 Golanese and their families living on the other side. Since 1978, in addition to facilitating the annual crossing of Druze pilgrims, the ICRC delegations in Damascus and Tel Aviv have facilitated the passage of almost 1,000 students annually across the line of separation to attend Syrian universities. In addition, each year the ICRC takes care of the logistical aspects of several weddings organized in the demilitarized zone. ■

Israel – Lebanon: The ICRC repatriates human remains to Lebanon

In early September 2005, the ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary between Israeli and Lebanese authorities to facilitate the repatriation of the body of a Hezbollah member killed at the end of June in the Shaba Farms area. The hand-over followed an official request by the Lebanese Government to the ICRC.

The transfer of the human remains took place on 8 September 2005 at the Rosh HaNikra / Ras Naqura border crossing. The IDF handed over the coffin to the ICRC, who transported it across the border to the Lebanese authorities. The body was then delivered to his family for burial in their hometown.

On 25 November 2005, in a similar operation, the ICRC repatriated the human remains of three Hezbollah fighters killed in clashes with the Israeli army four days earlier.

Since the 1970s, the ICRC, in its capacity as a neutral intermediary, has carried out several activities to maintain family links between Israel and Lebanon. It regularly facilitates the exchange of family news, transmits official documents, and repatriates the remains of deceased persons from one side of the border to the other. ■

From Iraq to Hebron: The ICRC reunites two Palestinian ex-detainees with their families

On 27 and 28 August 2005, the ICRC carried out the repatriation of two Palestinians released from Bucca detention camp in Iraq. In early August, the ICRC had received confirmation from US authorities that two Palestinian nationals were soon to be released. On this basis, the ICRC offered its services for their repatriation.

In an operation involving the ICRC delegations in Iraq, Jordan and IL/OT/AT, the two Palestinians were first transferred to Amman, and then to Hebron, home to both of them, via the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge. All authorities concerned facilitated the repatriation.

An ICRC team drove the two Palestinians from the Jordan Valley border to Hebron. On the way, they gave them the opportunity to speak on the phone with their relatives, whom they had not seen in over two years. "They looked as if they couldn't believe they were back. There was a lot of excitement in the car, followed by long minutes of silence after they spoke to their loved ones," recalls the delegate who accompanied the two ex-detainees. "During most of the way, they looked out of the window without saying a word. However, when we approached Hebron, they started to liven up, recognizing places and people."

At the ICRC office in Hebron, the two ex-detainees were reunited with their families, who had been waiting for their arrival the whole day. "It was a very

emotional moment," explains the ICRC delegate. "As soon as the two young men got out of the car, a crowd of relatives and friends surrounded them; everybody was laughing and crying at the same time." ■



Home at last

ICRC Setup/Budget

The ICRC currently has 266 staff members, including 66 expatriates, working in IL/OT/AT.

The ICRC's 2005 budget is approximately USD 39 million in this context.

Detention

While refraining from taking a position regarding the reason for their arrest, the ICRC tries to ensure that detainees falling under its mandate in Israeli places of detention benefit from its regular visits in order to improve, whenever necessary, their treatment and conditions of detention. ICRC delegates, sometimes accompanied by a doctor, conduct individual interviews with detainees. On the basis of the delegates' findings, confidential reports and recommendations are submitted to the respective authorities in charge. In the frame of an agreement with the Palestinian authorities, the ICRC carries out similar visits to Palestinian places of detention.

Between January and September 2005, ICRC delegates carried out 274 visits to detainees in 38 Israeli places of detention. As of the end of September 2005, there were 10,650 Palestinians detained by Israel, among whom were 452 minors and 122 women. About six percent of these detainees were held in administrative detention.

In the Occupied and Autonomous Territories, ICRC delegates visited 1,469 detainees: 197 visits were conducted to 6 civilian prisons, 16 interrogation centres, 3 military prisons, 3 criminal investigation departments and 9 police stations.

