

WESTERN BALKANS (regional)

COVERING: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia



ICRC / AR, 2014
 ◻ ICRC regional delegation ◻ ICRC delegation ◻ ICRC mission
 - - - - Inter-entity boundary line *UN Security Council Resolution 1244

The ICRC has been working in the countries covered since the early 1990s. The organization strives to respond to the needs remaining from armed conflicts in the region. In particular, it seeks to help clarify the fate of missing persons and to address the needs of their families. Throughout the region, the ICRC visits detainees, works with the authorities and civil society to promote IHL and supports the development of the National Societies.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

In 2014:

- ▶ national authorities in the region continued working to clarify the fate of persons missing in relation to past conflicts, helping resolve 572 cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 85 in Croatia and 68 in Kosovo
- ▶ families of missing persons met their psychosocial, legal and administrative needs with support from family associations and National Societies or Red Cross units backed by the ICRC
- ▶ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, with encouragement from the ICRC
- ▶ detainees in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia received ICRC visits, and the ICRC began discussions with the Kosovar authorities on resuming visits to detainees under its purview
- ▶ with ICRC assistance, the region's National Societies developed their capacities in restoring family links and addressing weapon contamination, notably in connection with migration and flooding respectively

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)	
Protection	2,351
Assistance	-
Prevention	518
Cooperation with National Societies	360
General	-

3,229

of which: Overheads 197

IMPLEMENTATION RATE	
Expenditure/yearly budget	93%

PERSONNEL	
Mobile staff	7
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	43

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 distributed	1
Phone calls facilitated between family members	1
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	646
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	23
Detainees visited and monitored individually	23
Number of visits carried out	9
Number of places of detention visited	9

* UN Security Council Resolution 1244

CONTEXT

The countries of the Western Balkans continued to address problems inherited from past conflicts. The thousands of unresolved cases of missing persons remained the most pressing humanitarian challenge in the region. War-crimes proceedings continued in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. The dispersal of families during migration or disasters – for instance, during floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia in May – was also a concern.

The prime ministers of Kosovo and Serbia continued to engage in discussions facilitated by the European Union (EU), with a view to implementing their 2013 agreement to normalize relations.

Serbia began formal accession talks with the EU; Albania was granted candidate status for EU membership. Negotiations between the EU and Kosovo, over a Stabilization and Association Agreement, continued. Bosnia and Herzegovina's inability to establish stable interethnic dialogue continued to hamper its pursuit of EU membership.

Kosovo police began operations to arrest people on charges of "terrorism". The parliaments of all countries in the Western Balkans adopted amendments to their criminal codes placing sanctions on citizens participating in or organizing recruitment for armed conflicts abroad.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued to back the efforts of the authorities in the region to ascertain the fate of persons missing in connection with past conflicts and, with the pertinent National Societies and Red Cross units, to ensure their families' access to psychosocial and other assistance. Together with international stakeholders, including the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), it continued to encourage national authorities to fulfil their obligations to the missing and their families. National authorities were urged to intensify their search for new information, for example by increasing cooperation with other parties concerned. Local actors were persuaded to assume further responsibilities and supported in strengthening their ability to do so.

As a result of these efforts, 572 cases of missing persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 68 cases in Kosovo were resolved. The Croatian Red Cross reported that 85 cases had been resolved in Croatia.

Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC chaired four sessions of the Kosovo-Serbia Working Group on Missing Persons, which were attended by members of the international community, associations of families of missing persons and the National Societies/Red Cross units of the two sides. Within the framework of the working group, the remains of 52 persons reported missing were exhumed, identified and returned to Kosovo for handover to their families.

The ICRC continued to help national authorities take over the lead role in resolving the issue of missing persons. It helped the Missing Persons Institute (MPI) in Bosnia and Herzegovina boost its capabilities in preparation for managing all open cases of missing persons and maintaining a central register of information on the missing. It continued to hand over responsibility for following up cases to the Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Throughout the region, families of the missing eased their situation with psychosocial/legal/administrative assistance from family associations and the pertinent National Societies/Red Cross units, all of which received ICRC support.

The ICRC supported the national authorities in the region in enacting or implementing legislation in line with IHL. The authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, assisted by the ICRC, reviewed the implementation status of the Convention on Enforced Disappearance and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In view of the continuing prosecution in the region of people alleged to have committed war crimes, the ICRC, in cooperation with national/international stakeholders, organized a regional conference to discuss the role of national jurisdictions in implementing IHL. With encouragement from the ICRC, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (hereafter FYR Macedonia), Montenegro and Serbia ratified the Arms Trade Treaty.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, vulnerable detainees, including those held for security-related reasons, received ICRC visits conducted according to the organization's standard procedures. The authorities received confidential feedback and, where necessary, recommendations to improve detainees' treatment and living conditions. The ICRC pursued discussions with the Kosovar authorities on conducting visits to detainees under its purview. People formerly held at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, now resettled in Bosnia and Herzegovina, visited relatives in foreign countries with ICRC support. Also in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the family of one person currently held at the Guantanamo Bay internment facility restored contact with him through an ICRC video call.

The ICRC continued to back the region's National Societies/Red Cross units in bolstering their ability to undertake humanitarian activities independently, particularly promoting IHL, restoring family links and addressing risks related to mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), for example, during the floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia in May.

CIVILIANS

Efforts to clarify the fate of persons missing in connection with past conflicts continued. Progress was slow owing to the lack of new information on gravesites and the difficulty of identifying human remains already recovered. Of 34,891 people reported missing in relation to the conflicts, 10,915 remained unaccounted for at end-2014.

Local actors built their capacities in addressing the issue with ICRC assistance and were encouraged to assume further responsibilities. National authorities received updated information, obtained through the various mechanisms working to clarify the fate of the missing, and were urged to share information in their possession, support institutions involved in the exhumation and identification process, and enact legislation protecting the rights of the missing and their families (see *Actors of influence*). The EU and other key international actors were urged to reiterate to national authorities the importance of fulfilling their obligation to provide answers to the families concerned.

The names of persons still being sought in the region were available on the ICRC family-links website (familylinks.icrc.org).

Local actors strengthen their ability to resolve cases of missing persons

Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict 1992–95

At end-December, the families of 7,129 individuals for whom cases were opened with the ICRC remained without news of their missing relatives. During 2014, 572 cases were solved, most of them using information from the MPI on recovered and identified remains; 13 persons were found alive.

With filing equipment and increased data-storage capacity provided by the ICRC, the MPI continued to work on the creation of a central register of missing persons. With financial/material/technical support from the ICMP and the ICRC, the MPI continued to develop its capabilities in preparation for eventually taking over the management of all open cases of missing persons. Owing to delays in locating and informing families, the handover of cases from the ICRC to the MPI was not completed by end-2014, as initially planned. Bosnia and Herzegovina's National Society continued to assume more responsibility for following up cases and maintaining contact with families of missing persons. The MPI and the National Society cooperated more efficiently after establishing standard procedures for their joint work.

The National Society/ICRC kept families informed of impending changes related to the handover of responsibilities. With ICRC assistance, 11 people travelled to identify the remains of their relatives, which enabled them to arrange dignified burials afterwards.

Kosovo conflict 1999

Serbian authorities completed exhumation work at a site in Raska, Serbia, where human remains had been discovered in 2013. The Serbian Commission on Missing Persons led the work, with technical/material assistance from the ICRC and other stakeholders. The families of 52 persons found some relief from uncertainty after the remains of their relatives were recovered from the Raska site and subsequently identified.

At the Kosovar and Serbian authorities' request, the ICRC coordinated the sharing among the various stakeholders of information pertaining to the recovery and identification of human remains. Such information was exchanged at four public sessions of the ICRC-chaired Working Group on Missing Persons, which members of the international community, family associations, the Red Cross of Serbia and the Red Cross units of Kosovo attended as observers. Based on requests from the Kosovar authorities, put forth through the Working Group, the Serbian authorities assessed

two possible gravesite locations; no remains were found at either site.

In Kosovo, the Government Commission on Missing Persons and the Department of Forensic Medicine continued to work on the establishment of a central register of missing persons, using the ICRC's ante/post-mortem data-management software.

The ICRC continued to gather information on possible gravesite locations from national/international archives and to share this with stakeholders, particularly EULEX, which carried out forensic work in place of the national authorities. Following mobilization efforts, international stakeholders provided documents thought to contain information that might help clarify the fate of missing persons.

As a result of these activities and the concerted efforts of stakeholders, 68 cases of persons missing in relation to the conflict were resolved during the year, with one person found alive. At end-2014, 1,655 individuals remained unaccounted for in connection with the Kosovo conflict.

The ICRC continued to encourage the Kosovar and Macedonian authorities to reach an agreement to search for and eventually repatriate human remains allegedly buried in FYR Macedonia in relation to the Kosovo conflict.

Croatia conflicts 1991–95

At end-2014, 2,131 people missing in relation to the Croatian conflicts remained unaccounted for. The Croatian Red Cross reported that 85 cases of missing persons were closed; three people were found alive.

Fifty-eight persons from Serbia found some closure after they identified the remains of their relatives at the Forensic Institute in Zagreb, Croatia; the ICRC facilitated their journey and attended the sessions as an observer.

Owing to the nature of the issue and the political tensions between the two countries, no meetings of the Croatia-Serbia Working Group on Missing Persons were held in 2014. The ICRC continued to urge the participants to intensify their efforts to provide answers to the families of the missing.

Families of missing persons lend each other support and increase public awareness of their plight

Throughout the region, during difficult occasions – for instance,

CIVILIANS	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	CROATIA	SERBIA	KOSOVO
Red Cross messages (RCMs)				
RCMs distributed	1			
Phone calls facilitated between family members	1			
Names published on the ICRC family-links website	8,056			1,719
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons¹				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered				15
<i>of whom women</i>				3
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance - boys</i>				1
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	572	1		73
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)	7,129	18		1,675
<i>of whom women</i>	997	3		237
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance - girls</i>	85			21
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance - boys</i>	291			85
Documents				
People to whom travel documents were issued			1	

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Not including cases of persons missing in relation to the Croatia conflicts 1991–95, dealt with by the Croatian Red Cross and the Red Cross of Serbia

identification of human remains and burial ceremonies – the families of missing persons received psychosocial support and, in some cases, first aid from family associations and National Societies/Red Cross units backed by the ICRC. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia, families obtained social benefits and initiated other legal or administrative procedures using documents, issued by the ICRC and distributed by National Societies/Red Cross units, attesting that their relatives were missing.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia, families of missing persons shared their experiences and concerns at peer-support gatherings. Kosovar and Serbian families organized commemorative activities, which helped mobilize additional support from their communities. Family associations in the three countries developed their capacities with ICRC backing, including training in public communication and event organization in Kosovo, technical assistance for online fundraising in Serbia and support in communicating with the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

National Societies bolster their tracing capacities

With ICRC support, the National Societies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia followed up tracing requests more efficiently and in line with data-protection requirements using ICRC-developed family-links software. Through ICRC training, 100 volunteers from the Red Cross units in Kosovo enhanced their skills in providing family-links services; one of the units reinforced its logistical capabilities with an ICRC-donated motor vehicle. The Serbian Red Cross, which had taken over the task of managing data on missing persons, continued to receive technical advice from the ICRC in this connection.

With financial/technical support from the ICRC, the National Societies of Croatia and Serbia organized a meeting on restoring family links disrupted by migration; the National Societies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia and Montenegro participated. The Red Cross of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with ICRC support, organized a similar meeting with its Bulgarian and Serbian counterparts.

Members of families dispersed by floods stay in touch

With help from their National Societies and the ICRC, people affected by floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia restored or maintained contact with their families.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, some 5,000 people were registered by the National Society as having been evacuated, and their personal details published on its website for the benefit of relatives seeking them. Enquiries into the whereabouts of 29 persons from the areas affected were received from other countries; seven of them were located. People in Serbia made phone calls to their relatives through the National Society. Others used mobile phones donated by local

telecommunications companies and ICRC-provided phone credit. In both countries, families were reunited by the National Societies, supported by the ICRC with staff, vehicles and equipment.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where floodwaters and landslides dislodged mines/ERW, national/international organizations assessed the risks and alerted the people concerned, with ICRC assistance. Through National Society presentations and promotional materials, some 2,800 schoolchildren and 2,900 hunters and fishermen learnt about safe practices in weapon-contaminated areas. Children reduced their exposure to mines/ERW after the National Society, with ICRC support, built two playgrounds in safer areas.

In Croatia, which was affected to a lesser extent, the National Society compiled lists of people missing or displaced, and processed tracing requests.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Vulnerable detainees receive ICRC visits

In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, people held for security-related reasons and other vulnerable detainees received ICRC visits carried out according to the organization's standard procedures. Following visits, the authorities received confidential feedback and, where appropriate, recommendations for improving detainees' treatment and living conditions. The ICRC continued its dialogue with the Kosovar authorities on conducting visits to detainees under its purview. In Macedonia, owing to internal administrative constraints, the ICRC was unable to conduct its annual visit to detainees. It nevertheless reaffirmed to the authorities its readiness to continue visits to detainees in the country, including those arrested for participating in armed conflicts abroad.

People previously detained in connection with past conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia addressed legal or administrative concerns using attestations of detention issued by the ICRC.

With ICRC assistance, two persons previously held at the Guantanamo Bay internment facility, now resettled in Bosnia and Herzegovina, visited their families in Algeria; one person from Bosnia and Herzegovina visited his father, a former internee, who had resettled in France (see *Paris*). Also in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the family of one person currently held at the Guantanamo Bay internment facility got in touch with him through an ICRC-facilitated video call.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

The public learns more about the plight of missing persons' families

Through commemorative activities held on the International Day of the Disappeared, media coverage of related events and an ICRC-produced television spot, the plight of the families of persons still missing in connection with past conflicts in the Western Balkans

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	SERBIA
ICRC visits		
Detainees visited	14	9
Detainees visited and monitored individually	14	9
Detainees newly registered	6	3
Number of visits carried out	6	3
Number of places of detention visited	6	3
Restoring family links		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	144	27

came to the forefront of public attention. The national authorities, international stakeholders and the public had access, through ICRC communication initiatives, to information on the steps taken to ensure a transparent process of exhumation, identification and handover of remains to the families.

