



ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

an independent, impartial and neutral organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict

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THE MISSING ^S

the right to know

Action to resolve the problem of people gone missing as a result of armed conflict or internal violence and to assist their families.

Throughout the territory of former Yugoslavia, there remain close to 19,000 missing persons, most of them in Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose fate remains unknown to their families. In Serbia, 1,440 persons are still unaccounted for, following the conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo.

The ICRC continues to address the authorities throughout the region, urging them to fulfil their responsibilities in providing answers to families, and speeding up the search for the mortal remains of their loved ones.



Poster of the Families of the Missing

Families of Missing Request News



(PHOTO: © Aleksandra Eroljan ICRC)

Families of Missing leave unlit candles in front of the Serbian Government building.

Hundreds of persons, mostly members of families of the missing, took the occasion of August 30, the International Day of the Disappeared, to remind the authorities of their obligation to provide information on the fate of their relatives who had disappeared during the armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia and are still unaccounted for. Family associations from across Serbia gathered in Belgrade at the main Republic Square for a silent protest walk to

the offices of the Serbian Government and Prime Minister. There they laid unlit candles on the steps of the government building in honour of the hundreds of missing persons whose fate remains unknown to this day. The families carried placards with photos of their missing relatives and banners which read 'We would like to light the candles. All we need from you is to tell us where', a poignant reminder of their continuing uncertainty and grief.

The Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 safeguards "the right of families to know the fate of their relatives." (Article 32) It also stipulates that "each Party to the conflict shall search for the persons who have been reported missing by an adverse Party." (Article 33) All the countries in the region are party to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977.

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Family Prison Visits to Croatia

Prison visits and re-establishing contact between detainees and their families is a core activity of the ICRC. In 2005, the ICRC visited 528,000 persons deprived of freedom in 2,600 places of detention in 76 countries. Here, in the region, the ICRC has regularly facilitated family prison visits from Serbia to Croatia since 1997, as lack of complete travel documents, security and financial concerns, make it difficult for most families to visit their relatives in prison, especially abroad.

I had no idea where my family was after „they fled from home and there was no way for me to find them, since I was in prison. The ICRC delegates offered me to write a Red Cross message. They told me that they will try to find them, deliver the letter and bring a reply back to me. A few weeks later, I was reading a Red Cross message written by my brother“, said one former detainee when revisited by the ICRC in his home in Serbia after he had served time in a Croatian prison. „Shortly after I was arrested, the ICRC visited me in the prison where I was detained. It was then that I knew that I will stay alive, that I was safe... My family could not come and visit me in prison, since they were living in a neighbouring country as refugees and had no travel documents. I was sentenced to 9 years and had no



(PHOTO: © Agnes Montanari, ICRC)

Family visit to Lepoglava, Croatia, June 2006

hope of seeing them soon until the ICRC made it possible through their family visits programme.“

By analogy with the mandate the Geneva Conventions give to the ICRC to visit Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees, the ICRC takes initiative and offers its services to visit persons detained in connection with security issues. Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and Article 5.3 of the Statutes of the RC Movement encourage the ICRC to take humanitarian initiative "as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary."

Students from Region Explore Humanitarian Law



Exploring Humanitarian Law

Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) is an international education programme for young people aged 13 to 18. Its objective is to introduce adolescents to the basic rules and principles of international humanitarian law (IHL), the body of rules that aims to protect life and human dignity during armed conflict and to reduce and prevent the suffering and destruction that result from it. Presented in the form of a multimedia package, EHL offers 30 academic hours of educational activities, which are transnational in scope and can easily be adapted to diverse educational settings.

(PHOTO: © ICRC)



Students working on an EHL poster in Zabljak

In late August 2006, 42 high-school students and teachers from all over former Yugoslavia, got together in Zabljak, Montenegro, to test their knowledge and share experiences with friends from the region. The students, all of whom had already undergone training in Exploring Humanitarian Law

(EHL) programme, spent three days of their summer holidays doing role-plays based on current topics like the crisis in Lebanon, and discussing a range of subjects, such as dilemmas bystanders face in a situation of violence, rights and responsibilities in armed conflict, ethical questions associated with humanitarian action etc. The camp has confirmed that preventive education helps young people understand better how controversial issues can lead to violence and that training alternative, constructive behaviour and attitudes, such as dialogue and tolerance, is always the preferred option.

ICRC's efforts to have EHL introduced into the national school curricula in the region have so far produced admirable results. Serbia and Macedonia are in the final phase of integrating EHL, while others are a step behind. Montenegro has completed the testing phase and Albania has just had a crucial memorandum of understanding signed on launching the EHL integration process in its schools.

States party to the Geneva Conventions have an obligation, in times of peace as in times of war, to spread the knowledge of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as widely as possible, including civilian population, and, if possible, to include the study thereof in civil instruction. (Article 144 of the 4th Geneva Convention of 1949) The role of the ICRC is „to work for the understanding and dissemination of knowledge of International Humanitarian Law applicable in armed conflicts.“ (Article 5.2 of the Statute of the RC Movement)

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Youth Compete in Voluntary Social Action

Many young Macedonians have become attracted to the Promotion of Human Values (PHV) programme where they learn how to organize social projects for the benefit of their community. Coached by the Macedonian Red Cross, they learn basic project management, communication and ways of putting in practice Red Cross values through concrete social action.

Introductory training workshops are offered by local Red Cross branches to secondary school students. They include the teaching of the basics of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the Red Cross principles. The culture of dialogue and tolerance become natural modes of behaviour when participants from different ethnic backgrounds interact in humanitarian projects organized with the help of the PHV club. Some of them even become volunteers of the Red Cross.

After presenting the results of their projects to a PHV board, the authors of the best projects are chosen to participate in the final PHV workshop and from there in international events.



(PHOTO: © ICRC)

Final PHV workshop in Struga, in May 2006

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Serbian RC European Champions



(PHOTO: © SRC)

SRC team in action at this year's FACE competition

The Serbian First-Aid champions from Belgrade's Palilula Branch of the Serbian Red Cross Society (SRCS) won the 2006 European First-Aid Competition (FACE) held in Assisi, Italy,

in June 2006. The 19th edition of FACE brought together 26 teams of National Red Cross Societies from across Europe with 162 volunteer competitors. The four-day contest provided the young participants with an excellent opportunity to show and compare their skills in administering first aid with their peers from other Red Cross Societies. The success of the Belgrade Palilula team was welcomed with enthusiasm by the SRCS as a confirmation of the value of its programmes and proof that the SRCS first-aid training methods are in full conformity with those in Europe's most developed countries. The experiences of FACE have led to the approval of the European First Aid Certificate, which is essential in standardizing first-aid procedures and techniques on the continent.

Article 17 of the Additional Protocol I of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 stipulates that „aid societies, such as national Red Cross Societies, shall be permitted ... to collect and care for the wounded, sick and shipwrecked even in invaded or occupied areas.“ According to the Statute of the Red Cross Movement, the Red Cross Societies organise „emergency relief operations and other services to assist the victims of armed conflicts as provided in the Geneva Conventions, and the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies for whom help is needed.“

First launched by the Norwegian Red Cross in 1996, the Promotion of Human Values (PHV) programme has been developed further by the Macedonian Red Cross, with the support of ICRC Skopje. Visitors from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armenia and Azerbaijan showed much interest in introducing PHV in their own countries, while the Serbian Red Cross is already developing a pilot PHV programme for Serbia.

The Red Cross was born from an urgent need to provide First Aid to the wounded in battle. It was sparked by a human response of Henry Dunant - the RC Movement's founder - to the horrible sight of thousands of dying soldiers lying helplessly on the battlefield of Solferino in 1859.

First Aid is still one of the most important activities of the Red Cross during armed conflicts, natural disasters and in normal civil life (accidents, sports and mass cultural events, First-Aid training for candidates for drivers licences etc.) First Aid saves lives every day!

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

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.



What the ICRC does in the region:

Protection of Persons Protected by International Humanitarian Law (IHL):

Traces missing persons and assists their families to clarify the fate of their relatives gone missing in armed conflicts in the region.

Offers legal advice to the governments in the region on how to legislate in favour of the families of missing persons so that the legal obstacles caused by the absence of a missing person can be overcome, allowing the family to get on with their lives.

Visits persons detained in relation to security and war crimes.



Preventive Action:

Promotes the knowledge and implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), especially with the armed and security forces, and national authorities responsible for integrating IHL into national legislation.

Introduces IHL and humanitarian values into the curricula of public education with its Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) programmes for adolescents.

Supports academic institutions in promoting IHL and international exchange of IHL experiences.



Cooperation with National Red Cross Societies:

Contribute to building and maintaining the capacity of the National Red Cross Societies to promote International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the principles and humanitarian values of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Consolidates the National Red Cross Societies capacity to restore family links as part of the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent tracing network.

Maintains its preparedness to assist victims of armed conflict or natural disaster.

Assists the National Red Cross Society in coping with other humanitarian activities, such as problems posed by the still present risk of mines and explosive remnants of war.

Red Cross Principles

HUMANITY
IMPARTIALITY
NEUTRALITY
INDEPENDENCE
VOLUNTARY SERVICE
UNITY
UNIVERSALITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is composed of 184 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It aims to prevent or alleviate human suffering, to protect life and health, to ensure respect for human dignity (especially in times of armed conflict), to work for the prevention of disease and the promotion of health and social welfare, to encourage voluntary service and a constant readiness to help and, finally, to foster a universal sense of solidarity towards all those in need of its protection and assistance.



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For more information, please consult our website or pay us a visit

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Juzni bulevar 144; 11000 Belgrade; Serbia

Phone: 011 3441-522 Fax: 011 3440-833

e-mail: belgrade.bel@icrc.org

www.icrc.org