

January – December 2025

 Uganda

ICRC Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi

From January to December 2025, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) remained committed to addressing the humanitarian needs resulting from conflict and armed violence in the region.

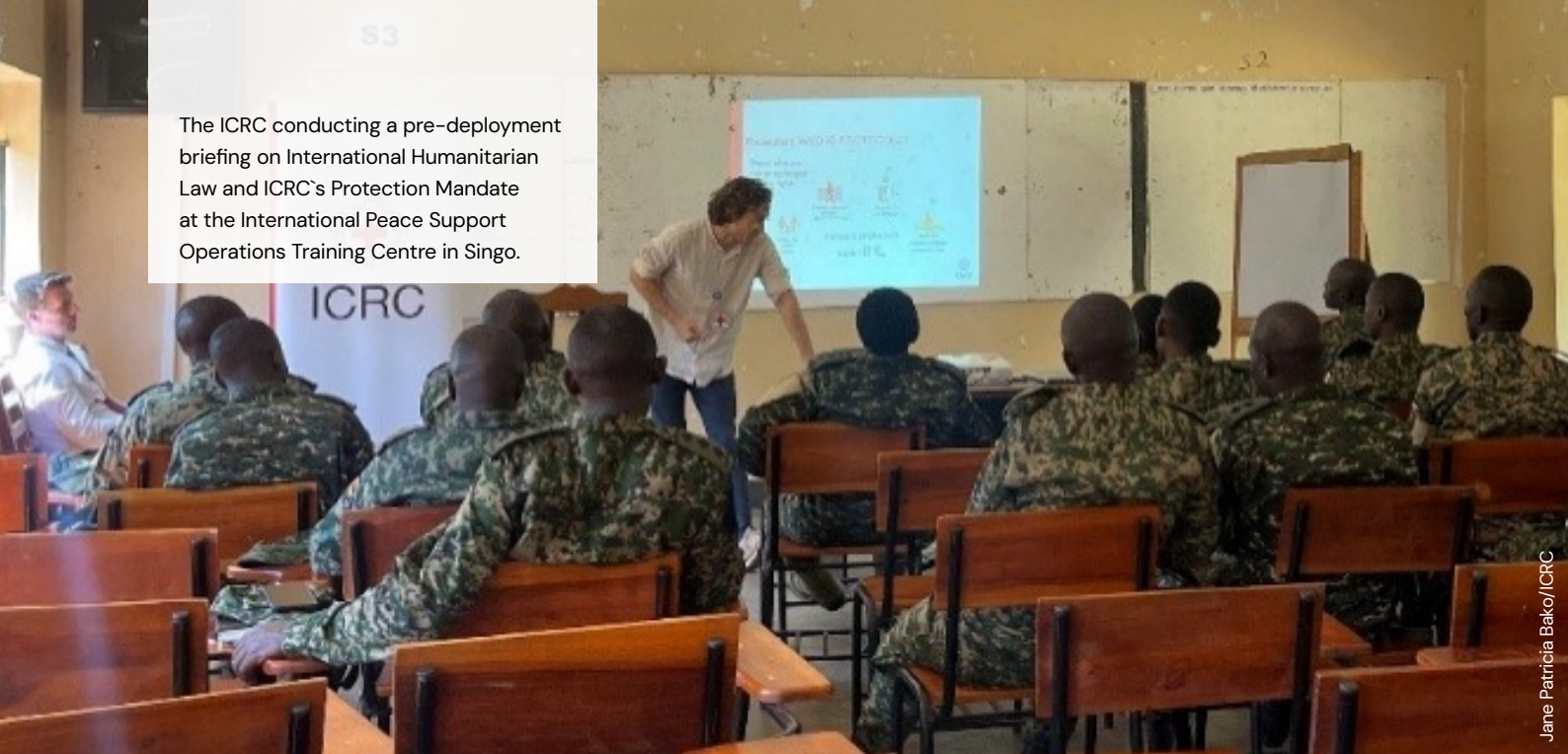
Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (URB) Regional Delegation (RD) continued to promote respect for and knowledge of international humanitarian law (IHL) and humanitarian principles through engagement with armed carriers, academic circles, and government authorities.