A planned regional workshop for journalists was cancelled owing to administrative constraints.

Authorities take steps to strengthen legal frameworks protecting victims of past conflict

While Bosnia and Herzegovina had yet to establish a national IHL committee, the authorities kept issues of humanitarian concern on their agenda. With ICRC support, they reviewed the current legislative/institutional framework for clarifying the fate of the missing and organized a round-table at which national/international stakeholders discussed further implementation of the Convention on Enforced Disappearance. The authorities also reviewed the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, with a view to establishing a legal framework that would enable victims of war crimes and other abuses, including sexual violence, to exercise their rights.

With ICRC encouragement, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia ratified the Arms Trade Treaty and began the process of incorporating its provisions in domestic legislation; Serbia adopted a law on the export/import of weapons and military equipment. The Serbian authorities participated in a workshop on domestic frameworks protecting health care during armed conflict and other emergencies (see *Brussels*), and in a consultative process on strengthening compliance with IHL (see *International law and policy*). Backed by the ICRC, the Serbian Red Cross pushed for the country's accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Court officials discuss the prosecution of people alleged to have violated IHL

At a conference in May, 65 judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers dealing with war crimes in south-eastern Europe discussed the role of national jurisdictions in implementing IHL; the conference took place in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was organized jointly by the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE, the Swiss embassy in Sarajevo and the ICRC, in line with "150 years of humanitarian action." The protection of detainees, the clarification of the fate of missing persons and the prosecution of war crimes involving sexual violence were among the topics discussed.

Armed forces enrich their understanding of the Movement's work

Through the annual "Viking 14" exercise led by the Swedish government, members of the Serbian armed and police forces, and members of armed forces from 11 other countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina and FYR Macedonia, learnt more about their humanitarian responsibilities in peace-support operations and the respective roles of National Societies and the ICRC.

During an ICRC presentation at an OSCE seminar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, members of the armed/security forces, civil society representatives and the media learnt about IHL in the context of implementing the OSCE code of conduct, and about new ICRC initiatives.

Local actors advance teaching on IHL

Education authorities continued to work towards incorporating the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme in school curricula. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, one university began to offer the programme as a mandatory course. Kosovo's Ministry of Education continued to take steps to incorporate the programme in its civic-education syllabus, producing a textbook on the subject with ICRC assistance. Young volunteers with one of the Red Cross units in Kosovo strengthened their ability, with ICRC support, to conduct training sessions on the programme; a brochure in Albanian was printed for their use. Backed by the ICRC, Serbian students participated in an international moot-court competition.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

National Societies enhance their ability to deliver humanitarian services

With financial/material/technical support from the ICRC, the National Societies in the region and the Red Cross units in Kosovo developed their capacities in providing humanitarian assistance (see *Civilians*) and promoting IHL (see *Actors of influence*).

With the International Federation and the ICRC, Bosnia and Herzegovina's National Society explored ways to advance its institutional development, strengthen its financial sustainability and position itself as a key humanitarian actor. It also worked to address weapon contamination after the floods in May (see *Civilians*).

With assistance from the Swiss embassy and the ICRC, the Serbian Red Cross organized three round-tables at which local authorities and academics discussed developments in IHL since the adoption of the original Geneva Convention in 1864. After bolstering their public-communication skills through ICRC training, the National Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Red Cross units in Kosovo conducted dissemination sessions on humanitarian principles for national/local authorities and young people.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
Red Cross messages (RCMs)¹					
		UAMs/SCs*			
RCMs distributed	1				
Phone calls facilitated between family members	1				
Names published on the ICRC family-links website	9,775				
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons²					
		Women	Girls	Boys	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	15	3			1
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	646				
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)	8,822	1,237	106		376
Documents³					
People to whom travel documents were issued	1				
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)⁴					
ICRC visits					
		Women	Minors		
Detainees visited	23				
		Women	Girls	Boys	
Detainees visited and monitored individually	23				
Number of visits carried out	9				
Number of places of detention visited	9				
Restoring family links					
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	171				

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo

2. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo; not including cases of persons missing in relation to the Croatia conflicts 1991–95, dealt with by the Croatian Red Cross and the Red Cross of Serbia

3. Serbia

4. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia