

KUWAIT (regional)

COVERING: member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates



ICRC regional delegation

The ICRC has been in Kuwait since the 1990–91 Gulf War. It focuses on humanitarian needs remaining from that war or arising from current armed conflicts and other situations of violence in the wider region. Its work includes activities for people deprived of their freedom in the countries covered and the promotion of IHL and its own role as a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organization, among governments and other influential circles. Strengthening partnerships with the Red Crescent Societies of the region is another priority, along with resource mobilization and coordination with other actors.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

In 2014:

- ▶ detainees in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar – including, for the first time, migrants at a Qatari deportation centre – received visits; at regional conferences, authorities discussed improvements to detainee health care
- ▶ families restored/maintained contact with their relatives, including those detained abroad, through family-links services, such as RCMs, phone/video calls and family visits
- ▶ dialogue with key actors during regional events, such as a humanitarian pledging conference for Syria and events co-organized with/for Islamic organizations, helped raise acceptance of/support for the ICRC's work
- ▶ the region's National Societies were supported in enhancing their operational capacities, for example, at a regional course in responding to large-scale emergencies, hosted by the Qatar Red Crescent Society/ICRC
- ▶ despite new information, including GPS coordinates, no remains of persons missing in relation to the 1990–91 Gulf War were found by the ICRC-chaired Tripartite Commission

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)	
Protection	1,795
Assistance	252
Prevention	1,497
Cooperation with National Societies	530
General	-

4,074

of which: Overheads 249

IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	84%

PERSONNEL	
Mobile staff	10
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	27

YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

PROTECTION	Total
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)	
Red Cross messages (RCMs)	
RCMs collected	273
RCMs distributed	194
Phone calls facilitated between family members	139
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	15
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	8,190
Detainees visited and monitored individually	450
Number of visits carried out	29
Number of places of detention visited	12

CONTEXT

The member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) continued to exert influence in the region and beyond. Most GCC governments and National Societies carried out, jointly or individually, activities to assist people affected by conflict in the Gaza Strip in the occupied Palestinian territory, and in the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria), including those who had fled to neighbouring countries. For the second consecutive year, Kuwait hosted an international pledging conference for victims of the Syrian crisis. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (hereafter UAE) participated in airstrikes against the Islamic State group, as part of a coalition led by the United States of America. Kuwait and Qatar provided logistical support for the coalition's efforts.

Despite growing tensions in the wider region, the situation in most GCC member States remained relatively stable. In Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, some people were arrested on charges of "terrorism." Most States tightened their policies on economic migration, which contributed to an increase in the number of detainees. Bahrain continued to see bouts of unrest linked to the suspension of talks between the government and those calling for reforms. Law enforcement operations to quell demonstrations in the country often led to arrests.

Saudi Arabia hosted the secretariats of the GCC and of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and its Humanitarian Affairs Department.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC regional delegation in Kuwait focused on building awareness of and support for IHL and its implementation, as well as the ICRC and its work. It visited detainees and supported the authorities in ensuring their well-being; helped people restore/maintain family links; and continued to act as a neutral intermediary in efforts to address the issue of persons missing in relation to the 1990–91 Gulf War. Cooperation with GCC National Societies helped them boost their operational capacities.

Through contact with and events for the authorities, intergovernmental/international organizations, NGOs, academics and journalists, the ICRC developed dialogue with them, reinforcing their acceptance of and support for IHL and humanitarian principles, as well as the ICRC's work for conflict/violence-affected people. For example, the ICRC president's participation in a pledging conference for Syria in Kuwait helped elicit support for the ICRC's activities in Syria and neighbouring countries. Regional conferences co-organized with/for Islamic organizations, particularly charities, helped pave the way for future cooperation with them in the field of humanitarian action. The ICRC also re-initiated cooperation with the Kuwaiti army on IHL dissemination for their officers.

National IHL committees drew on ICRC support to promote IHL and its implementation. Bahrain established such a committee with ICRC assistance, and Oman's efforts in this regard continued to be supported. The ICRC encouraged universities to incorporate IHL into their curricula, notably, through dialogue with them and IHL seminars for academics/students.