In 2025, the RD focused on activities linked to the impact of armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and URB troops deployments in other African contexts. Since February 2025, the conflict in North and South Kivu led to the displacement of thousands of Congolese people to Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. This sudden arrival took place in precarious and unorganised conditions, leading to the separation of many families. Refugees include a large number of unaccompanied and separated children. Together with the National Societies (NS) of the three countries, we protected family links (PFL) of the people separated by conflict or other situations of violence in the region. As the conflict intensified in North Kivu, URB RD provided logistical and financial support to ICRC Kinshasa, Bukavu, and Goma to reinforce emergency response capacities.

URB's operational priorities were tailored around protection and prevention activities, security management, coordination and dialogue with URB authorities and support services. ICRC activities combined protection and prevention approaches in collaboration with Movement partners and other relevant stakeholders working on IHL and protection topics of joint interest.

In Uganda, dissemination activities increased acceptance of the ICRC's role and added value as a neutral, impartial, and independent humanitarian actor among authorities, weapon bearers, and other influential actors. These efforts fostered respect for IHL to improve Protection of Civil Population, Displaced and People Deprived of Freedom, including for the use of new weapon technologies.

The ICRC conducting a pre-deployment briefing on International Humanitarian Law and ICRC's Protection Mandate at the International Peace Support Operations Training Centre in Singo.



Jane Patricia Bako/ICRC

The ICRC Mission in Rwanda strengthened its position as a trusted interlocutor with strategic leadership by hosting the ICRC President and engaging directly with President Kagame. These high-level interactions enhanced understanding and acceptance of the ICRC's role, relevance, and added value, reinforcing its distinctive identity as a neutral and impartial actor, a key reference organisation on IHL and protection during armed conflict, and a credible intermediary in cross-border and regional humanitarian matters.

In 2025, the ICRC Mission in Rwanda achieved key milestones, including strengthened acceptance, reinforced commitment by Rwandan authorities to GIIHL, a shift in engagement with security and law-enforcement bodies from theoretical to practical discussions on IHL, and increased academic interest in IHL.

ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger with His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda during her visit to Rwanda in 2005.



Communication Team, Office of the President of the Republic of Rwanda

The ICRC Burundi Mission together with the Burundi Red Cross and partners, focused on responding to the large influx of people fleeing as a result of armed conflict in DRC by helping families torn apart by conflict to stay connected and find each other. The teams provided PFL services which include free phone calls, phone charging and internet access at the connectivity centres, tracing missing relatives and support reunification efforts. These activities aimed to ease the anguish of separation, particularly for vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied children, and underscored the Movement's commitment to protecting families and upholding humanitarian principles amid ongoing displacement and uncertainty.

Below is an overview of our humanitarian activities across the Regional Delegation.

ICRC Regional Delegation Head Omar Kedir Awol met with H.E. Prime Minister Ntahontuye to discuss the ICRC's humanitarian action in Burundi and ongoing support to the Burundi Red Cross. Bujumbura, 10 October 2025



Communication Team, Office of the Prime Minister

Further efforts for Access and Protection dialogue through Humanitarian Diplomacy

The URB Regional Delegation has made several bilateral engagements with high government officials and multiple security forces in addition to the Red Cross Movement and diplomatic sectors in the 3 contexts (Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi) to increase acceptance of the ICRC and engagements on protection dialogues, strengthening operations and collaborations on humanitarian issues in the region.

Accordingly, the ICRC President met the President of the Republic of Rwanda on 06 May. Prior to this, the ICRC Regional Director for Africa met the State Minister of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MINAFFET) on 12 November and on 03 March ICRC Deputy Regional Director for Africa met the RDF CDS of Rwanda. The HoRD and team have also held various meetings since May 2025.

In Rwanda they met with:

- State Minister of Rwanda, MINAFFET - 09 July
- Minister of Defence of Rwanda - 10 July
- Minister of Interior of Rwanda - 14 October
- Chief of Defence Forces of Rwanda - 15 October
- Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Minister of State in charge of Regional Cooperation - Republic of Rwanda - 16 October.

