

# BRUSSELS

**COVERING:** Institutions of the European Union, NATO, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, specific armed forces in Western Europe, Belgium

The ICRC has been working in Brussels since 1999, building strong institutional and operational relations with European Union institutions, NATO and its Parliamentary Assembly, specific armed forces based in Western Europe, and Belgium. It aims to make the ICRC's mandate better known, to mobilize political, diplomatic and financial support for its activities and to ensure that relevant military decision-makers in Western Europe view the ICRC as the main reference point for neutral and independent humanitarian action, as well as for IHL.

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

### In 2014:

- ▶ sustained dialogue with institutions of the European Union ensured that IHL-related issues and humanitarian concerns related to crises around the world were addressed at the highest levels
- ▶ NATO considered incorporating, in its military doctrine, ICRC recommendations for protecting health-care services in armed conflicts, and including ICRC e-learning tools in its training resources
- ▶ an experts' workshop organized with the Belgian authorities and National Society produced a report/guidance tool to help States strengthen laws protecting health-care services in armed conflicts/other emergencies

## YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

**HIGH**

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)	
Protection	44
Assistance	-
Prevention	2,607
Cooperation with National Societies	198
General	-
	<b>2,850</b>
	<i>of which: Overheads 174</i>
IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>90%</b>
PERSONNEL	
Mobile staff	2
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	14

PROTECTION	Total
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>	
<b>ICRC visits</b>	
Detainees visited	1
Detainees visited and monitored individually	1
Number of visits carried out	1
Number of places of detention visited	1

## CONTEXT

The European Union (EU) maintained its involvement in crisis management and conflict resolution worldwide through political mediation and other means, and remained a major global humanitarian donor. It expressed particular concern about the conflicts in the Central African Republic (hereafter CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and the occupied territories, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria) and Ukraine, as well as regionalized conflicts in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region of West Africa. It launched a military mission in the CAR and two civilian missions, in Mali and Ukraine, bringing the total number of active missions under the EU Common Security and Defence Policy to 17 at the end of the year.

EU member States and institutions pursued efforts to develop the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, particularly by refining the positioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS), headed by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The Political and Security Committee was a key body in this regard.

Elections to the European Parliament were held in May, a newly appointed European Commission took office in November, and a new president headed the European Council as of December. The bi-annual EU presidency, held in 2014 by Greece and Italy, chaired certain working groups of the EU Council. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) remained the primary EU body handling humanitarian affairs.

NATO completed the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan at the end of the year. It shifted its role from combat to training/advisory support for Afghan forces, and prepared to launch its Resolute Support Mission in 2015.

Belgium held general elections in May and formed a new government in October. It remained committed to supporting humanitarian action and to developing and promoting IHL.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The Brussels delegation continued to foster relations with EU institutions and NATO, and contributed to ICRC headquarters' dialogue with the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to ensure that IHL and humanitarian issues were given due consideration in the decisions, policies and programmes of these bodies. It highlighted specific humanitarian issues, such as sexual violence and access to health care in armed conflicts and other emergencies, with a view to aiding European efforts to protect and assist people affected by armed conflicts/violence worldwide.

Discussions with EU institutions – among them the EU presidency, the EU Council, the European Commission, including ECHO, and the EEAS – centred on the humanitarian situation/ICRC response to various crises, such as those in the CAR, Syria and Ukraine, and on IHL-related issues. Dialogue tackled issues relating to sexual violence in armed conflict, the goals of the Health Care in Danger project, the Arms Trade Treaty, the “Strengthening IHL” process, and the potential implications of EU data protection reforms for humanitarian activities. Meetings between the ICRC president and senior EU officials brought pressing humanitarian concerns to the forefront of discussions at the highest levels.

Operational dialogue with NATO headquarters, and with NATO's Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT), continued. Talks covered the specific role/mandate of the ICRC, IHL/humanitarian concerns related to military operations, and other humanitarian matters of common interest, particularly safe health-care delivery, lessons learnt during operations in Afghanistan, and sexual violence in armed conflict. ICRC presentations for troops and engagement with NATO units during collective training exercises enhanced dialogue and mutual understanding at field and central levels. ACT and the ICRC also began discussions on the potential inclusion of ICRC e-learning tools in NATO training resources.

Brussels' network of think-tanks and humanitarian actors provided opportunities for the ICRC to promote IHL and its development. Events organized with the College of Europe, the EU Institute for Security Studies and the Network on Humanitarian Action created space for European, international and national civil servants, and academics, to learn more about the subject and to discuss current humanitarian challenges.

The ICRC maintained regular dialogue with the Belgian authorities and cooperation with the Belgian Red Cross on IHL-related and other humanitarian concerns. A workshop attended by international experts resulted in the production of a report and a guidance tool containing recommendations for States to enhance legal protection for health-care services during emergencies.

Continuous contact with the Red Cross/EU Office ensured coherence in Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy, particularly in efforts to clarify the strictly humanitarian objectives of the Movement's family-links activities for vulnerable migrants in Europe.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

One detainee convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and serving his sentence in Belgium received a visit from the ICRC, which checked on his conditions.

## ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

### Meetings with EU institutions tackle humanitarian concerns at the highest level

Meetings with the EU Council, the European Commission, the EU presidency and the EEAS encouraged the incorporation of IHL/humanitarian perspectives in their decisions, policies and programmes, and enlisted/reinforced support for the ICRC and its activities. These included high-level dialogue between the ICRC president and the presidents of the European Council and the European Parliament, the commissioners for humanitarian aid and crisis management, the commissioner for budgets and human resources, and senior EEAS officials, as well as interaction with the Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid.

