

ICRC Mission in Kosovo

Response to COVID-19

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak in Kosovo, the ICRC Mission in Kosovo had to change the course of its programmatic actions and switch to aiding the most affected communities. Indeed, the first priority was to boost the capacities of the Red Cross structures to cope with the situation and be able to reach out to the most in need. Throughout the course, the ICRC maintained regular contacts with Kosovo authorities and international organizations to discuss the most pressing challenges related to COVID-19, including the management of the dead.

Support to the families of the Missing

The restrictive measures and prolonged suspension of work due to COVID-19 pandemic affected the Kosovo families with the lowest incomes, including the families of missing persons. The ICRC engaged in supporting elderly relatives and the most vulnerable families of missing persons with an ad-hoc cash support to alleviate the consequences of COVID-19 crisis and help them cover their basic needs during the emergency. People of over 65 years of age were contacted to assess their needs, including for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Most of them mentioned difficulties they were facing to cover their basic needs, such as medicaments, hygienic and protective items (gloves and masks). To date, the families of **269** missing persons were contacted, and over **150** were identified as in need for immediate assistance, from which, **115** were assisted with ad-hoc cash support. In parallel, and as this process continues, dozens of families of missing persons received psychosocial support related to COVID-19, through phone conversations with the ICRC psychologist.

Forensics

ICRC *Guidelines on the Management of the Dead in the Context of COVID-19*, which were published in March by the ICRC Forensic Unit, were translated into Albanian and distributed to relevant actors, including the Institute of Forensic Medicine (IFM). Complimentary posters and a video were translated, printed and distributed accordingly. To help the authorities cope with the pandemic, at a meeting with IFM interlocutors held on 08 July, the ICRC handed over nearly 5'000 PPE items, namely face shields, surgical caps, disposable isolation gowns, gloves, N95 masks.



ICRC hands over the donation to the Institute of Forensic Medicine

Detention

Soon after the outbreak of COVID-19 in Kosovo, the Kosovo Correctional Service (KCS) introduced a number of restrictive measures, in a bid to prevent entry and the spread of COVID-19 in the detention settings. In this regard, and upon their request, the ICRC donated **3'270** PPE and hygienic items (gloves, hand disinfectants, hand soap and liquid soap) to the KCS.

In addition, following a KCS request for support, the ICRC donated **1'600** sets of clothing for the detainees, whereas ICRC *Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of COVID-19 in Detention Settings* were shared with the respective detention authorities.



The ICRC hands over the donation to the Kosovo Correctional Service

Migration

Kosovo authorities requested ICRC's support to cover the needs of migrants and asylum seekers. Thereupon, the ICRC, jointly with the RCK, at three occasions, distributed hygienic items, PPE and clothing in the Asylum Centre and two other migration facilities. The ICRC Public Note on the Protection of Migrants in the face of COVID-19 was translated into Albanian and shared with Kosovo authorities.

Support to Red Cross Structures

Soon after the first cases of COVID-19 were reported, the ICRC provided financial, technical and advisory support to the Red Cross of Kosova (RCK) to help the response to the needs of the most vulnerable and communities most adversely affected by the crisis produced by the pandemic. Similarly, support was provided to the Red Cross of Kosovo and Metohija (RCKM) to enable them to respond to the needs of those affected by COVID-19.



Red Cross volunteers delivering food items to the elderly without care

The ICRC support enabled the volunteers and RCK staff to engage in assisting the vulnerable category of the elderly without care by providing them with supplies needed the most (food, hygienic items and medicaments). The ICRC shared its tips and tools with RCK volunteers engaged in supporting the elderly during COVID-19 crisis.

Religious circles

In two patches handed over during the pandemic, the ICRC donated PPE to the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK), which included N95/FFP2 masks, liquid soap, long sleeve gowns, anti-fog goggles, waterproof plastic aprons and surface disinfectants.

The aim of the donation was to increase the safety of imams involved in washing the dead bodies before burials in Kosovo. The ICRC also donated **100 sets of 5 posters** for health care and death care workers involved in the management of dead bodies to the ICK.

One of the posters illustrated the proper use of PPE by imams while washing and managing the dead bodies of people who died from COVID-19. The ICRC *Analysis of the Islamic Guidance for the Handling of the Remains of Coronavirus Victims* was also shared with the ICK,



Red Cross volunteers carrying food items to be delivered to the people in need

Through the project, the RCK managed to reach out to over **500** lone elderlies from all communities. Since March, the RCK engaged in distribution of over **3'800** food and hygienic parcels to most vulnerable communities. Their costs related to distribution, volunteers' engagement, logistics and other were supported by the ICRC. On the other hand, the ICRC funded the purchase of over **800** food and hygienic parcels that were distributed to the people in need and for the purchase of PPE (gloves, masks, goggles and disinfectants) for the RCKM staff and volunteers involved in RC activities.

including a video in Albanian providing instructions on the proper use of PPE and procedures to be followed by health care/death care staff involved in the handling of bodies of people that have died from COVID-19.



The ICRC Communication Officer and the Senior Advisor to the ICK Presidency discuss the donation received from the ICRC

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