In Uganda they met with:

- Chief of Joint Staff of Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) - 30 January
- Minister of Foreign Affairs - 08 August
- Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of International Relations (MoFA) - 18 August
- Minister of Defence of Uganda - 25 November

And in Burundi they met with:

- Prime Minister of Burundi - 10 October, for the first time in recent ICRC history
- Chief of Staff of the National Intelligence Service - 13 August (after 9 years)
- Inspector General of the Burundi National Police - 18 August
- Chief of Defence Forces of Burundi - 18 August
- Secretary General of the National Assembly - 03 September
- Minister of Defence of Burundi - 18 September
- Permanent Secretary to the MOFA and Development Cooperation - 09 October

Across all three contexts, with these interlocutors, ICRC promoted IHL awareness and discussed pertinent ICRC operations, priorities and humanitarian action in the region and appreciated the warm welcome and appropriate audience and support given to it, which we hope will continue in 2026 as well.

Promoting knowledge and respect for IHL and IHRL

URB strengthened respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) across the region by engaging authorities, academia, the military, and law-enforcement agencies through targeted trainings, structured dialogue, and operational support. As a result, legal norms were increasingly integrated into decision-making and field operations, contributing to improved protection for civilians, displaced persons, and people deprived of their liberty.

Uganda

Engaging with armed forces and security

- Conducted **2 briefing sessions** at the Peace Support Operations Training Centre in Singo on the protection of civilians for **2,500 officers** and soldiers prior to their deployment to Somalia, as well as a separate briefing for **32 battlegroup 46 commanders** on the ICRC's role and mandate.
- Conducted **5 IHL training sessions** to **55 officers** from East African countries at the Senior Command and Staff College, **42 officers** from the Military in Security Operations Course, **30 officers** from the Law of Air Operations course, **29 officers** from the Motorized Infantry Division, **143 officers** from the Mountain Warfare Training School.
- Conducted a training session for **30 UPDF officers** at the Legal Training Centre on Direct Participation in Hostilities.
- Conducted a training session for **42 officers** from the Chieftaincy of Defence, Intelligence and Security on IHL and ICRC's protection mandate – safeguarding the lives and dignity of people affected by armed conflict and violence through activities like visiting detainees, reconnecting separated families, and ensuring respect for humanitarian principles by all parties to a conflict.



2 briefing sessions

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Engagement with academic circles

- Donated **100 IHL Books** to Cavendish University and King Ceasar University of East Africa.
- Delivered **1 guest lecture** to the International University of East Africa students.
- Supported **4 Universities** participate in the Annual IHL National Moot Competition.
- Increased knowledge of students through **2 guest lectures** delivered to **2 Universities** on means and methods of warfare, and contemporary IHL issues.
- Facilitated **3 students** from Uganda Christian University presented Uganda in the All-Africa IHL Moot Competition.
- Organised **1 faculty** round table that convened **14 IHL lecturers** from **7 universities** enhancing the instruction and teaching of IHL across various universities the next generation of policymakers, judges, and leaders.
- Facilitated **1 lecturer** to participate in the Regional IHL seminar in Nairobi.



1 lecturer

Facilitated **1** lecturer to participate in the Regional IHL seminar in Nairobi.

Rwanda

- Supported IHL initiatives that benefited **1,180 members** of the academic community through IHL faculty roundtable discussions, youth dialogues and National IHL Moot Court Competition.
- Conducted **8 IHL lectures** and pre-deployment training sessions to **3,900** Rwanda Defense Force (RDF), Rwanda National Police (RNP), and Rwanda Correctional Service (RCS) persons, in support of upcoming UN peacekeeping deployments in South Sudan (SSD) and Central African Republic (CAR).
- Organised **2 one-day IHL events** involving **45 representatives** from the RDF, RNP, RCS, security and other law enforcement services like ministries, public institutions, and academia to facilitate in-depth exchanges on the conduct of hostilities, military planning and targeting, and contemporary approaches to the protection of civilians.
- In line with advancing the Mission's humanitarian diplomacy agenda, **8** high-level visits and meetings were conducted by senior ICRC leadership (Regional Director for Africa, his Deputy and URB Management), strengthening dialogues on IHL priorities, protection issues, and developments related to the DRC crisis.
- **8 journalists** and **20 media outlets** produced coverage of ICRC operations and key IHL events, reaching approximately **137,920 people** and enhancing visibility of the ICRC's mandate and impact.
- Donated **643 IHL publications** to the Mount Kigali University's new School of Law and iPeace.