Family Links between Detainees and their Families

For detainees and their families, keeping in touch with their loved ones is always of great importance. Particularly through its Family Visit Programme, the ICRC has given Palestinian detainees held in Israeli places of detention the opportunity to maintain contact with their families in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

The number of families visiting their detained relatives increased sharply in 2005, with an average of more than 19,000 visitors transported every month. This increase was partly due to the resumption of the Family Visit Programme in Nablus. In total, between January and September, the ICRC facilitated the issuing of permits and arranged transport for 157,780 family members to visit their relatives. Each month, more than 6,000 detainees receive visitors.

In addition, during the same period, 24,679 Red Cross messages were exchanged through the ICRC between detainees in Israeli and Palestinian places of detention and their relatives.

Economic Security Assistance

Since the beginning of 2005, the ICRC has launched small-scale food security and income-producing projects in the West Bank and Gaza. So far, 22 projects have been implemented, benefiting 1,345 vulnerable families living in rural areas.

In the old city of Hebron and its surrounding areas, the ICRC continued monthly distribution of basic food parcels to 2,220 families affected by the severe restriction of movement and lack of access to employment. These families received an additional hygiene kit on a quarterly basis.

Between January and September, in the framework of its emergency assistance programme, the ICRC distributed some 164 relief kits to families whose houses had been destroyed or damaged.

In addition, emergency food parcels and/or household commodities were handed out to an average of 146 vulnerable families each month.

Health

A Basic Trauma Life Support training course was conducted in Gaza in June 2005. Twenty-two nurses and emergency transport staff from the Ministry of Health were trained to be able to provide proper care of trauma victims in time of disaster or conflict.

As a preventive measure before the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, a war-wounded kit was donated to the emergency department of the Ministry of Health in Gaza. The kit is designed to treat up to 100 war wounded.

Water and Habitat

The ICRC, in close cooperation with the Palestinian Water Authorities, is currently implementing four projects aiming at improving access to water supply for the Palestinian population, through the construction of reservoirs, the rehabilitation and/or extension of water networks and pumping infrastructures.

These projects, co-financed by the Saudi Red Crescent, will benefit over 70,000 people in the districts of Qalqilia, Bethlehem and Hebron.

During the summer of 2005, the ICRC, through its programme of subsidized water trucking, delivered low-cost water to 60,000 residents in the Hebron and Tubas districts.

Cooperation with the Palestine Red Crescent Society and Magen David Adom in Israel

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) President and Magen David Adom in Israel (MDA) Executive Chairman met in Amman on 21 and 22 April 2005. The purpose of this first high-level meeting since 2001 was to build confidence and explore areas of cooperation between the two National Societies.

Several additional meetings have taken place since then in Geneva and Jerusalem.

In March, an important workshop on the «Protection and Respect of the International Movement of the Red Cross / Red Crescent Emblem» was convened in Ramallah. The PRCS is currently campaigning for legislation that would regulate the use and protection for the Emblem in the Palestinian Territories and is preparing to address the misuse of the Emblem.

In January, a nine-member medical team from MDA participated in the tsunami relief operation in Sri Lanka. In addition, the MDA Tracing Officer was seconded to the ICRC for a one-month mission to assist the tracing effort in Sri Lanka. This was the first time that MDA seconded a staff member to an ICRC mission.

Presentations on the ICRC and International Humanitarian Law

Between January and September 2005, 37 sessions on the ICRC and the basic principles of IHL were held for IDF officers, checkpoint commanders and soldiers, as well as Border Guard, Military Police, staff of the Civil Administration and Prison Services. A similar session was carried out for the first time for the management of the Allenby Bridge crossing run by the Israel Airport Authority.

In the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to sessions to a broad range of publics in the field, the ICRC focused on addressing prayer leaders and imams. In cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, six presentations on "IHL and Islam" have been organized since the beginning of the year.

During the summer months, the ICRC carried out 43 dissemination sessions to some 1,500 teenagers participating in summer camps organized by the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) or local NGOs.

In addition, training seminars on the Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) educational programme were held for school principals in the West Bank and Gaza in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Education and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS).

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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 endeavors 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.

The ICRC has been continuously present in Israel and in the Occupied and Autonomous Territories since 1967.



ICRC