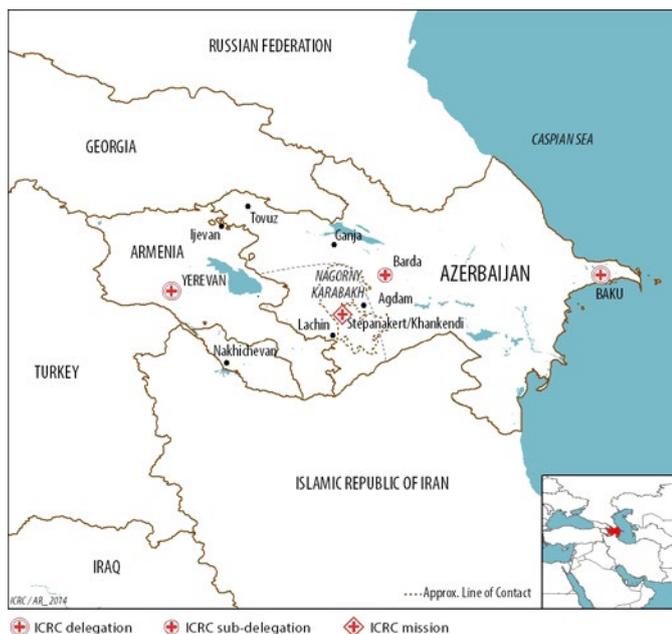


# AZERBAIJAN



The ICRC has been working in Azerbaijan since 1992 in relation to the Nagorno Karabakh armed conflict. It focuses on the issue of missing persons and on detainees held for conflict-related or security reasons, and works to protect and assist communities living along the Line of Contact and the international border with Armenia. It promotes implementation of IHL and its integration into armed and security forces' training and into academic curricula. The ICRC works in partnership with and aims to help the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan strengthen its capacities.

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

### In 2014:

- ▶ the authorities were reminded of their responsibility to protect civilians, especially those living close to the front lines; armed forces personnel attended courses on IHL and its application in military decision-making
- ▶ civilians in front-line villages better protected themselves against shooting and improved their livelihoods through National Society/ICRC projects, though the security situation hampered some activities
- ▶ with the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary, 10 civilian internees were voluntarily transferred/repatriated across front lines, and the remains of 2 deceased civilians were returned to their families for burial
- ▶ the pilot phase of collecting DNA samples from families of missing persons was completed; families obtained support for their psychosocial/other needs with the help of ICRC-trained local service providers
- ▶ the authorities and forensic specialists strengthened their capacities to clarify the fate of missing persons by learning best practices on a study tour abroad
- ▶ the renewal of an agreement with the Azerbaijani authorities on access to all detainees in Azerbaijan remained pending

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)	
Protection	2,041
Assistance	4,422
Prevention	770
Cooperation with National Societies	369
General	-

**7,602**

of which: Overheads **464**

IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>100%</b>

PERSONNEL	
Mobile staff	13
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	73

## YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

**MEDIUM**

PROTECTION	Total
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>	
<b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>	
RCMs collected	44
RCMs distributed	49
Phone calls facilitated between family members	85
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	14
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>	
<b>ICRC visits</b>	
Detainees visited	11,421
Detainees visited and monitored individually	196
Number of visits carried out	65
Number of places of detention visited	21
<b>Restoring family links</b>	
RCMs collected	130
RCMs distributed	71
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	45

ASSISTANCE	2014 Targets (up to)	Achieved
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>		
<b>Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)</b>		
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	57
Productive inputs <sup>1</sup>	Beneficiaries	545
Cash	Beneficiaries	1,365
Work, services and training <sup>1</sup>	Beneficiaries	20
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	5,400
		7,569

1. Owing to operational and management constraints, figures presented in this table may not reflect all activities carried out during the reporting period.

## CONTEXT

The consequences of the unresolved Nagorny Karabakh conflict continued to be felt, particularly along the Line of Contact and the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia. An upsurge in military activity and incidents of cross-border fire, coupled with the continued presence of mines/explosive remnants of war (ERW), resulted in an increase in military and civilian casualties, and in conflict-related detention, compared with recent years. The insecurity limited daily movement, access to basic services and livelihood opportunities for civilians in front-line areas. Thousands of families remained without answers on the fate of relatives missing in relation to the conflict.