1,180 members

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Burundi

- **750 soldiers** from the MINUSCA battalion (Central African Republic) were made aware of IHL, humanitarian issues such as sexual violence, the protection of vulnerable groups, and the protection of medical missions and other related topics, prior to their deployment.
- **152 FDNB officers** undergoing initial and continuing training were made aware of IHL concepts and related topics at their military academies.
- **420 FDNB non-commissioned officers** in initial and continuing training were made aware of IHL concepts and related topics in their training centers.
- **17 training officers** from the Mudubugu peacekeeping training center benefited from capacity building in IHL and related topics.
- **1 FDNB general officer** received support to participate in an international course on the rules governing military operations in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- **2 FDNB senior officers** received support to participate in a workshop on protecting water resources during the planning and execution of military operations in armed conflicts.
- **20 military court officers** were trained in IHL and techniques for investigating violations of IHL.
- **1,540 police officers** and non-commissioned officers undergoing initial training were trained in respect for human rights and humanitarian principles.
- **150 senior officers** from the FDNB and PNB were trained in international and national standards applicable to the involvement of the armed forces in internal security operations.



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32 students

from 8 universities and higher education institutions took part in the national IHL moot court competition on IHL and related topics.

- **1 senior PNB officer** received support to participate in the international course on rules governing police operations (SWIRPO) in Bogota, Colombia.
- **400 members** of joint human security committees attend training courses on human rights and humanitarian action.
- **180 local authorities** were made aware of the principles and action of humanitarianism.
- **32 students** from **8 universities** and higher education institutions took part in the national IHL moot court competition on IHL and related topics.

Facilitating dignified treatment and living conditions for detainees

URB ensured that people deprived of their freedom were treated with dignity, respect, and humanity, in line with IHL and international standards for detention. Through regular visits, monitoring, and collaboration with authorities, URB worked to improve living conditions in detention facilities.

Uganda

21 detention visits

Conducted 21 detention visits to 7 detention facilities to ensure detainees are treated humanely and afforded dignified living conditions. 274 inmates were followed individually.

12 meetings

Convened 12 meetings with various authorities to discuss the treatment and conditions of detainees in civilian places of detention.

110 red cross messages

Collected and passed 110 Red Cross messages (letters) and 98 Salamat (oral short messages) between detainees and their families.

5 detention facilities

Donated plumbing material, sanitation equipment and blankets to 5 detention facilities.

Rwanda

2
centres

ICRC gained access to 2 centres hosting protected persons in connection with the recent conflict in the DRC.

10
detention visits

Conducted 10 detention visits to 3 detention facilities to ensure detainees are treated humanely and afforded dignified living conditions, and 451 inmates were followed individually.

68
red cross messages

Collected 68 Red-Cross messages from detainees and 20 distributed to detainees.

132
salamats

Collected 132 salamat and distributed 342 Salamat responses to persons detained in Rwanda.

Protection of Family Links (PFL)

PFL activities is one of the ICRC core actions. Armed conflicts other situations of violence or natural disasters, force people to move and lead to family separations. Though the ICRC's services and in close coordination and partnership with the National Red Cross Societies, these families get answers on the fate of their missing family members, restore and maintain contacts with their loved ones.

Uganda

- Opened **1,508 new tracing requests** to clarify the fate of missing persons.
- Collected **1,366 new Red Cross messages** containing family news, **36% (488)** distributed among family members both in Uganda and abroad.
- Located **1,004 missing persons** and their fate clarified.
- Closed **1,227 cases of missing persons** with a negative outcome (fate not clarified).
- Reunited **173 unaccompanied and separated children**, as well as vulnerable adults, with their family members, including **3 children** formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups.
- Registered **124 new cases** of unaccompanied children to search for their missing family members.
- Supported refugees and asylum seekers who made **17,253 successful phone calls** helping to restore and maintain contact with their families.
- Refugees accessed **38,400 phone recharge services** in **1 transit centre** and **4 refugee settlements** to enable them to communicate with their families.



