



# ICRC IN CHINA





The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) established its East Asia office in Beijing in 2005 to foster and sustain strategic dialogue with the People's Republic of China. One senior ICRC official stated at the time, ***“China is in the process of looking outwards to assume a greater role and more responsibility both at the regional and global level.”*** Indeed, over the last two decades China has steadily taken on a prominent role in international relations.

Today the world has become more polarized and volatile, and challenges abound.

*Having worked in conflict-affected regions across the world over its 161 years of history, the ICRC knows well the profound human and material cost of war.*

In China, in the 1930s, our delegates witnessed the heavy toll of war on prisoners and civilians. But they also observed glimpses of hope raised by the resilient humanitarian efforts amid the violence.

Twenty years on, the ICRC's dialogue on global humanitarian affairs and international humanitarian law (IHL) with the Chinese government, the People's Liberation Army, the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) and many other influential people in Chinese academia, think tanks, media and corporate sector has reached a high level of understanding, acceptance and cooperation.

The rich dialogue within China is complemented internationally with regular discussions in global diplomatic hubs such as New York and Geneva, and in many capitals in the regions where the ICRC has operations or engages in humanitarian diplomacy.

During her first visit to China in September 2023, ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric said, ***“The ICRC needs more support from China in advancing the international humanitarian cause,”*** adding that it is hoped the two sides can make joint contributions to promoting world peace and development.

As the personal envoy of the ICRC President for China, I am heartened to note that in September 2024, China, along with five other states, joined the ICRC in a high-level political initiative on international humanitarian law. This joint effort to strengthen IHL complements a renewed global focus on advancing peace, reinforcing civilian protection and strengthening global governance systems, which in turn ensures more effective international cooperation and protection for those affected by armed conflict.

Guided by a common sense of humanity and responsibility to act, the ICRC and China will continue to actively work together, focusing on effective responses to the needs of people affected by conflict and facilitating their path to peace, stability and development. Thus, the following pages not only outline the ICRC’s work in China, but also serve as an invitation for new and deeper interactions and partnership between China and the ICRC.



Balthasar Staehelin  
Personal Envoy of the President  
Head of Regional Delegation for East Asia

# DIALOGUE ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

The ICRC maintains regular dialogue with Chinese authorities, think tanks and academic institutions on major humanitarian issues and challenges worldwide.



Discussing issues related to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, examining how combining humanitarian action, sustainable development and support for vulnerable people in conflict zones contributes to establishing stability and peace.

In December 2024, the ICRC organized an event in Beijing, bringing together experts to discuss humanitarian and development approaches to promote peace and stability in Africa.

Similarly, we actively pursue dialogue with Chinese experts on issues like climate change and conflict, cyber warfare and autonomous weapons with the use of artificial intelligence, protecting civilians from digital threats and other contemporary issues.

On 17 December 2024, the ICRC and the Center for China and Globalization jointly organized an event to launch the Chinese version of the ICRC's Global Advisory Board report on digital threats in armed conflicts.



As part of our consultations with the corporate sector, we provide guidance and share best practices with companies working in conflict affected countries to help them fulfil their corporate social responsibility duties. We have addressed expert-level audiences at prominent forums, including the Boao Forum for Asia and Xiangshan Forum on issues that impact millions of people affected by armed conflicts and other violence around the world.



The ICRC's vice-president, Gilles Carbonnier, spoke on global security governance at the 11th Beijing Xiangshan Forum on 14 September 2024.

## PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Another focus of the ICRC is to promote international humanitarian law, the rules that strive to limit the effects of armed conflict.



By engaging in impactful dialogue with the authorities and different entities of the government, we continue our discussions on key contemporary issues related to IHL, promote China's participation in IHL treaties and encourage the integration of IHL into domestic legislation.



In cooperation with authorities and the academia in China, we promote respect for IHL through different programmes and discussions.

## DIALOGUE WITH MILITARY AND POLICE

The ICRC employs former military officers to engage in dialogue with the Chinese People's Liberation Army regarding the integration of international humanitarian law into their doctrine, training and operations. This dialogue also touches upon key humanitarian themes of global concern.

## GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH

The ICRC is actively engaged in dialogue with Chinese authorities and institutions on issues of global public health. In particular, we share our experience with Chinese government agencies, think tanks and academia. Through our global health diplomacy programme, we advocate for Universal Health Coverage of people most affected by violence and conflict.

China has been supporting the provision of health care in different countries by regularly sending medical teams abroad for over 60 years. In our regular dialogue with Chinese counterparts, we focus recommendations on public health in emergency situations, protection of medical personnel and facilities, and strengthening health systems in fragile settings.

# WORKING WITH THE RED CROSS SOCIETY OF CHINA

The ICRC works with the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) to promote a better understanding of:

- the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
- the importance of international humanitarian law
- humanitarian principles and values.



ICRC supported the National Society's emergency response team's coast search and rescue simulation in 2022.



ICRC Field Hospital in Gaza is supported by the Hong Kong Red Cross, a branch of the RCSC, together with other partners.



The 2023 Humanitarian Education Program Student Painting Competition co-organized by the ICRC and RCSC.

## Share knowledge and expertise

at national, regional and global levels to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity.

## Strengthen our international cooperation

with the RCSC by focusing on conflict areas such as Afghanistan, Gaza, Syria and Ukraine, where the National Society has financially supported our activities.

## Support Humanitarian Education Programme

which was developed by the RCSC and the Ministry of Education to introduce students to the essential rules and principles of IHL.

# RAISING AWARENESS

Leveraging digital and social media platforms, alongside traditional media and public outreach methods, we seek to deepen the understanding of global humanitarian issues and their far-reaching consequences. Our efforts include spreading awareness of international humanitarian law among the Chinese public, emphasizing the importance of a shared commitment to humanity.

A key component of the ICRC's work here is its dedicated translation team, which adapts essential literature and resources into Chinese. This helps to ensure that more people connect with and support humanitarian causes.

## HUMANITARIAN FORENSICS

The ICRC works with the authorities to strengthen their capacity to search for, recover and scientifically identify those killed in natural disasters and in past conflicts, such as the Korean War, so that they can be buried in a dignified way. As part of our efforts, we also hold consultations with academia and other forensic experts.

## PROCUREMENT OF RELIEF SUPPLIES FOR GLOBAL OPERATIONS

The ICRC started buying relief supplies directly from China in 2010 and the country quickly emerged as one of its largest procurement hubs worldwide. The wide variety of purchased items include essential household items (tents, tarpaulins, hygiene items, clothes and kitchen sets), water purification tablets, solar lamps and medical supplies. They are distributed to communities affected by conflict in countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen.



An ICRC staff tests a power supply machine to be sent for our humanitarian operations in Syria.

## FUNDRAISING

The ICRC has an active dialogue with Chinese authorities on funding for humanitarian operations worldwide. We also regularly engage in discussions with government institutions and think tanks working on China's foreign aid policy to learn more about China's perspectives and share our insights about various policy issues.



## About the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is a neutral and independent humanitarian organization working in over 90 countries to protect and help people affected by armed conflict. The ICRC 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 Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The ICRC's regional delegation for East Asia covers People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Mongolia. While we have worked in different phases in China since 1932, the regional delegation opened its office in Beijing in 2005.

Our work in China focuses on securing support for the ICRC's mandate and leveraging the country's global influence to promote the protection of women, children and other vulnerable individuals affected by conflict, by fostering greater respect for international humanitarian law.

Cover photo: Mirjana Spoljaric, ICRC President, in front of the Great Hall of the People with the Chinese nurses who were awarded 2023 Florence Nightingale Medals. 5 September 2024.



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