High-level meetings between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, held under the aegis of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, temporarily eased tensions. However, no progress was made towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict. May marked 20 years since the ceasefire agreement.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued working to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. It monitored the situation of civilians living near the Line of Contact and the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia, raised concerns with the relevant authorities and reminded them of their obligations under IHL.

In partnership with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan, the ICRC implemented an integrated approach to help communities in front-line areas strengthen their resilience and pursue their daily activities more securely. Residents in three districts gained reliable access to clean water following improvements to their water networks. Economically vulnerable households regained their self-sufficiency by launching their own micro-economic initiatives. Villagers reduced their exposure to crossfire after planting ICRC-donated trees along vulnerable areas; some had their homes modified and protective walls built around them. Despite reminders to the relevant authorities to take extra precautions, activities had to be put on hold several times owing to the intensity of exchanges across the front lines. To reinforce their ability to cope with the precarious security conditions, communities learnt life-saving first-aid skills from National Society trainers.

In Nagorny Karabakh, families of mine/ERW victims improved their living conditions with the help of livelihood grants and home repairs. Monthly cash allowances enabled elderly pensioners to meet their basic needs.

Resolving the fate of people who went missing during the conflict remained a priority. The ICRC, in coordination with the Azerbaijani State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons (CEPOD) and the *de facto* commission in Nagorny Karabakh, piloted a DNA sample-collection project to facilitate future efforts to identify human remains. Trained staff collected buccal swabs from missing persons' relatives, whose informed consent was obtained and who had access to psychological support throughout the process. Aided by the ICRC's technical expertise, the two commissions continued to compile ante-mortem data on missing persons in their centralized databases. During a study tour in Georgia, Azerbaijani CEPOD members and forensic specialists gleaned best practices from work on cases of missing persons.

Families of the missing addressed their needs with the assistance of ICRC-trained service providers. They received psychological support provided in groups or individually, obtained health services and had their legal concerns referred to the appropriate authorities.

The ICRC visited detainees, including those held in relation to the conflict, and monitored their treatment and living conditions to ensure compliance with IHL/internationally recognized standards. Visits to detainees under the purview of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Internal Affairs however remained suspended, pending the renewal of an agreement on ICRC access to detainees. At the request of all parties concerned, the ICRC facilitated the transfer/repatriation of civilian internees and human remains across the Line of Contact and the international border.

Humanitarian issues arising from the conflict remained central to dialogue with the authorities, weapon bearers and other stakeholders. ICRC presentations and seminars for the Azerbaijani armed forces and for the *de facto* armed forces in Nagorny Karabakh emphasized the need to consider IHL principles in military decision-making; front-line troops of the latter also attended IHL briefings. Azerbaijani police and internal troops learnt more about international policing standards and the ICRC's work during training sessions. Work with the authorities on measures to implement IHL progressed slowly; a planned round-table on the protection of cultural property in armed conflict was postponed. Local and international events fostered expertise in IHL among academic circles.

With support from Movement partners, the Azerbaijani Red Crescent strengthened its core capacities, particularly in first aid, restoring family links and public communication. Movement partners regularly coordinated their activities.

## CIVILIANS

### Parties to the conflict are reminded to take extra precautions

For civilians, including IDPs, living along the Line of Contact and the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia, exchanges of fire and the presence of mines/ERW were sources of constant insecurity and at times caused fatal injury. Through its presence in front-line regions and contacts with local communities, civilian and military authorities and National Society branches, the ICRC kept abreast of the humanitarian situation, monitored respect for IHL among the parties to the conflict and noted issues faced by the population. It raised concerns with the relevant authorities, including the *de facto* authorities in Nagorny Karabakh, and reminded them of their obligations under IHL, especially with regard to the protection of civilians and the need to take extra precautions, particularly during the farming season, public holidays and the implementation of ICRC activities for front-line communities. In some cases, however, the ICRC was unable to obtain temporary security agreements to facilitate these activities, owing to the intensity of exchanges across the front lines.

### Communities living near the front lines reduce their exposure to risks

The ICRC, in partnership with the National Society, addressed the humanitarian needs of front-line communities through an integrated approach aimed at helping them strengthen their existing coping mechanisms and improve their living conditions.

At their request, around 1,540 residents of a village in Terter district, near the Line of Contact, received 3,000 trees, which they

planted along roads leading to agricultural fields, schools and the most exposed houses, giving them added protection against bullets as they went about their daily activities. In Tovuz district along the international border, 32 households (approximately 150 people) had their homes modified and protective walls built, making their houses safer from shooting. Some similar projects were put on hold as the security situation deteriorated later in the year.