Discussions tackled, among other things: the humanitarian situation and operational priorities in conflict-affected countries (see *Context*); the ICRC's mandate/working procedures and approach to sexual violence in armed conflict; ICRC concerns regarding certain provisions of EU data protection laws and their potential implications for humanitarian activities; and the Health Care in Danger project. A briefing for the Working Group on Conventional Arms Export emphasized the importance of broad participation in and proper interpretation of the Arms Trade Treaty; the Working Group on Public International Law was briefed on the Swiss-ICRC initiative on strengthening IHL compliance. ECHO and the ICRC signed

an agreement strengthening strategic partnership; a joint photo exhibition at the European Parliament drew attention to the challenges facing health-care services during armed conflict.

The ICRC participated in the spring and autumn sessions of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. The Council of Europe and the OSCE received advice on IHL/humanitarian issues through dialogue led by ICRC headquarters with the delegation's support.

### **NATO headquarters affirms support for Health Care in Danger project**

Dialogue with NATO and Europe-based armed forces furthered understanding of the ICRC's mandate and reinforced the organization's standing as the main source of reference on IHL-related matters.

The ninth NATO-ICRC staff talks in November involved headquarters-level interaction between the two organizations. Meetings at policy and operational levels covered NATO's crisis management approach; its operations and lessons learnt in Afghanistan and the ICRC's contributions to the latter, particularly with regard to the conduct of hostilities and the protection of civilians; and sexual violence and access to health care in armed conflicts/other emergencies.

NATO headquarters' support for the Health Care in Danger project was approved by the Military Committee's chairman and endorsed by the International Military Staff's director-general. Discussions focused on the incorporation into military doctrine of operational lessons learnt and recommendations formulated at a 2013 ICRC workshop on protecting medical services during conflict. These also fed into lessons-learnt exercises, on humanitarian issues, being developed with other NATO commands and components.

### **NATO considers ICRC training input**

ICRC relations with NATO's Strategic Commands – ACO and ACT – continued to develop in line with a 2012 tripartite agreement. Participation in collective training exercises related to the NATO Response Force certification process enabled the ICRC to engage with standby units and headquarters likely to respond in the event of a crisis. ACT and the ICRC drew up an action plan outlining training/education events to which the ICRC was invited to attend in 2015.

Through courses held at NATO schools/colleges or at member States' training institutes, NATO officers/troops familiarized themselves with IHL and the ICRC's work. Similar presentations were given to ISAF officers prior to their deployment. At ACT, discussions began on the prospective inclusion of ICRC-produced tools in the development of e-learning, immersive training environments and virtual reality for NATO training. The ICRC attended ACT's e-learning conference in Norfolk, Virginia, United States of America, to this end.

Relations with US forces based in Europe were maintained through ICRC visits and working-level interaction with the US Europe and US Africa Commands, and with US Army Europe headquarters in Germany.

### **Experts produce recommendations for strengthening legal protection for health-care services**

Dialogue with the Belgian authorities covered IHL promotion, development and implementation and ICRC operations in crisis-stricken contexts, emphasizing issues relating to sexual violence and access to health care.

In January, the Belgian national IHL committee, the Belgian Red Cross and the ICRC organized a three-day experts' workshop on legal protection for medical services during armed conflicts/other emergencies. Some 50 specialists and academics from 25 countries and regional/specialized organizations discussed how domestic laws could better protect health-care services. Participants recommended legal prohibitions against obstructions to health care – such as interfering with the safe passage of ambulances – in addition to existing laws prohibiting direct attacks against medical personnel/facilities. The recommendations were collected in a report, and a guidance tool produced, to help States enact the necessary measures.

Meetings with Brussels-based humanitarian actors and participation in events hosted by various organizations contributed to strengthening humanitarian coordination and enabled the ICRC to exchange views on operational developments and IHL/humanitarian issues. European civil servants, diplomats and humanitarian workers were introduced to IHL and its application in contemporary conflicts at a seminar organized with the Network on Humanitarian Action and the Belgian Red Cross. Law students attended IHL courses co-organized with the College of Europe, with Swiss government support. Experts from governments, international organizations, armed forces and various universities discussed legal issues related to detention in armed conflicts at the 15th Bruges Colloquium on IHL, likewise co-organized with the College of Europe. Policy-makers, NGO representatives and academics tackled the issue of sexual violence and the protection of women during armed conflict at a colloquium hosted jointly with the EU Institute for Security Studies.

EU, NATO and Belgian contacts and European media kept abreast of ICRC operations through news releases/updates.

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

Coordination with the Red Cross/EU Office ensured the coherence of Movement-wide humanitarian diplomacy with European institutions, particularly of efforts to clarify the strictly humanitarian nature of the Movement's family-links services for migrants (see *Europe*). It also helped monitor progress in pledges made by EU member States/National Societies at the 31st International Conference.

The Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants and the European Legal Support Group drew on the ICRC's IHL expertise.

The Belgian Red Cross and the ICRC sustained cooperation in humanitarian/IHL-related initiatives. A joint exhibition in Ypres showcased the Movement's humanitarian activities during the First World War.

<b>MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION</b>					
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>		<b>Total</b>			
<b>ICRC visits</b>			<b>Women</b>	<b>Minors</b>	
Detainees visited		1			
			<b>Women</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
Detainees visited and monitored individually		1			
Number of visits carried out		1			
Number of places of detention visited		1			

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children