

MOROCCO



ICRC/AR, 2015

⊕ ICRC delegation

The ICRC's work in Morocco dates back to 1975 during the Western Sahara conflict. Opening in 2015, its delegation aims to encourage cooperation with the Moroccan authorities, so as to facilitate IHL promotion and implementation at national level. It also seeks to support the Moroccan Red Crescent in building its operational capacities, particularly in family-links services and mine-risk education.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2015

- ▶ Vulnerable people – notably irregular migrants and asylum seekers – restored family links and met some of their basic needs with help from the Moroccan Red Crescent and the ICRC.
- ▶ The National Society strengthened its family-links services/ mine-risk education activities with ICRC support – for instance, for conducting needs assessments and developing training manuals.
- ▶ National training institutions and the national IHL committee drew on ICRC support to brief military/gendarmerie/police officers on IHL/international human rights law and the ICRC's mandate.
- ▶ The newly established Morocco delegation worked to establish a broad base of support for ICRC action; the delegation particularly sought the authorities' approval for its proposal to visit detainees.

YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

MEDIUM

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	690
Assistance	-
Prevention	346
Cooperation with National Societies	587
General	-
Total	1,623
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	99

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	91%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	4
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	4

CONTEXT

Morocco remained largely stable, despite insecurity in the wider region and some unrest in the country – to do mainly with economic issues and demands for political reform. Military/security forces conducted operations against persons or groups pursued under “anti-terrorism” legislation.

The Moroccan government contributed troops to international coalitions, including in Yemen (see *Yemen*).

The status of Western Sahara remained a point of contention between Morocco and the Polisario Front; the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was extended to 2016. Hundreds of people waited for news of relatives missing since the 1975–1991 conflict. Mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continued to threaten the safety of all those living in contaminated areas.

Because of Morocco’s geographical situation, tens of thousands of people – those fleeing insecurity in the Syrian Arab Republic, for example – arrived in the country en route to Europe. Morocco revised its policies regarding asylum seekers/migrants, reportedly granting visas and refugee status to 18,000 of them and relocating others after their makeshift camps in the north were dismantled by security forces.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC upgraded its presence in Morocco to a delegation in March. It focused on establishing a broad base of acceptance for future action, while maintaining other longstanding activities and joint efforts.

The Moroccan Red Crescent continued to improve its activities for vulnerable foreigners and people affected by mines/ERW, with ICRC help. It assessed the family-links needs of vulnerable migrants and asylum seekers, in central and southern Morocco, and local branches’ ability to meet them; coordinators and volunteers in these branches then developed the necessary skills through ICRC training. Communities in the Moroccan-administered parts of Western Sahara were urged to adopt safe practices around mines/ERW through risk-awareness campaigns.

The authorities and other influential actors were urged, through meetings and other means, to support IHL and the Movement. Military/security commands drew on ICRC support to train troops in IHL and international human rights law: at briefings organized with national training institutions and/or the national IHL committee, or during ICRC-supported training abroad, military officers, *gendarmierie* and police personnel learnt more about IHL, internationally recognized standards on the use of force during arrests and detention, and the ICRC’s mandate. After their training, police officers passed on what they had learnt to their respective units. The authorities and the ICRC discussed Morocco’s progress in implementing IHL-related treaties and the ICRC’s proposal to visit people deprived of their freedom.

The headquarters agreement that the Moroccan government signed with the ICRC in late 2014 was reconfirmed after the parliament passed a bill ratifying it.

CIVILIANS

The families of detainees held abroad, for instance, in Iraq, Jordan or at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station

in Cuba, were able to maintain contact with their relatives through video calls and RCMs facilitated by Movement partners; one detainee’s family was also able to exchange parcels. The remains of a Moroccan pilot who had died in Yemen were repatriated with ICRC help (see *Yemen*).

The Moroccan Red Crescent strengthens family-links services for migrants/asylum seekers

In addition to receiving some assistance from the National Society and acquiring first-aid skills at National Society/ICRC training sessions, migrants living in dire conditions in five areas – mostly camps in forests – learnt of Movement family-links services available to them. They also shared their experiences and the challenges they faced on the migration route, which enabled the National Society/ICRC to better understand their situation and craft an appropriate response in this regard.

The National Society worked to establish its family-links network: it assessed the family-links needs of vulnerable people – notably irregular migrants and asylum seekers – in central and southern Morocco, complementing the assessments done in the north in 2014. It checked its local branches’ ability to meet these needs; family-links coordinators and volunteers in these branches then developed their skills accordingly, with ICRC training and supervision.

The National Society/ICRC also discussed possibilities for cooperation with organizations working to benefit vulnerable foreigners. A National Society representative also gained insight into the use of the Arabic version of the ICRC’s family-links website, having attended, with ICRC support, the official launch of the website (see *Jordan*).

The Moroccan national human rights committee and Sahrawi/Polisario Front bodies/organizations had discussions with the ICRC on the subject of maintaining a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian approach to ascertaining the fate of people missing since the Western Sahara conflict (see *Tunis*). The ICRC reminded all parties of its readiness to serve as a neutral intermediary.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Through meetings and other means, the authorities concerned were briefed on the ICRC’s mandate and its activities for detainees, with a view to securing their support – in the form of an official agreement – for ICRC visits to detainees. Civil society representatives and other stakeholders concerned with detention were consulted; their insights helped further the ICRC’s understanding of the situation of persons deprived of their freedom in the country.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

National training institutions further troops’ understanding of IHL and human rights principles

Military/security commands drew on ICRC support to train troops in IHL and international human rights law. Senior Moroccan military officials attended a workshop on the rules governing military operations (see *International law and policy*). Information sessions/seminars organized with national training institutions and/or the national IHL committee provided valuable instruction: over 150 military officers, some from other countries, learnt more about IHL and the ICRC’s activities; and *gendarmierie* personnel, including more than 200 future commanding officers, strengthened their understanding of such subjects as differences in the applicability of IHL and international human rights law, the categories of person protected by IHL and international norms on the use of force during arrests and detention. Ten police officials

who were trained in these matters later relayed this information to their respective units.

The authorities and the ICRC discussed Morocco's progress in implementing IHL-related treaties – particularly in preparation for the 32nd International Conference – and in creating a national mechanism for preventing ill-treatment in detention. With a view to encouraging their participation in the Strengthening IHL process, the authorities were briefed on the subject. The national IHL committee updated its references with ICRC-provided material, facilitating their role in the implementation process.

Members of civil society help to broaden awareness of National Society/ICRC activities in Morocco

The authorities and other influential actors were encouraged to support IHL and the Movement through meetings and other means, with a view to establishing a broad base of support for ICRC action, in particular its work for people deprived of their freedom. Civil society organizations and the ICRC discussed issues of common concern: the situation of detainees, with human rights groups and others working in the area of detention; mine-related matters, with MINURSO; and Moroccan Red Crescent/ICRC activities for migrants/asylum seekers, with NGOs working to benefit vulnerable foreigners.

Moroccan law professors and other academics learnt more about specific IHL-related issues during advanced courses/workshops abroad (see *Lebanon* and *Niger*); this helped to improve the teaching of IHL in the country and broadened the ICRC's range of contacts in academic circles. The national IHL committee and the law faculty of one university made plans for Moroccan students' participation in regional moot court competitions in the future.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Communities in Moroccan-administered parts of Western Sahara were urged to adopt safe practices around mines/ERW through two risk-awareness campaigns conducted by Red Crescent volunteers with the help of an ICRC expert in weapon contamination.

The Moroccan Red Crescent's headquarters and its branches took steps – in line with ICRC recommendations made in 2014 – to coordinate their mine-risk education activities more closely. The National Society appointed a national coordinator, which enabled it to assume more responsibility for such activities. Together with an ICRC consultant, it prepared a new training manual in Arabic to ensure that its risk-education activities were aligned with internationally recognized standards and the principles of the Safer Access Framework. National Society instructors familiarized themselves with the new training manual at a train-the-trainer workshop.

With ICRC sponsorship, the National Society sent a representative to a regional first-aid seminar in Senegal (see *Dakar*), to help the National Society prepare for emergencies. There, the representative learnt best practices for administering first aid during incidents of violence, such as protests. The National Society's first-aid team strengthened their capacity to respond to emergencies with first-aid supplies, radio equipment and an electrical power generator from the ICRC.