In Agdam, Dashkesan and Gazakh districts, some 5,350 people had safer and more reliable access to clean water following the construction and rehabilitation of water networks and repairs to electrical systems. Technical training helped 20 operators from three district water boards maintain pumping stations more efficiently, benefiting some 1,150 residents. Over 2,380 beneficiaries of a water-supply system constructed in 2013 learnt about the sustainable use of water and infrastructure through a National Society/ICRC awareness campaign.

Nearly 300 economically vulnerable households (1,330 individuals) in six front-line villages, including those headed by civilians injured in crossfire, received cash grants with which they pursued income-generating activities of their choice, enabling them to meet their daily needs. Training sessions with local professionals on, *inter alia*, business skills, livestock rearing and beekeeping prepared them for these activities. Some 3,000 residents of six villages also benefited from community-based projects that they helped conceptualize. These included the distribution of seed and fertilizer, which boosted food production, and the construction/rehabilitation of community infrastructure, such as a road leading to a cemetery, which helped prevent villagers from straying into insecure areas. To further strengthen the National Society's ability to assist conflict-affected communities, 18 staff/volunteers underwent training in needs assessment, and the Dashkesan branch received office equipment and a vehicle.

Sixty community members from Agdam and Terter districts learnt life-saving first-aid skills from National Society trainers.

### **Mine/ERW victims and other vulnerable people regain their self-sufficiency**

Twelve families that had lost their breadwinners to mine/ERW incidents put up small businesses using grants distributed by the National Society in Azerbaijan.

In Nagorny Karabakh, 60 mine/ERW-affected households (297 people) likewise augmented their income through micro-economic initiatives that they launched with ICRC support. Five families (21 people), including the family of one civilian killed on the Line of Contact, had the costs of their home repairs covered. ICRC teams continued to collect data on mine-related incidents and the needs of the victims and/or their families, and provided technical support to the *de facto* authorities in managing such information. Efforts to mobilize the *de facto* authorities and relevant agencies to meet the needs of mine/ERW victims and other vulnerable people continued. Around 300 elderly people living alone in Nagorny Karabakh supplemented their pensions with monthly cash allowances distributed by the ICRC in coordination with the *de facto* Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, enabling them to reach a minimum standard of living.

### **Pilot phase of DNA-collection project is successfully completed**

By the end of 2014, 4,542 people remained unaccounted for as a result of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict: 4,140 were registered as missing in Azerbaijan, including 426 in Nagorny Karabakh.

To facilitate future efforts to identify human remains and provide answers to the families concerned, the ICRC, in coordination with the relevant authorities, completed the first phase of DNA sample collection from missing persons' families. Trained ICRC staff and hospital personnel collected buccal swabs from 205 relatives of missing persons, in line with protocols and standard procedures agreed with the authorities and other stakeholders, which included obtaining families' informed consent and ensuring respect for confidentiality. Samples sent for profiling and quality control to a DNA laboratory abroad returned with a 100% success rate. Psychological support was made available to the families throughout the process.

The ICRC continued to review and hand over files containing ante-mortem data provided by the families of missing persons, together with pertinent documents, photographs and information regarding DNA samples, to the Azerbaijani CEPOD and the *de facto* commission in Nagorny Karabakh. Trained administrators entered the data into the centralized ante/post-mortem databases of the commissions. To ensure the quality of data entry, administrators from the Azerbaijani, Armenian and *de facto* CEPODs attended a refresher course in Tbilisi, Georgia. Following a study visit to the same country, Azerbaijani CEPOD representatives and forensic specialists brought home best practices and lessons learnt from the work of their Georgian counterparts in exhuming and identifying human remains in the context of past armed conflict.

Progress in clarifying the fate of the missing continued to be hampered by the absence of an agreed-upon mechanism for sharing information between the sides; the ICRC, as a neutral intermediary, facilitated the exchange of queries about missing persons between the respective CEPODs. Coordination with them continued, with a view to consolidating a list of missing persons that would serve as a common source of reference for following up cases.

### **Families of missing persons obtain comprehensive support**

Many families continued to struggle with not knowing the fate of missing relatives. They often faced emotional, psychological, health, economic, legal and administrative difficulties, exacerbated in part by the lack of official recognition for their status.

