

LONDON

COVERING: Republic of Ireland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland



Set up in 2003, the London mission focuses on pursuing humanitarian diplomacy and facilitating ICRC operations in the field. Through contact with the British government, armed forces, members of parliament, think-tanks, the media and international NGOs, it seeks to improve understanding of and secure broad support for IHL and ICRC and Movement operations. It also works with the Irish authorities on the incorporation of IHL into national legislation. The London mission operates in partnership with the British Red Cross in a wide range of areas of common interest and cooperates with the Irish Red Cross Society.

CONTEXT

In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), the governing Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition pursued far-reaching austerity measures to reduce the national debt, drawing criticism from the political opposition, trade unions and diverse groups across the country. In August, riots and looting broke out in some of the UK's main cities, notably London, lasting several days before law and order were restored.

New episodes of sectarian violence in some parts of Northern Ireland resulted in a number of casualties from bomb attacks and the use of firearms, drawing condemnation from the main political parties in the power-sharing executive.

UK armed forces remained engaged in the non-international armed conflict in Afghanistan, from where they were due to withdraw by the end of 2014. The UK was also a major supporter of and participant in the NATO-led multilateral military intervention in Libya launched in March in implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1973.

Various UK-based diaspora groups, such as the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and Libyan communities, expressed their views publicly on events in their respective countries.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC president and senior UK government officials exchanged views in April on issues of common interest, in particular in relation to major ongoing armed conflicts, fostering mutual understanding on these and other pressing humanitarian concerns. The talks also touched on the protection afforded to victims of armed conflict under IHL.

In April, the ICRC established a presence in Belfast in order to improve its understanding of the humanitarian consequences of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, with a view to shaping its potential future activities there in line with the relevant provisions of its mandate. To this end, it continued to develop and expand dialogue with key actors in Northern Ireland, including the authorities, security forces and former paramilitary groups, as well as with victim groups and key NGOs.

In 2011, the London mission received 120 ICRC visitors, whose expertise in various domains contributed extensively to the work of the ICRC in the UK. They engaged in dialogue with government officials aimed at ensuring that ICRC positions and

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	86
Assistance	-
Prevention	583
Cooperation with National Societies	735
General	-
Total	1,404
of which: Overheads	86

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	86%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	3
National staff (daily workers not included)	0

KEY POINTS

In 2011, the ICRC:

- ▶ president and senior UK government officials met and exchanged views on humanitarian issues of common interest
- ▶ discussed with UK Defence Ministry officials lessons learnt in relation to detention and the conduct of hostilities in Afghanistan
- ▶ hosted a series of dedicated public events to raise awareness of various humanitarian issues, which included the launch in the UK parliament of an edition of the *International Review of the Red Cross* featuring Afghanistan
- ▶ renewed its Partnership Framework Agreement with the British Red Cross on a far-reaching range of activities and operations
- ▶ deepened its understanding of humanitarian issues in Northern Ireland to help it develop appropriate activities there
- ▶ and the Republic of Ireland government launched a joint study on the compatibility of Irish legislation with IHL

perspectives were taken into account in relevant UK government decision-making processes, contributed to briefing the media and exchanging information with humanitarian organizations, and participated in public events on humanitarian issues.

A number of public events were held by the ICRC in the UK in 2011. Their scope, diversity and focus helped the ICRC to position itself within the debate on humanitarian issues and to raise awareness of them and their consequences.

UK defence officials and the ICRC jointly examined lessons learnt from their working relationship in Afghanistan and considered ways to improve its effectiveness. Senior armed forces officers continued to learn more about IHL and the ICRC during presentations at military academies and institutions.

In coordination with the Irish Red Cross, the Irish authorities and the ICRC launched a study on the compatibility of the Republic of Ireland's legislation with IHL. A research unit based at Cambridge University, jointly funded by the British Red Cross and the ICRC, released an update of the customary IHL public database, comprising new entries on relevant practice in 30 countries.

The armed conflict in Libya and the unrest in the Syrian Arab Republic led to exchanges of information with representatives of their respective diasporas about ICRC operations in these countries. Media outlets welcomed ICRC information and perspectives on events related to the "Arab Spring" and on contexts such as Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia. This provided opportunities for numerous live interviews on major TV and radio channels.

After the launch of the Health Care in Danger project in the UK, plans progressed to hold a symposium on the security and effective delivery of health care in armed conflict and other situations of violence, co-organized with the British Red Cross and the British and World Medical Associations.

The British Red Cross and the ICRC further consolidated their partnership with the signing of a third Partnership Framework Agreement covering 2011–2013 in various fields of cooperation. The importance of this partnership was emphasized at a meeting between the National Society's leadership and the ICRC president.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Individuals resident in the UK and Ireland after their release from the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba met and kept in touch with ICRC representatives in 2011. This followed extensive meetings in 2010 which helped the ICRC gain insight into these former internees' perceptions of the organization during their captivity, the difficulties they faced since their release, and ways in which they could be assisted.

AUTHORITIES

UK government ministers and secretaries of State and the ICRC president held talks in London in April. They exchanged views on the situation in countries such as Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Yemen. The talks also covered the protection afforded to victims of armed conflict under IHL, the status of the ICRC's presence in the UK and the funding of ICRC operations. In other meetings, government officials learnt more about specific ICRC operations, being briefed at times by field delegates. Other topics of discussion included the Health Care in Danger project and the 31st International Conference. The UK authorities and the ICRC

agreed on a protocol recognizing the confidentiality of ICRC work and related documents.

Building on its relationship with parliamentarians, the ICRC briefed the Defence Select Committee – the parliamentary body responsible for holding the armed forces to account – on specific contexts and on how the organization's mandate related to its current or proposed activities in the UK.

Representatives of all authorities concerned and the ICRC discussed the humanitarian consequences of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. Networking was also extended with members of devolved political parties in Northern Ireland aimed at enhancing their knowledge of the ICRC's mandate and deepening the ICRC's understanding of the local context.

The Republic of Ireland government and the ICRC launched a joint study on the compatibility of Irish legislation with IHL.

The research unit based at Cambridge University, jointly funded by the British Red Cross and the ICRC, released an update of the customary IHL public database, including fresh information on State practice in 30 countries.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The Ministry of Defence and the ICRC reviewed their working relationship in Afghanistan and examined ways of improving its effectiveness, specifically with regard to people held by UK forces. The positive results of the exercise led both parties to envisage such reviews on an annual basis, in parallel with their regular meetings on topics of mutual concern.

Senior military officers deepened their knowledge of the ICRC and humanitarian action in conflict situations during presentations at the Joint Services Command and Staff College, the UK Defence Academy and the Military Stabilisation Support Group.

One Irish officer participated in the 2011 Senior Workshop on International Rules Governing Military Operations (see *International law and cooperation*).

CIVIL SOCIETY

Contacts with members of diaspora groups in the UK, including from India, Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic, enabled the ICRC both to benefit from their knowledge and perspectives regarding the situation in their respective countries and to communicate key messages on various topics, including IHL and humanitarian concerns, to their constituencies.

Regular contact with mainstream media provided opportunities to relay essential information on humanitarian challenges and concerns in relation to contexts such as Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic and to the Health Care in Danger project to a wide audience, including via live radio and television interviews.

A series of public events highlighted humanitarian concerns throughout 2011, including the Humanity in War exhibition at Edinburgh Castle and the first-ever launch of an edition of the *International Review of the Red Cross* in parliament. The *Review* featured Afghanistan, and in that context the launch ceremony included a panel discussion, bringing together senior political and civil society figures. Young British Red Cross volunteers also participated in a satellite TEDxRC2 event.

After the launch of the Health Care in Danger project in the UK, plans progressed to hold a symposium on the security and effective delivery of health care in armed conflict and other situations of violence in conjunction with the British Red Cross and the British and World Medical Associations.

Regular dialogue with various humanitarian organizations, NGOs, think-tanks and academic institutions contributed to the sharing of information, when appropriate, to enhance complementarity of action and foster humanitarian debate.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

After reviewing their 2009 agreement, the British Red Cross and the ICRC signed a new Partnership Framework Agreement covering 2011–2013. Its importance was underscored at a meeting between the National Society's leadership and the ICRC president and during a British Red Cross-hosted panel discussion attended by various National Societies and the ICRC director-general. The agreement aimed to strengthen various areas of cooperation, including restoring family links, staff secondment and training, promotion of IHL and the Movement in the UK, and coordination between the two organizations. The annual partnership meeting and visits from ICRC representatives to the UK and vice versa provided opportunities for both organizations to develop relations at working level.

Given the ICRC's presence in Northern Ireland, the British Red Cross and the ICRC held regular meetings to coordinate their respective roles in that context. They also coordinated on a range of public events (see *Civil society*).

Discussions with the Irish Red Cross focused on its input to the updating of the ICRC's study on customary IHL and on a study of the compatibility of Irish legislation with IHL (see *Authorities*).