Formal discussions with the Bahraini authorities commenced, regarding the ICRC's possible contribution to their efforts to ensure the protection of the population during law enforcement operations.

Detainees in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar – including, for the first time, migrants at a deportation centre in Qatar – received ICRC visits. To help ensure that their treatment and living conditions met applicable norms and internationally recognized standards, based on its visits, the ICRC confidentially shared recommendations with the authorities; penitentiary staff and decision-makers participated in related training and events abroad. Notably, Health/Interior Ministry officials discussed health care for detainees at regional conferences in Kuwait and Jordan.

National Society/ICRC family-links services enabled families to locate or keep in touch with relatives abroad, including those held at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba and at the Parwan detention facility in Afghanistan. In Kuwait, the ICRC advocated the importance of facilitating family visits for migrants at deportation centres, and, with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, studied the feasibility of providing them with video calls.

Dialogue with the GCC National Societies resulted in initiatives to help them reinforce their capabilities to restore family links, respond to large-scale emergencies, and raise awareness of IHL, including issues related to the Health Care in Danger project. Such dialogue also tackled the importance of conducting humanitarian action in accordance with the Fundamental Principles.

The ICRC continued to chair and act as a neutral intermediary within the Tripartite Commission (TC) handling the issue of persons missing in connection with the 1990–91 Gulf War. Despite new information, no human remains were found in 2014.

CIVILIANS

People in Bahrain, particularly those who participated in demonstrations, reported concerns related to law enforcement operations; some of these were documented during ICRC visits to places of detention (see *People deprived of their freedom*). Formal discussions with the authorities commenced, regarding the ICRC's possible contribution to their efforts to protect the population during law enforcement operations; the ICRC also tackled the subject during dialogue with other stakeholders (see *Actors of influence*).

Members of dispersed families keep in touch

People in GCC member States located or exchanged news with relatives abroad – including those living in countries affected by conflict/natural disasters, and those detained in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon – through RCMs, phone/video calls, oral messages relayed via ICRC delegates, family visits and other family-links services jointly offered by the region's National Societies and the ICRC. Some families also sent parcels containing food/recreational items to their relatives held at the Guantanamo Bay internment facility and the Parwan detention facility. However, family visits for people with relatives in Iraq could not take place, owing to security constraints.

GCC National Societies drew on ICRC advice and support to improve their family-links services, notably, through a regional workshop (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*).

Efforts to ascertain the fate of missing persons continue

With the ICRC chairing and acting as a neutral intermediary within the TC comprising Iraq, Kuwait and former coalition States (France, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America), the parties involved continued working to clarify the fate of persons missing

in relation to the 1990–91 Gulf War. The UN Mission in Iraq joined the TC as an observer.

At two ICRC-chaired meetings of the TC and five meetings of its technical sub-committee, the parties concerned discussed progress made and obstacles encountered. Despite new information on the location of potential gravesites in Iraq and Kuwait, including GPS coordinates and possible witness testimonies, no human remains were recovered during excavation missions in the two countries.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Migrants at deportation centres in Qatar receive ICRC visits for the first time

Over 8,100 detainees in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar – including, for the first time, migrants at a deportation centre in Qatar – received visits conducted according to standard ICRC procedures. Delegates paid particular attention to the situations of vulnerable detainees, such as people arrested after demonstrations in Bahrain, migrants and security detainees in Kuwait, and in Qatar, people held in connection with a failed coup attempt in 1996.

Based on observations made during visits, ICRC delegates gave the authorities confidential feedback and, where appropriate, recommendations for improving detainees’ treatment and living conditions, particularly during arrest and the initial stages of detention. Discussions tackled prison management and issues such as overcrowding; the importance of access to health care; concerns related to mental health; and facilitating family contact for detainees, particularly migrants. In Bahrain and Kuwait, detainees learnt about hygiene and health practices through information campaigns organized by the authorities, as per ICRC recommendations.