Over 700 members of families of missing persons obtained support for their multifaceted needs with the help of ICRC-trained counsellors and local service providers. Some 560 people spoke about their difficulties and received psychological support during peer-support sessions and individual home visits/follow-up. Over 80 people had their legal and administrative concerns referred to local authorities, and 145 were referred to health services provided by the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Over 50 people received material assistance according to their specific needs, including wheelchairs and heaters.

In Nagorny Karabakh, 45 people with a missing family member received similar support, through home visits, counselling from ICRC-trained psychologists, peer-group discussions and sessions with specialists on medical, legal, social and other issues affecting them. Four people had the costs of their medical treatment reimbursed by the ICRC. Twenty-three people acquired new skills at vocational workshops, opening up more opportunities for them to improve their families' financial situation. Nine families (35 people) generated additional income using supplies and equipment they purchased with ICRC-provided grants. Six families (25 people) with elderly members improved their living conditions following the rehabilitation of their homes, funded by the ICRC.

## Separated relatives restore contact

Members of families dispersed by the conflict maintained contact with relatives (see *People deprived of their freedom*) by exchanging RCMs, photos and short messages relayed by ICRC delegates. Members of one family separated by the Line of Contact met each other twice in Georgia.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

### Civilian internees voluntarily repatriated/handed over under ICRC auspices

Over 11,400 detainees, including 1 POW and 12 civilians held in relation to the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, received ICRC visits, conducted in accordance with the organization's standard procedures. Delegates checked whether their treatment and living conditions complied with internationally recognized standards and IHL and, following visits, shared their findings and recommendations confidentially with the authorities concerned. Visits to detainees held under the authority of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Internal Affairs remained suspended, pending the renewal of an agreement with the government on ICRC access to detainees.

Detainees contacted their families through RCMs, oral messages relayed by ICRC delegates, and, in the case of foreign inmates, phone calls. Some detainees at the main prison in Nagorny Karabakh received visits from their families, whose travel costs were covered by the ICRC. Over 400 particularly vulnerable detainees received food, clothes, hygiene items and/or books to ease their situation.

Acting as a neutral intermediary and at the request of all parties concerned, the ICRC facilitated the handover of two civilian internees and the remains of one civilian across the Line of Contact, and the repatriation of eight civilian internees and the remains of another to Armenia.

### Foreign authorities learn from Azerbaijan's TB-control model

Foreign government officials expressed interest in learning from the Azerbaijani authorities' efforts to address multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) in prisons. Officials and technical staff from Kyrgyzstan's penitentiary department and representatives from China observed this first-hand during three study tours organized

by the ICRC in coordination with the medical department of the Ministry of Justice. The Azeri-language version of the documentary film *Combating MDR-TB in Detention* was released.

## ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

The humanitarian consequences of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, along with the ICRC's work for conflict-affected people, remained at the core of discussions with the authorities, armed forces, the diplomatic corps, international organizations and civil society representatives. Regular contacts, supported by newsletters and media reports based on ICRC press materials, kept them and the wider public informed about these topics and contributed to securing acceptance for the ICRC's mandate, access to people affected and respect for IHL (see *Civilians* and *People deprived of their freedom*).

### Armed forces familiarize themselves with IHL considerations in military operations

At an ICRC presentation, 12 military personnel attending courses at the Military College in Azerbaijan enhanced their knowledge of IHL and neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. Eighteen officers of the armed forces – including army and navy officers, members of Azerbaijan's battalion for joint operations with NATO, and legal personnel – attended a workshop on IHL considerations in planning and executing military operations; the ICRC also gave a presentation on respecting IHL in combat operations at a NATO Partnership for Peace predeployment exercise conducted by the joint-forces battalion. Ministry of Defence representatives participated in an IHL course in San Remo, Italy. During training sessions, officers of the police and the internal troops, and heads of temporary detention facilities in Baku, learnt more about international rules and standards for policing, and about IHL and the ICRC's work for detainees.

