

The multiple tasks and activities of the UN often have implications of a humanitarian nature. Operating since 1983, the ICRC delegation to the UN serves as a support and a liaison for ICRC operational and legal initiatives. The delegation conveys the ICRC's viewpoint and keeps updated on trends and developments relating to humanitarian issues and promotes IHL.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

In 2014:

- ▶ key actors at the UN reflected on IHL and humanitarian issues after ICRC statements to the Security Council and at the General Assembly, and following visits by senior ICRC officials, including the president
- ▶ the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) revised guidelines and procedures on peacekeeping, taking account of ICRC feedback on IHL-related issues
- ▶ the UN General Assembly resolution on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel emphasized the urgency of protecting health-care delivery and referred directly to the Health Care in Danger project
- ▶ UN officials and representatives of member States learnt more about specific ICRC operations, such as those in Africa and the Middle East, and about the humanitarian situation there
- ▶ the ICRC kept abreast of developments in the humanitarian field, which were incorporated in its institutional analysis of operational and other issues, and helped strengthen its field practice and activities

YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)	
Protection	-
Assistance	-
Prevention	2,506
Cooperation with National Societies	-
General	-

2,506

of which: Overheads 153

IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	105%

PERSONNEL	
Mobile staff	3
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	11

CONTEXT

The UN and the diplomatic community continued to grapple with crises throughout the world, particularly in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereafter DRC), Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territory, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria) and Ukraine. These context-specific discussions often involved broad humanitarian concerns – for instance, access to violence-stricken contexts, children in armed conflict and women, peace and security, and other protection-related issues.

Peacekeeping missions authorized to use force at the tactical level, as in the cases of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), have received extensions of their “robust” mandates. In light of the renewed violence in South Sudan, the Security Council passed a resolution in May 2014 to streamline the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which continued to host tens of thousands of IDPs at “protection-of-civilian” sites within its compounds. Plans were under way for a review of UN peacekeeping missions in 2015.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa also figured prominently in the UN’s priorities, prompting it to pursue increased coordination and to establish its first system-wide emergency health mission.

Ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit, scheduled for 2016, the international community discussed the summit’s main themes: humanitarian effectiveness; reducing vulnerabilities and managing risks; transformation through innovation; and serving the needs of people in conflict. Discussions also encompassed the convergence of humanitarian assistance and development, as well as the post-2015 development goals.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC’s New York delegation stayed in regular contact with UN bodies, member States and observers, and civil society organizations to emphasize the most pressing humanitarian concerns and to help strengthen respect for IHL. The organization used its field experiences to concretize discussions and to secure support for principled, apolitical humanitarian action. It also provided feedback on specific contexts and issues during policy debates and other discussions, as well as during the drafting of guidelines.

As a permanent observer at the UN, the ICRC maintained a regular presence at Security Council and General Assembly events. For instance, it served as an expert briefer at the Security Council’s open debate on the protection of civilians and delivered statements to the General Assembly on the rule of law, universal jurisdiction and the specific concerns of women, children and IDPs. These were opportunities for the ICRC to advocate for the strengthening of IHL with regard to peacekeeping operations, the use of and trade in weapons, and humanitarian access; it also pushed for a purely humanitarian approach to assisting victims of violence. Thanks in part to these efforts, UN discussions, reports and resolutions addressed IHL-related issues and reflected the ICRC’s feedback, as did the updated guidelines against the militarization of schools. The General Assembly resolution on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel contained strong language on the violence affecting health care and made direct reference to the Health Care in Danger project.

The ICRC kept up its cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), providing IHL-related recommendations on guidelines and procedures for peacekeeping missions. At briefings for DPKO staff and for State representatives, the ICRC addressed the applicability of IHL to multinational forces. It continued to push for stricter regulation of weapons and for the further development and implementation of IHL in this regard.

It pursued direct engagement with officials of the UN and representatives of member States at frequent bilateral/multilateral meetings. These included the high-level events attended by the ICRC president and other senior officials – such as the ministerial debate, co-hosted by the WHO, on the importance of protecting health-care delivery. These contacts helped the ICRC keep abreast of pertinent developments in the humanitarian sphere, contributing to streamlining institutional practices in the field.

ICRC delegates delivered briefings on the organization’s operations, including those in Israel and the occupied territories, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, which aimed at reconciling ground realities with the discourse of policy-makers based in New York. The ICRC and the New York University School of Law jointly organized the 31st Annual Seminar for Diplomats on IHL, which was attended by over 90 State representatives. Diplomats regularly consulted the ICRC on matters within its remit, such as women and children in armed conflict, sexual violence, the protection due to those seeking/providing medical care, and other IHL and protection-related issues. Such exchanges helped decision-makers at different various levels to deepen their understanding of the ICRC’s distinct mandate and approach.

