

ICRC MOSCOW REGIONAL DELEGATION

RESPONSE TO KURSK SITUATION

MARCH 2025



Family reunification in Kursk after repatriation from Sumy (Ukraine), November 2024.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND RESPONSE IN BRIEF

- Following the significant escalation in hostilities in and around Russia's Kursk region in August, **humanitarian needs persist**. Intense fighting resulted in thousands of families leaving their homes – many remain displaced and the number of people looking for loved ones. Although thousands have returned home, many families are not yet able to re-establish their lives due to the volatile situation on the ground, as well as destroyed houses and damaged infrastructure.
- In its role as a neutral intermediary, **the ICRC participated in several repatriation operations of a total of 104 Russian vulnerable civilians** originally from Kursk region, accompanying them from Sumy in Ukraine, through Belarus, back to Russia, in November 2024, and March 2025.
- In collaboration with the Russian Red Cross (RRC), our main operational partner, **the ICRC provided significant assistance to the affected population from Kursk**, and continues helping families look for missing relatives. Coordination also takes place with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

PROTECTION OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION

On Nov. 22–23, the ICRC participated, in its role as a neutral intermediary, in **the repatriation of 46 Russian civilians originally from Kursk region**, from Sumy in Ukraine, back to Russia, through Belarus.

On March 3–4, 2025, 33 additional civilians were repatriated from Ukraine to Kursk, among which were seriously wounded and ill people. **On March 28–29, 2025, another 25 civilians** were helped to return to Kursk from Sumy in Ukraine.

The ICRC was requested to support these humanitarian repatriations after an agreement was reached between the authorities concerned. These operations were the result of a complex process that required the coordination of relevant authorities, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Tatiana Moskalkova, as well as the support of our partners from the Russian Red Cross and the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, and involved ICRC teams in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

Since August, the ICRC has been closely following the situation of Russian citizens who moved to Ukraine from the Ukrainian Armed Forces-controlled part of the Kursk region, as well as requests for evacuation from Kursk and return from Ukraine. **In Sumy, Ukraine, the ICRC has been providing Russian displaced civilians with essential assistance** such as medicines, hygiene items, and clothes. The ICRC also helped them reconnect with their families.

Regular contacts and confidential dialogue are maintained with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Office of the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, and the Russian Red Cross.

ICRC remains ready to consider ways that it could support initiatives for the safe passage of civilians, as well as further repatriations, following an agreement between both parties.

ASSISTANCE TO VULNERABLE DISPLACED PEOPLE

Scaling up the humanitarian response in Kursk region, the ICRC Regional Delegation in Moscow along with the Russian Red Cross (RRC) set up several programmes, following ongoing needs assessments.

- As part of the initial emergency response, by the end of August, the Kursk RRC branch assisted **over 35,200 affected people**. More than 1600 food parcels, 1300 hygiene kits, 1300 bedclothes, 1750 pillows and 1300 blankets were distributed from their prepositioned emergency stock that was provided by the ICRC.
- A **pharmacy voucher program** was rapidly launched in August, following an assessment which highlighted the need for medicines among the affected population due to loss of income, instability of their situation and limited access to essential services, including routine healthcare options. By October, **a total of 25,000 residents received vouchers**, each worth 3,000 rubles (30 CHF). Disabled individuals, the elderly, single parents, pregnant or lactating women, and large families were prioritized to receive this support.
- Over time, the needs of affected displaced people has evolved: many struggle with paying rent, buying baby food or winter

clothes. As a response, at the beginning of November, a **pre-paid bank card distribution program** was started to more effectively cover needs. This is the first time that the RRC and ICRC have used this mode of assistance in Russia – the key advantage is its flexibility, allowing individuals and families to prioritize based on their unique circumstances. Overall, **31'000 residents of Kursk region, received them**.

- In order to support the capacity of the RRC to assist affected people in distant areas of the Kursk region, the ICRC continues **supporting 4 positions** involved in distribution of in-kind assistance.

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS (RFL)

Following the escalation of the conflict in Kursk region in August and the displacement of people, **several thousand families approached the ICRC and the Russian Red Cross** looking for their missing relatives. The ICRC and the RRC supported these families and processed numerous requests of missing persons and prisoners of war (PoWs). Both teams experienced a sharp increase in the overall number of tracing requests, phone calls and visits to the offices from families seeking to know the fate of their loved ones. Some cases were fortunately solved, and families reconnected. Search is ongoing for those still looking for their loved ones, while other families continue approaching the ICRC and the RRC.

- During its **visits to civilians who were relocated in Sumy** (Ukraine), the ICRC gave them the possibility to contact their families in Russia. Such a service was also provided to the 79 civilians during their repatriation from Sumy to Russia in November 2024 and March 2025.
- The ICRC visited **Russian prisoners of war in Ukraine**, captured in relation to the hostilities in the Kursk region, and offered them to send family news to their relatives. The ICRC continues to transmit family news between prisoners of war and their relatives via Red Cross Messages (RCMs).
- The ICRC also supported the Russian Red Cross RFL team** financially, with new positions and providing trainings in order to support their response in relation to Kursk emergency. **2 RFL positions** were established at the Kursk branch to boost RFL capacity, including work in the temporary accommodation centers with displaced persons. In 2024, **9 new RFL staff** were recruited in Moscow to support the processing of increased requests from families.

The ICRC remains committed to helping families find their missing relatives and reconnect.

SUPPORT TO RUSSIAN RED CROSS EMERGENCY RESPONSE CAPACITIES

The local emergency teams of the RRC were successfully deployed, demonstrating a response capacity built over the past 2 years, with the financial and material support of the ICRC. The ICRC also donated 2 vehicles (for Kursk branch and for the RRC's federal Emergency Response Team), 50 protective personal equipment kits, funded additional warehouse capacity and information technology equipment, and supports several operational positions to improve RRC's security management and emergency operations capacity.

FORENSIC SUPPORT TO AUTHORITIES

The ICRC provided support and technical recommendations to the authorities tasked to manage the dead.