In Kuwait, migrants in deportation centres and shelters had their situation monitored and assessed by the National Society/ICRC; joint family-links activities for them were discussed, such as support for video calls.

GCC prison authorities exchange views on health care for detainees at a regional conference

Through ICRC-facilitated training, penitentiary staff and decision-makers bolstered their capacity to ensure detainees’ well-being, in line with applicable law and internationally recognized standards.

At a seminar in Kuwait, Health/Interior Ministry officials from all GCC member States, including those where detainees did not receive ICRC visits, discussed challenges and norms related to health-care provision in detention, while broadening their understanding of the ICRC and its activities. Officials from the Bahraini, Kuwaiti and Qatari Interior Ministries, and the Kuwaiti Health Ministry, exchanged best practices at a regional conference abroad (see *Jordan*). Countries in the region were encouraged to transfer responsibility for detainees’ health care from the Interior to the Health Ministry.

In light of plans for new detention facilities, Health and Interior Ministry officials from Kuwait boosted their knowledge of prison construction standards and rehabilitation programmes for detainees through an ICRC-facilitated tour of Swiss prisons.

Former POWs helped by attestations of captivity

Some 10,780 Iraqi former POWs who had been held in Saudi Arabia during the 1990–91 Gulf War received attestations of captivity, which enabled them to apply for financial assistance in Iraq or helped facilitate legal procedures in third countries where they had resettled.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

High-level talks help garner support for the ICRC’s work for conflict-affected people in the wider region

Participation in humanitarian symposia and high-level dialogue with governments and international and intergovernmental organizations such as the OIC, notably during the ICRC president’s visits to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, helped raise acceptance of and support for the ICRC’s work for conflict/violence-affected people.

For example, at a humanitarian pledging conference for Syria in Kuwait, participants were updated on ICRC activities in Syria and neighbouring countries, and conferred with the ICRC president on the need to ensure respect for IHL and safe access to victims during conflicts. This helped elicit renewed pledges of support for the ICRC from several organizations and States, notably, Kuwait.

Presentations during humanitarian fora in Qatar covered ICRC activities in the wider region, and in the UAE, the particular needs of conflict/violence-affected women as well as the importance of unhindered access to health care for victims. At OCHA workshops, the ICRC discussed ways to share information and strengthen partnerships with other actors, including the media.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	BAHRAIN	KUWAIT	QATAR
ICRC visits			
Detainees visited	3,404	2,320	2,466
<i>of whom women</i>	76	586	333
<i>of whom minors</i>	295	25	5
Detainees visited and monitored individually	327	105	18
<i>of whom women</i>	3	20	4
<i>of whom girls</i>		1	
<i>of whom boys</i>	14		
Detainees newly registered	98	96	11
<i>of whom women</i>		18	4
<i>of whom girls</i>		1	
<i>of whom boys</i>	9		
Number of visits carried out	8	16	5
Number of places of detention visited	3	5	4
Restoring family links			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	1	10,780	

Bahrain establishes a national IHL committee

National IHL committees received advice on promoting IHL and the adoption/implementation of IHL-related treaties in line with regional plans of action (see *Egypt*); the committees' presidents discussed related challenges at a regional conference (see *Algeria*). Diplomats furthered their understanding of IHL and the ICRC's mandate at a regional seminar co-organized with the UAE's national IHL committee. At a workshop co-organized with Qatar's national IHL committee – the first since its establishment in 2012 – local government officials, including committee members, augmented their knowledge of best practices in IHL implementation. With ICRC input, Bahrain established a national IHL committee in May. In Oman, government officials' efforts in this regard continued to be supported.

In Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE, universities were encouraged to incorporate IHL into their curricula through dialogue with and IHL seminars involving academics/students. Selected legal professionals/organizations received IHL reference materials. Scholars discussed IHL at regional courses (see *Lebanon* and *Pakistan*).

Regional conferences co-organized with Islamic charities pave the way for future cooperation

Key actors increased their understanding and acceptance of IHL and humanitarian principles and the ICRC and its mandate through contact with/events co-organized by the ICRC.