The ICRC continued to coordinate closely with other organizations and UN-affiliated consortia, and with Movement partners in particular. To increase public awareness of its priorities and activities, the ICRC also maintained its ties to New York-based NGOs and think-tanks and its contacts with UN-accredited media and academic institutions.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

As a permanent observer at the UN, the ICRC helped ensure that IHL and other matters linked to the protection of civilians were at the forefront of discussions on key humanitarian issues. It used its operational experiences in areas high on the UN’s agenda (see *Context*) to concretize the importance of humanitarian access and action from a strictly apolitical, principled perspective.

UN bodies develop guidelines reflecting ICRC expertise in IHL

The ICRC engaged with the UN and its bodies, agencies and member States at various fora, where it shared its thematic and operational expertise. As an expert briefer during the Security Council’s open debate on the protection of civilians, it emphasized States’ legal obligations to facilitate conflict victims’ access to assistance, and the urgent need to regulate weapon use and strengthen compliance with IHL. It also addressed the General Assembly – including during its 69th session and at committee debates – to draw attention to the relevance of the rule of law and universal jurisdiction and to the specific concerns of women, children and IDPs.

In the run-up to the Security Council’s adoption of a resolution on children and armed conflict, the ICRC provided advice on the protection due to medical personnel/facilities and schools, which

contributed to the resolution's IHL-related language; recommendations like these were also reflected in the subsequently updated guidelines on protecting schools against military use. Similarly, the General Assembly's resolution on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel contained strong language on the importance of safe health-care delivery and referred directly to the Health Care in Danger project; the ICRC president reiterated these sentiments at a ministerial debate hosted jointly with the WHO on the sidelines of the General Assembly session.

DPKO, OLA draw on ICRC feedback on peacekeeping guidelines

The DPKO and the OLA drew on the ICRC's legal advice, using its recommendations and suggested language, to revise general UN guidelines on the use of force by peacekeeping missions with "robust" mandates and specific guidelines for MONUSCO on its internment procedures, and for MINUSMA and UNMISS on the protection of civilians; UNMISS guidelines also covered the security conditions at "protection-of-civilians" sites in South Sudan.

An ICRC briefing created space for DPKO staff to familiarize themselves with the organization's position on IHL in the context of peacekeeping. Six State representatives attended a similar session, where they also discussed policy-related issues.

The ICRC made recommendations to the UN Secretariat on the scope of a review of UN peacekeeping operations scheduled for 2015.

States work towards stricter weapons control regime

The ICRC maintained its commitment to helping strengthen the regulations on the use and trade of weapons and encouraging the development of applicable norms. It encouraged further ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force in December, and also contributed to the general debate on the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, nuclear weapons, cyber-warfare and new technologies. Notably, it spoke out against the use of nuclear weapons during a panel discussion organized by the Japanese authorities on the margins of a meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

High-level interaction helps foster ties with emerging actors

Regular meetings with UN officials and representatives of member States, including monthly meetings with the president of the Security Council, allowed for in-depth exchanges. At two high-level events on the sidelines of the General Assembly session, the ICRC president explained the organization's perspectives on the situation in South Sudan and in Syria. He also met with senior diplomats at an event hosted by the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group (HLWG), where he described the most pressing challenges confronting the ICRC. His meeting with regional leaders and representatives of emerging States buttressed the organization's efforts to expand relations with all humanitarian stakeholders.

Over 90 State representatives added to their knowledge of IHL, legal and humanitarian developments and ICRC operations during the 31st Annual Seminar for Diplomats on IHL, jointly organized by the New York University School of Law and the ICRC. A number of officials, many of whom had participated in the seminar, requested and received further advice from the ICRC on topics within its remit, such as women and children in armed

conflict, sexual violence, the protection of medical personnel/facilities, and other IHL and protection-related concerns or context-specific issues. Many government representatives also took part in briefings on the ICRC's major operations – in Israel and the occupied territories and in Somalia, for instance.

Such linkages helped key actors and policy-makers take note of IHL and the challenges in the field and, in turn, fostered their support for resolutions and policies (see above) that reflected these issues accordingly.

Humanitarian actors coordinate activities

Meetings of the HLWG and the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee facilitated coordination of humanitarian activities and allowed the ICRC to monitor policy developments and other thematic issues (e.g. those concerning accountability, early recovery and partnerships), to emphasize the importance of principled humanitarian action and to set out its priorities and concerns.

Frequent contact with Movement partners, NGOs, think-tanks and UN-affiliated humanitarian organizations furthered understanding of each other's roles and positions on pertinent issues and of the ICRC's distinct mandate. Notably, working with Movement partners to mark the 150th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions reinforced Movement cooperation. Participating in events organized by think-tanks and NGOs kept the ICRC updated on changes in the humanitarian sphere and enabled it to put forward its priorities to a wider base. Other organizations also drew on ICRC guidance on IHL-related matters.

These exchanges fed into the ICRC's own analysis of thematic and operational issues and, in effect, helped it strengthen its field practice.

Future decision-makers learn more about humanitarian principles and the Movement

UN-accredited media covered ICRC activities, aided by the organization's press releases and publications. At ICRC events, future lawyers, leaders and decision-makers enriched their grasp of IHL. The delegation continued to develop its presence on social media and maintained its targeted communication initiatives.