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OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

Photo of mother waiting for news of missing son

ICRC ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON FOR THE YEAR 2012

With the influx of refugees from Syria the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) contributed to the humanitarian response, supporting the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) for the transfer of the wounded, funding the treatment of some of the most urgent cases and assisting over 30'000 refugees, including Palestinians. With a sustained dialogue with the Lebanese authorities, the ICRC helped to ensure that the refugees felt safe in Lebanon.

In the Palestinian camps, aside from assistance to more than 10'700 Palestine refugees from Syria, the ICRC concluded a 5 year support program to the hospitals of the Palestine Red Crescent and provided first aid training for communities and arms carriers.

The ICRC started collecting detailed information on persons who went missing during armed conflicts and situations of violence in Lebanon, a project aimed at helping clarify the fate of missing persons and give answers to their families. While it continued visiting persons deprived of their liberty in prisons and places of detention to monitor their conditions of detention and treatment, the ICRC worked with the prison authorities on improving hygiene conditions and healthcare for detainees.

The Lebanese Red Cross Society is the main national partner of the ICRC in Lebanon. Operational Support and joint contingency planning between the two are the backbone of a common effort to ensure preparedness of the National Society to respond efficiently to any emergency.

The Missing Persons and their Families

Lebanon counts thousands of people unaccounted for as a result of armed conflict, many dating back to the 1975-90 civil war. In 324 interviews with families of missing persons, the ICRC identified specific needs and difficulties related to the disappearance. Recommendations from this comprehensive study will be presented to the Lebanese authorities and civil society to address those needs.

Strikingly, the study confirmed that first and foremost the families need to know the fate of their loved one. To help Lebanon address this, in April 2012 the ICRC started collecting detailed information about missing persons through interviews with their relatives. This information can be used in a future process to clarify their fate and give answers to their families. The ICRC allocated a special telephone line (03 186386) to allow relatives of missing persons to contact its delegation and register for an interview. By the end of 2012, detailed information had been received on 612 missing persons and a complementary project to collect biological reference samples of families of missing persons (for DNA testing) was ready to start.

In parallel, a refresher training was conducted for the Lebanese Armed Forces on the use of a specialised database developed by the ICRC to manage information on missing persons and/or human remains found.

To express its support to the families of the missing people and to raise public awareness about their suffering, the ICRC organised a weeklong exhibition of art by relatives of missing people, marking the International Day of the Disappeared on August 30.

Visiting Detainees

In 2012, based on an agreement signed with the Lebanese authorities in 2007, ICRC delegates visited detainees held in interrogation centres and prisons of the Ministries of Interior and Defence. In the course of the year, 5183 detainees were visited in 16 places of detention with the aim of improving the conditions in which they are being held, the treatment they receive and respect for their basic judicial guarantees. ICRC's findings and recommendations during those visits were discussed confidentially with the prison authorities and at the central level of the Internal Security Forces, General Security, Military Intelligence and Military Police, as well as with the concerned ministries and the judiciary.



ICRC



ICRC delegate talks to a detainee during a visit to a Lebanese prison

As part of its activities in prisons, in June 2012 the ICRC handed over the water project it had achieved in Roumieh Central Prison to improve hygiene conditions by increasing the quantity and distribution of water available for inmates in Lebanon's largest detention facility. In addition, the ICRC provided first aid training for all the staff working in the Roumieh Medical Centre and donated medical assistance to the prison dispensaries, including stretchers, electrocardiograms, oxygen generating machines and sterilization equipment.

In 2012, the ICRC

- Collected detailed information on 612 missing persons
- Visited 5183 detainees in 16 places of detention in different regions of Lebanon
- Repatriated 15 civilians and the bodies of six deceased Lebanese from Israel
- Made arrangements for two families living in Syria and Saudi Arabia to travel to Lebanon and visit their detained relatives in Roumieh central prison.

A national seminar on Health in Detention was organized together with the Internal Security Forces during which challenges of providing healthcare in prisons were discussed with representatives of the ISF, General Security and Ministries of Health, Justice and Social Affairs, as well as doctors and nurses working in prisons throughout the country.

Authorities committed to follow up on recommendations from this event.

The ICRC continued its role as neutral intermediary between Lebanon and Israel and facilitated the repatriation of 15 Lebanese civilians as well as the bodies of another six persons from Israel. During the year, ICRC received 115 requests to trace persons mostly alleged to be arrested in Syria; 30 of them could so far be located, were released or visited by their families in prison.

Together with the Lebanese Red Cross

The ICRC is committed to providing continuous support to its main national partner, the Lebanese Red Cross. Over the past five years, this support focused on strengthening the response capacities of LRC's Emergency Medical Services and consolidating its sustainability.

In 2012, the ICRC financed supplies of medical consumables for LRC EMS stations, First Aid Posts and ambulances. EMS logisticians also received training by an ICRC medical logistics expert on advanced techniques and best practices in the management of their medical equipments and supplies.

The ICRC assisted the LRC in renovating 10 of its EMS stations and centers, including EMS headquarters, supported fleet maintenance for their ambulances and provided them with computers and other IT equipment. The skills

of more than 3,700 LRC volunteers were reinforced through training on international standards for the provision of emergency medical services.

The ICRC supported the activities of LRC's Youth department, including the 2012 Child Festival, as part of a joint effort to disseminate Humanitarian Norms.