1,508 new tracing requests

Opened 1,508 new tracing requests to clarify the fate of missing persons.

- Supported **12,257 persons** access free internet (Wi-Fi) to contact their families.
- Issued **6 emergency travel documents** to facilitate family reunifications.
- Transmitted **4 personal documents** (academic and passport) to beneficiaries from different countries to Uganda.

Rwanda

- Supported refugees and asylum seekers make **41,286 phone calls** to help reconnect with separated family members.
- Provided **42,841 phone chargers** for refugees and asylum seekers in transit centres, refugee camps and ETM Gashora, to help them contact their families.
- Supported the exchange of **4,447 Red Cross messages** between separated family members in Rwanda and abroad.
- Supported the distribution of **39 salamat** to families in Rwanda from detained persons abroad.
- Organised family reunification of **132 unaccompanied/ separated children**.
- Supported the closure of **271 tracing requests** positively (fate of missing persons clarified) and **124** closed negatively (fate of missing persons not clarified).
- Registered **384 new tracing requests**.
- Registered **235 new unaccompanied children**.
- Reunified **101 unaccompanied children** with their families received cash assistance to support their reintegration process.
- Issued **63 attestations** of detention to detainees or families of detainees upon their request.



41,286
phone calls

Supported refugees and asylum seekers make **41,286** phone calls to help reconnect with separated family members.



In 2019, three siblings who had been separated from their mother due to armed conflict in the DRC were joyfully reunited with her in Rwanda after several months. A story of hope, resilience, and restored family links

Burundi

- Supported refugees and asylum seekers make **10,382 phone calls** were made helping them reconnect with separated family members.
- Provided **123,721 phone chargers** to refugees and asylum seekers in transit centres and different camps using them to charge phones to maintain contact with their families.
- Supported **27,261 people** to access free internet helping them to restore and maintain contact with their families.
- Supported exchange of **1,315 Red Cross messages** between separated family members in Burundi and abroad.
- Transmitted **55 documents** to beneficiaries in Burundi.
- Registered **730 new cases** of unaccompanied and separated minors.
- Located **119 persons** and their fate clarified.

Working with the National Society (NS)

In partnership with National Societies, URB delivered activities that include, amongst others, the enhancement of NS emergency preparedness response capacities and support to the National Societies humanitarian response to DRC refugees' influx. As a result, National Societies demonstrated strengthened operational capacity to provide humanitarian services safely and effectively, including in emergency contexts, and were better positioned to fulfil their statutory responsibilities.

Uganda

- Installed a **13.5 km new water pipeline** in Busunga Town Council in Bundibugyo enabling **210 unmetered customer connections** to access clean and safe water.
- Rehabilitated **2 large water reservoirs** – strengthening the storage and distribution capacity of the system.
- Supported **8 bi-weekly** community sensitization and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) education sessions conducted by the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS). The sessions aimed at ensuring access to safe water, proper sanitation facilities, and the promotion of good hygiene practices to improve public health.
- Supported **2 URCS staff member** attend the Data Protection Officer Humanitarian Action Certification Course in Nairobi, Kenya.
- Supported URCS to commemorate and celebrate the World Red Cross Day.
- Supported **24 positions** at the URCS, including **7 key positions** at the Head Quarters, **7 Branch Managers** and **10 positions** in the Protection of Family Links programme – with **74 volunteers** in the programme.
- Contributed towards the procurement and distribution of **461 Red Cross reflector jackets** targeting staff and volunteers in 20 URCS branches to enhance visibility.
- Supported renovation of **2 URCS Branch Offices** (Pader and Rukungiri) to improve their operations.
- Conducted **1 support and monitoring visit** to URCS Branch, where ICRC recently built an office space after a fire devastation.
- URCS Headquarters and **7 Branches** received financial and technical support to conduct capacity building training for **189 National Society staff** and volunteers in Safer Access Framework (SAF).



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189
National Society staff

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3 radio and tv programmes

Supported **3** Radio and TV programmes aired on major national outlets, increasing public awareness of the ICRC and Rwanda Red Cross Society mandates, humanitarian activities, and IHL, including a joint broadcast for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.

Rwanda

- Supported **3 Radio and TV programmes** aired on major national outlets, increasing public awareness of the ICRC and Rwanda Red Cross Society mandates, humanitarian activities, and IHL, including a joint broadcast for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.
- Supported training of **3 RRCS staff** on the use of Virtual Reality equipment to support the IHL dissemination programme using digital technologies.
- Supported **41 newly elected Branch Committee members** in the Southern Province of Rwanda to attend induction programme on their roles and responsibilities.
- Supported **87 RRCS volunteer trainers** attend refresher training on Safer Access during humanitarian operations and **30 RRCS volunteers** receive refresher on IHL dissemination.
- Donated **13 kits** to support ambulance operations during emergencies.

Burundi

- **8 ambulances** were donated to the RRC as part of a joint donation with the IFRC.
- **2,000 liters of fuel** were provided for the evacuation of patients in the Kansega and Bweru camps.
- **10 trainers** were trained in ambulance services.
- **200 cyclists and motorcyclists** were trained in first aid.
- **20 volunteers and branch managers** were trained in the use of the ambulance service database.
- **100 volunteers and RCB staff members** were trained in water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) in emergency situations.
- **200 volunteers** received training combining first aid and implementation of the Safer Access Framework, and 20 facilitators were trained specifically on this framework.
- The ICRC contributed to the payment of insurance for **300 volunteers** involved in emergency response.
- **200 first aid kits**, office supplies for four PFL branches, and personal protective equipment for **150 volunteers** were provided to the CRB.
- **280 Red Cross vests** were given to the CRB to ensure the visibility and safety of volunteers in the field.
- **14 family tents, 20 flexible water tanks**, and essential kits for **2,000 households** (including blankets, mats, soap, kitchen kits, mosquito nets, and buckets) were distributed to Congolese refugees.
- **5 bladders** for **10,00 liters water** were made available to supply the Bweru camp with drinking water.
- A **20,000-liter tanker truck** belonging to the CRB ensured daily supplies.
- **120 sprayers, 120 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits**, and **10 barrels** of chlorine were provided for the disinfection of reception sites.
- **500 hygiene kits**, including cans, soap, buckets, basins, water purification tablets, and reusable sanitary towels, were distributed to **500 refugee households**.



8 ambulances

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Didier Dusabe/ICRC

Working with movement partners

URB supported and coordinated engagements with Movement partners to optimize operational tasks of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Great Lakes region hence resulting in stronger and more coherent Movement response and enhancing the collective humanitarian impact across operations.

Uganda

3 URCS-ICRC partnership

Participated in 3 URCS-ICRC Partnership Coordination Meetings held to evaluate progress in the implementation of the 2025 joint Plan of Action and discuss 2026 plans.

12 movement coordination meetings

Supported and attended 12 Movement Coordination Meetings; 4 Operational Coordination meetings, 2 Updates meeting with URCS & IFRC on the implementation of the NSIA-supported project, 1 Workshop on Movement Contingence Planning and 5 meetings on Movement safety & security exchanges.

Rwanda

1 annual meeting

Supported the convening of 1 Annual Red Cross Movement Partnership meeting focused on "Building resilient communities: Youth-led resilience and Socio-Economic transformation."

Burundi

1 joint statement

1 joint statement by the Movement (ICRC, CRB, and IFRC) was shared with journalists during the commemoration of World Red Cross Day on 8th May 2025, highlighting current humanitarian challenges linked to the conflict in the DRC.



ICRC/URCS

Since 1863, the ICRC works to relieve suffering and preserve human dignity during war and armed violence. We deliver vital aid without discrimination and reconnect families alongside our Red Cross and Red Crescent partners.

Engaging with all sides and armed forces, often confidentially, we advocate for detainees' humane treatment and urge compliance with international humanitarian law to protect civilians on the ground and online.

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