In Nagorny Karabakh, over 1,700 military personnel stationed along the Line of Contact learnt about IHL basics, their application in armed conflict, and the ICRC's mandate during dissemination sessions organized in coordination with the *de facto* Ministry of Defence. Thirteen commanding officers furthered their understanding of the need to incorporate IHL in military planning and decision-making processes at a workshop on the subject.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	RELATED TO THE NAGORNY KARABAKH CONFLICT	NOT RELATED TO THE NAGORNY KARABAKH CONFLICT
<b>ICRC visits</b>		
Detainees visited	13	11,408
<i>of whom women</i>	1	168
<i>of whom minors</i>	4	41
Detainees visited and monitored individually	13	183
<i>of whom women</i>	1	2
<i>of whom girls</i>	1	
<i>of whom boys</i>	3	
Detainees newly registered	7	90
<i>of whom women</i>		1
<i>of whom boys</i>	1	
Number of visits carried out	29	36
Number of places of detention visited	4	17
<b>Restoring family links</b>		
RCMs collected	65	65
RCMs distributed	54	17
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	1	44
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		3
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC	10	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	1	1

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### **Work on IHL-implementation measures makes minimal progress**

While mobilizing the authorities to advance efforts to clarify the fate of missing persons and meet the needs of their families (see *Civilians*), the ICRC worked on updating a previously conducted study on the compatibility of Azerbaijani legislation with a draft law on the status of missing persons and the rights of their families. It incorporated input from local NGOs working with families of the missing and prepared recommendations to support the authorities in taking the necessary legislative measures. The ICRC also reviewed a compatibility study relating to the implementation of the Hague Convention on Cultural Property, in preparation for dialogue on the subject at a round-table co-chaired with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; however, the round-table did not take place owing to other government priorities.

### **Academics gain practical knowledge at IHL events**

Over 150 law, journalism and international relations students at two Azerbaijani universities broadened their knowledge of IHL during ICRC guest lectures and at a summer course; the latter also enabled IHL professionals in Azerbaijan to meet international experts and thus expand their academic networks. The donation of IHL publications to Baku State University gave students, lecturers and researchers more opportunities to pursue related studies or enrich IHL instruction. Law students from Nagorny Karabakh participated in a summer course and an international conference in Armenia (see *Armenia*).

Drawing on ICRC leaflets, local media in Nagorny Karabakh produced features on the ICRC's work in behalf of families of missing persons, vulnerable elderly people and civilian internees (see *Civilians*). Two journalists improved their ability to report on humanitarian topics through a media workshop in Armenia. Azerbaijani journalists covering the situation in front-line areas attended a similar workshop in Barda.

Visitors who viewed photo exhibitions on "150 years of humanitarian action" in Barda and Nagorny Karabakh learnt more about humanitarian principles and the ICRC's activities for conflict-affected people.

### **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

The Azerbaijani Red Crescent worked in partnership with ICRC teams to assist conflict-affected people (see *Civilians*). It also reinforced its core capacities in emergency preparedness, restoring family links and promoting the Fundamental Principles. With support from Movement partners, it continued to work on its contingency plan and drafted security regulations, incorporating elements of the Safer Access Framework. It conducted refresher courses for first-aid trainers from front-line branches and, with the Austrian Red Cross and the ICRC, carried out an assessment of its first-aid services to identify further capacity-building measures. Following an upsurge in clashes in late 2014, front-line branches were equipped with first-aid bags and stretchers. Managerial staff participated in an ICRC-sponsored seminar on fundraising and resource mobilization.

Movement partners met regularly to coordinate their activities.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>					
<b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>			UAMs/SCs*		
RCMs collected		44			
RCMs distributed		49			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		85			
<b>Reunifications, transfers and repatriations</b>					
Human remains transferred/repatriated		2			
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		38	12	4	3
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		14			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		4,170	335	22	71
<b>Documents</b>					
People to whom travel documents were issued		1			
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		1			
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>					
<b>ICRC visits</b>			Women	Minors	
Detainees visited		11,421	169	45	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		196	3	1	3
Detainees newly registered		97	1		1
Number of visits carried out		65			
Number of places of detention visited		21			
<b>Restoring family links</b>					
RCMs collected		130			
RCMs distributed		71			
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		45			
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		3			
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC		10			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		2			

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)</b>				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	57	46%	0%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	17		
Productive inputs <sup>1</sup>	Beneficiaries			
Cash	Beneficiaries	2,019	50%	25%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	159		
Work, services and training <sup>1</sup>	Beneficiaries	2,205	36%	37%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	1,294		
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	7,569	40%	23%
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Economic security<sup>1</sup>, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection programme)</b>				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	108		
Productive inputs	Beneficiaries	320		

1. Owing to operational and management constraints, figures presented in this table may not reflect all activities carried out during the reporting period.