In 2012, the ICRC

- Financed the renovation of 7 EMS stations of the Lebanese Red Cross, in Furn El Chebak Jounieh, Aley, Bekaata, Deir El Kamar, Tebnine and Jbeil, in addition to the training school in Baabda, Bekaa operation room, and EMS HQ
- Supported 92 training sessions for 3'783 EMS volunteers all-over Lebanon
- Provided IT & medical equipment to EMS stations
- Supported the maintenance of 168 EMS ambulances
- Supported the technical evaluation of the 5-year EMS strategy as a prelude for the design of the follow-on strategy.

Supporting Health Services

Mainly in relation to the arrival of wounded from Syria and to the outbreak of violence in Tripoli, in 2012 the ICRC provided medicines and medical material to 29 health facilities, including hospitals, clinics and dispensaries, as well as ambulance service centers across Lebanon. To respond to urgent needs, the ICRC keeps emergency stocks for the treatment of more than 600 weapon wounded.

Completing a five year programme to improve the quality of healthcare available for Palestinian refugees in camps in Lebanon, the ICRC continued to support five hospitals run by the Palestine Red Crescent. It provided bio-medical engineering expertise and technical equipment to allow hospitals to preserve vital medical equipment from damages caused by power fluctuation and to ensure uninterrupted functioning during power failures. It also ensured that radiation safety standards at the hospitals' X-ray installations were verified and certified by Lebanon's Atomic Energy commission.

In parallel, more than 120 Palestinians in three camps received First Aid training and refresher courses in the course of the year.

In 2012, the ICRC

- Donated medical assistance to 29 medical facilities, including hospitals, dispensaries and ambulance services
- Organized training and workshops to over 150 doctors and nurses treating Syrian casualties in order to optimize care for weapon wounded.
- Trained members of five emergency medical care providers in Lebanon on the management of dead bodies in case of conflict and natural disasters

In order to help improve their emergency response in case of conflict, the ICRC organized a workshop on the management of dead bodies for the five main ambulance service providers in Lebanon. These included the Lebanese

Red Cross, Civil Defence, Islamic Health Society, Risala Scouts and the Islamic Medical Association. An “Emergency Room Trauma Course” was organized for 37 medical doctors from the Lebanese Army to optimize the emergency care provided by the military to trauma patients.

Disseminating International Humanitarian Law

The ICRC maintained dialogue with the Lebanese military and government authorities, as well as actors of the civil society, to promote knowledge and respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and ICRC’s mandate. It regularly briefed the Lebanese Army, the Internal Security Forces and the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on IHL and ICRC’s activities in Lebanon and the region during sessions organized for both troops and high-ranking officers.

In 2012, Lebanese journalists were introduced to the ICRC’s global campaign “Health Care in Danger”, which highlights the critical issue of lack of safe access to health care during armed conflicts and other situations of violence. Violence targeting victims, health providers and medical structures during conflicts cause harm and endanger the lives of war victims and those who assist them.

Assisting Refugees from Syria

In a refugee situation, the ICRC’s humanitarian operation is auxiliary to that of the host government and specifically mandated agencies such as the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The ICRC can complement existing assistance where it has an added value, for instance in terms of access to vulnerable populations and flexibility of its mandate. In Lebanon, rapidly growing refugee numbers and an initially geographically limited refugee assistance coverage brought the ICRC to intervene.

From the onset of the crisis in Syria in 2011, the ICRC backed the Lebanese Red Cross Emergency Medical Services to ensure the transfer of wounded crossing into Lebanon to hospitals. It financed a temporary EMS station in Ras Baalbeck, in north-east Bekaa, to facilitate the medical evacuation process and financially supported the LRC blood bank to respond to increased demand for blood. LRC ambulances were called out over 1’430 times for help to the Syrian refugee population in 2012.

For very critical cases that needed immediate hospitalization, the ICRC secured the admission and covered treatment cost for more than 158 severely wounded refugees in five hospitals in the Bekaa. The ICRC also assisted 10 medical facilities treating Syrian wounded with kits and sets for treatment of war injuries and provided post-operative and rehabilitation material including medicine, consumables and prosthesis. Specialised training in war surgery techniques and patient management was offered for staff of the hospitals receiving the wounded.

In areas or for populations for whom other humanitarian actors



ICRC nurse helps a Syrian refugee fix a prosthetics on amputated hand at a rehabilitation center in North Lebanon



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Palestinian refugees from Syria receiving ICRC assistance at Baddawi Camp, North Lebanon

had difficulties providing immediate or sufficient assistance, the ICRC distributed food rations, mattresses, blankets, family hygiene kits, kitchen sets and other household items. This assistance reached more than 30'000 refugees, including over 10'700

Palestinian refugees from Syria. Within the framework of its work in prisons, the ICRC visited Syrians arrested and detained in Lebanon, and worked closely with the Lebanese authorities to ensure the respect of the

principle of non-refoulement and protect the rights of these individuals. Together with the ICRC delegation in Damascus, the ICRC also offered support to families separated by the events in Syria to try to re-establish contacts with their loved ones.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross has been present in Lebanon since 1967, addressing the humanitarian consequences of conflict and other situations of violence, in close cooperation with the Lebanese Red cross Society and the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Over the last 45 years, the ICRC has assisted families separated by war, prisoners, displaced populations, acted as neutral intermediary in the repatriation of combatants and mortal remains and reminded parties involved in conflict to respect the principles of international humanitarian law.



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