Notably, governments, international/intergovernmental organizations, and other actors discussed universal humanitarian principles and shared operational challenges at regional conferences co-organized with and for Islamic organizations, particularly charities, paving the way for future cooperation with them in the field of humanitarian action. In Kuwait, the first such event introduced neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action to a wider audience; a second forum covered ways to help local charities reach more people in need. In Saudi Arabia, stakeholders tackled topics such as challenges to IHL implementation, the protection of humanitarian workers and the importance of social media in humanitarian work. In the UAE, the similarities between IHL and sharia law were discussed, particularly, in relation to assisting victims of conflict.

During local workshops co-organized with Bahraini associations – one for lawyers and another for journalists – participants enhanced their knowledge of topics such as IHL and the protection it affords civilians and medical services. Regionally, journalists helped raise awareness of humanitarian issues and ICRC activities by drawing on ICRC briefings and reference materials to enrich their coverage.

Members of the Kuwaiti and Qatari armed forces boost their knowledge of IHL and the ICRC

Cooperation with the Kuwaiti army on IHL dissemination was re-initiated, following officers' participation in an ICRC-conducted regional seminar on IHL integration in 2013; at a four-day IHL training course, 35 senior officers increased their knowledge of the subject.

At a presentation in a Qatari military college, 40 officers and instructors in charge of curriculum development learnt about the ICRC's role during armed conflict and other situations of violence. IHL training for the Bahraini army was postponed, owing to administrative constraints.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Dialogue with GCC National Societies resulted in joint initiatives – some of which covered the Safer Access Framework and the goals of the Health Care in Danger project – to help them bolster their operational capacities; furthermore, it also tackled the importance of conducting humanitarian action in accordance with the Fundamental Principles. Following the ICRC president's visit to Saudi Arabia, an agreement on future cooperation with the National Society was drafted.

GCC National Societies worked towards strengthening their legal bases and public communication capabilities, particularly, regarding IHL dissemination and protection of the Movement's emblems.

National Societies enhance their family-links services and emergency-response capacities

Staff/volunteers from the Kuwaiti, Qatari, and Saudi National Societies reinforced their capacity to provide family-links services at ICRC-hosted training sessions. During a regional workshop co-organized with the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society, GCC National Societies discussed the coordination of such services and the need to raise awareness of their importance amongst decision-makers and the public.

Over 125 National Society staff/volunteers from the wider region strengthened their capacities in IDP camp management and disaster preparedness/response at a Qatar Red Crescent Society/ICRC-organized workshop. ICRC-supported courses helped the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent's newly formed emergency response team boost its capacity to respond to natural disasters. At ICRC workshops, over 40 staff from the Red Crescent Society of the UAE sharpened their skills in advanced first aid and instruction thereon. The regional Health Emergencies in Large Populations course was postponed to 2015; related materials were translated, with a view to conducting it in Arabic for the first time.

The Bahrain Red Crescent Society hosted a regional workshop on humanitarian diplomacy, at which the ICRC briefed government/NGO representatives and Movement components on the importance of dialogue with parties to conflicts for improving access to victims and staff safety. In the UAE, representatives of local medical institutions discussed IHL rules regarding safe access to health care at a seminar organized by the National Society/ICRC. A similar event in Qatar was postponed to 2015, owing to administrative constraints.

Movement components discussed ways to improve coordination and maximize their impact, notably at the 40th General Assembly of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
Red Cross messages (RCMs)					
			UAMs/SCs*		
RCMs collected		273			
RCMs distributed		194			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		139			
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons					
			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		15	3		3
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		5			
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		15			
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		5			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		1,509	15	2	44
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		1,400			
Documents					
People to whom travel documents were issued		18			
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		2			
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)¹					
ICRC visits					
			Women	Minors	
Detainees visited		8,190	995	325	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		450	27	1	14
Detainees newly registered		205	22	1	9
Number of visits carried out		29			
Number of places of detention visited		12			
Restoring family links					
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		10,781			

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)¹				
Health				
Number of visits carried out by health staff		15		
Number of places of detention visited by health staff		7		

1. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar