

# TUNIS (regional)

COVERING: Tunisia, Western Sahara



ICRC regional delegation 
 ICRC office/presence  
 ICRC-supported prosthetic/orthotic project

The regional delegation based in Tunisia, which has been operating since 1987, visits people deprived of their freedom in Tunisia, monitoring their treatment and conditions of detention. It promotes awareness of IHL among the authorities, armed forces and armed groups, as well as implementation of that law. The ICRC supports the Tunisian Red Crescent in building its capacities. With the Polisario Front and Sahrawi organizations, it works to address issues of humanitarian concern arising from the aftermath of the Western Sahara conflict.

## YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

**MEDIUM**

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2015

- ▶ Detainees in Tunisia benefited from ICRC visits and the detaining authorities' initiatives – carried out with ICRC support – to reinforce health care and treatment protocols and to reduce overcrowding.
- ▶ The Tunisian authorities and the ICRC pursued a partnership for conducting IHL-related training, for example, in law enforcement norms for security officers and in medical ethics for military medical staff.
- ▶ Families dispersed by armed conflict or detention, and migrants – notably people rescued off the Tunisian coast – kept in touch with relatives through Tunisian Red Crescent/ICRC family-links services.
- ▶ The Tunisian authorities and the National Society learnt more effective methods of managing the remains of migrants that were recovered on the Tunisian coast.
- ▶ Near Tindouf, Algeria, disabled Sahrawi refugees, including mine victims, regained some mobility through services and assistive devices provided at an ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centre.

PROTECTION	Total
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>	
<b>Restoring family links</b>	
RCMs collected	27
RCMs distributed	55
Phone calls facilitated between family members	783
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	3
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>	
<b>ICRC visits</b>	
Detainees visited	17,145
Detainees visited and monitored individually	305
Number of visits carried out	48
Number of places of detention visited	15
<b>Restoring family links</b>	
RCMs collected	133
RCMs distributed	69
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	323

## EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	1,648
Assistance	2,009
Prevention	864
Cooperation with National Societies	207
General	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,754</b>
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	<b>290</b>

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	87%
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## PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	17
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	35

ASSISTANCE	2015 Targets (up to)	Achieved	
<b>WOUNDED AND SICK</b>			
<b>Physical rehabilitation</b>			
Projects supported	Structures	1	1
Patients receiving services	Patients	500	733

## CONTEXT

The new Tunisian government, which took office in early 2015, was confronted by a number of serious social and security issues. Attacks by gunmen at the Bardo National Museum in March and on a beach in Sousse in June, and a bombing in Tunis in November, resulted in the deaths of scores of foreign tourists and members of the presidential guard and injuries to many others. Hundreds of arrests were made following these incidents; the Tunisian parliament adopted an anti-terrorism law in July. State forces continued to conduct operations – particularly along Tunisia's borders with Algeria and Libya – against armed groups reportedly operating in the region and within the country.

Thousands of people fleeing armed conflict or instability in the region sought refuge in Tunisia or passage to their home countries or Europe.

Western Sahara continued to be the subject of dispute between Morocco and the Polisario Front. Families there remained at risk from mines and explosive remnants of war; thousands continued to wait for news of relatives missing since the 1975–91 Western Sahara conflict. Hundreds of thousands of Sahrawis lived in refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria; the camps sustained severe damage during heavy floods in October. The UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was extended to 2016.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC's regional delegation in Tunis focused on meeting the needs of people deprived of their freedom in Tunisia, and of vulnerable people separated from their families, in cooperation with State actors and Movement partners in the region.

In Tunisia, the ICRC visited thousands of detainees in accordance with its standard procedures; special attention was paid to people held in relation to State security or in places of temporary detention, and foreigners. Confidential feedback based on these visits, technical advice from the ICRC, and insights gleaned from pilot health projects helped justice ministry officials and penitentiary authorities improve detainees' treatment and living conditions.

Detaining authorities took steps to update policies on medical care and file management, and on documenting ill-treatment. For instance, they encouraged health/medical personnel to restrict access to detainees' medical files, and to include in them an illustration of the human body so that victims could more easily report physical abuse. The ICRC helped the health/justice ministries improve health care for detainees: in the two prisons that were sites of pilot health projects, detainees were treated for illnesses at ICRC-supported clinics, and policies for hiring, retaining and training staff were developed. At the same time, infrastructural upgrades to kitchens and waste-management systems lowered the risk of detainees contracting hygiene-related illnesses. With the ICRC's assistance, the authorities built an accommodation facility for detained minors, with a view to improving the minors' situation by permitting them to reintegrate into society while serving their sentence.

Authorities/weapon bearers in the region, and others capable of facilitating humanitarian activities for vulnerable people and detainees, learnt more about IHL and the ICRC's mandate through dialogue, information sessions and courses abroad. Tunisian authorities, trainee security officers and journalists furthered their understanding of international human rights law and/or the

ICRC's activities for detainees; a representative from the Polisario Front attended an IHL course in San Remo. Tunisian military medical officers discussed medical ethics at ICRC-organized events. Polisario Front officials and Sahrawi journalists were briefed on ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation services for disabled Sahrawis.

Disabled Sahrawi refugees living near Tindouf, Algeria, including mine victims, regained a measure of mobility through treatment and prosthetic/orthotic devices provided to them by the ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centre there. The centre moved to the Rabouni hospital in 2014; more people made use of its services in 2015 than in the previous year. To promote the centre's services and to assist patients unable to travel easily, outreach visits were conducted in refugee camps. To help ensure that wounded people could receive adequate treatment, the ICRC assisted Tunisian military/civilian doctors to expand their war-surgery skills, and Tunisian Red Crescent and "Sahrawi Red Crescent" volunteers to strengthen their capacities in first aid.

Members of families dispersed by armed conflict, detention or migration restored/maintained contact through Movement family-links services. Regular contact with the ICRC enabled the Tunisian authorities to realize that in order to notify the families concerned in a timely manner, it was necessary to improve management of the remains of migrants recovered on the Tunisian coast. Polisario Front authorities, and organizations such as the "Sahrawi Red Crescent" and the Moroccan and Sahrawi human rights committees 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 past conflict.

## CIVILIANS

### Families stay in touch with relatives who have migrated or are detained abroad

In Tunisia and in the wider region, members of families dispersed by conflict or migration maintained or restored contact with the help of Tunisian Red Crescent/ICRC family-links services. Migrants who had left Libya by boat and were rescued by the Tunisian coast guard contacted their families through National Society/ICRC-facilitated phone calls. Families in Tunisia also used these services to re-establish or maintain contact with relatives detained/interned abroad, including those transferred from the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba or at the Parwan detention facility in Afghanistan.

Tunisian families requested the ICRC to help them find their relatives who were reportedly involved in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic; similar requests were received from the families of migrants from Libya. Families whose relatives went missing in Lebanon continued to receive legal advice from the delegation.

Some refugees received ICRC assistance for getting/sending documents from/to the UNHCR.

### The Tunisian authorities/National Society learn ways to improve human remains management

Through regular exchanges with the ICRC, the Tunisian authorities, mainly officials from the interior, social affairs and health ministries, learnt how to improve management of the remains of migrants recovered on the Tunisian coast, so that the families concerned could be informed in a timely and appropriate manner. Twenty-four interior ministry personnel developed their skills in

managing human remains at a training session organized by the ICRC. Selected National Society volunteers were also briefed on the subject, notably on strengthening coordination with the authorities.

### **Local bodies make limited progress in ascertaining the fate of people missing since past conflict**

Polisario Front authorities, and organizations such as the “Sahrawi Red Crescent” and the Moroccan and Sahrawi human rights committees, had discussions with the ICRC on the subject of maintaining a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian approach to clarifying the fate of people missing since the past conflict (see also *Morocco*). The ICRC reminded all parties of its readiness to serve as a neutral intermediary.

Refugees in Tindouf recovered after heavy floods had damaged the camps they were living in, with the assistance of various humanitarian agencies, including the ICRC, which helped them repair their dwellings and restored the supply of water.

### **PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM**

In Tunisia, over 16,500 detainees held by the justice ministry and approximately 600 by the interior ministry received visits from the ICRC, conducted according to the organization’s standard procedures. Special attention was paid to security detainees, people held in places of temporary detention, and foreigners: 305 inmates were followed up individually. Findings from these visits shared confidentially, recommendations/suggestions – for example, from five workshops co-organized by the ICRC – and information gathered from pilot projects (see below) helped detaining authorities improve penitentiary services.

### **Detention authorities in Tunisia move to address overcrowding and the situation of detained minors**

The penitentiary authorities took measures to tackle overcrowding; for instance, they created a multi-sectoral working group with the support of the ICRC. The Sousse probation office (for which the ICRC ended direct support in 2014) sentenced 135 people to community service, and placed 347 on conditional release, instead of adding to the growing prison population. The authorities expressed interest in maintaining the office; the justice ministry, with ICRC technical advice, continued working to establish a legal status for the office, particularly in light of efforts by the European Union/Tunisian authorities to set up more structures of this kind.

The authorities took steps to improve the situation of minors in conflict with the law by permitting them to reintegrate into society while serving their sentence. To this end, with ICRC support, the authorities built a special facility at the Mourouj centre to house minors. Along with other parties concerned, the authorities drew on the ICRC for advice on managing the reintegration programme and on other issues of humanitarian concern related to juvenile justice.

### **Detainees benefit from health initiatives, such as those updating procedures to monitor health/treatment**

Police/*gendarmerie* commands, the ministries concerned and the ICRC discussed the situation of people in temporary/permanent detention and the internationally recognized standards regulating their treatment. At ICRC-organized events, medical and non-medical interior ministry staff were reminded of their role in improving the living conditions of detainees; representatives from 16 public hospitals and 9 prisons discussed guidelines for dealing with detainees on hunger strike. In line with agreements made in 2014, penitentiary authorities worked on updating their health-related procedures,

including those for monitoring detainees’ health, organizing specialist consultations inside and outside prisons, and managing medical documentation. For instance, they urged health/medical personnel to restrict access to detainees’ medical files, and to include in them an illustration of the human body – as prescribed in internationally recognized guidelines for documenting ill-treatment – so that physical abuse suffered by detainees could be recorded more easily.

Joint health ministry/ICRC pilot health projects continued at the Borj El Amri and Mornaguia prisons: 8,500 detainees were treated for illnesses, such as scabies, at prison clinics supported by the ICRC with medical supplies and technical advice. The health/justice ministries worked with the ICRC to develop policies for hiring and retaining staff, and training them (for example, by creating modules for training nurses on legal frameworks/guidelines for working in detention).

Five doctors joined their peers to discuss issues pertaining to the provision of health care in detention at courses in Jordan and Switzerland.

### **Detainees have more hygienic living conditions after upgrades to sanitation and kitchen infrastructure**

Some 1,600 detainees at the Borj El Amri prison stood to benefit from better waste management, following repairs to the sewer network; and the 1,500 inmates of the Mahdia prison benefited from ICRC-sponsored upgrades to their kitchen. At the ICRC’s recommendations, the authorities organized technical committees to oversee construction/rehabilitation projects.

Female detainees without the means to purchase hygiene items, and unable to acquire them through their families, maintained their personal hygiene with assistance from the ICRC. Plans to initiate vocational training activities could not be put into practice, as the authorities were yet to repair prison workshops.

A number of detainees, particularly foreigners and security detainees, maintained contact with their relatives through Movement family-links services.

### **WOUNDED AND SICK**

#### **Tunisian officers expand their war-surgery skills and strengthen their grasp of medical ethics**

Military health authorities and the ICRC discussed the humanitarian consequences of armed clashes in the north-west and issues covered by the Health Care in Danger project, such as the right of wounded fighters to health/medical care. Two Tunisian medical officers discussed IHL and medical ethics with their peers at a forum in Switzerland. To increase the likelihood of wounded people receiving adequate treatment, medical officers expanded their war-surgery skills with ICRC help: several, including 50 doctors affiliated with the health ministry, attended war-surgery seminars supported/organized by the ICRC; one officer attended an advanced course in Switzerland.

Polisario Front health/social affairs authorities and “Sahrawi Red Crescent” volunteers prepared to administer first aid at public events, with some ICRC support.

#### **Disabled Sahrawis obtain ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation services at the Rabouni hospital**

Over 730 disabled people, including mine victims, living near Tindouf regained some mobility through treatment and prostheses/

orthoses provided to them by the physical rehabilitation centre at the Rabouni hospital; this was a 40% increase over the number of patients treated in 2014. Children and women made up half of the beneficiaries. Of the 728 persons who benefited from physiotherapy, 117 were mine victims. Some 165 devices were repaired. Close to 60 people were able to participate in social activities in the camp after receiving wheelchairs; at information sessions, they, along with their families and communities, learnt ways to promote social inclusion of disabled people.

The families of some children suffering cerebral palsy were briefed on their children's specific vulnerabilities, helping to ensure that their needs were met; they were also offered solutions to help improve the children's condition.

With the ICRC's support, the centre maintained the quality of its services despite staffing constraints. Local staff, apprentices and volunteers from the health authorities developed their skills in prosthetics/orthotics and physiotherapy through on-site coaching and at training sessions organized by ICRC technicians.

Around 50 midwives learnt how to prevent birth disabilities at an ICRC training session; the interaction with the midwives also served to reinforce the referral system helping patients to obtain treatment at the centre. To promote the centre's services and to assist patients unable to travel easily, seven outreach visits were conducted in five refugee camps, during which some people availed themselves of various services. People familiarized themselves with the centre's services at public events, such as those held to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and through media campaigns.

### **ACTORS OF INFLUENCE**

Authorities/weapon bearers in the region, and other actors capable of facilitating humanitarian activities for vulnerable people and detainees, or of persuading others to do so, furthered their understanding of IHL and Movement action through ICRC publications/information sessions and discussions with delegates.

#### **Tunisian officials, magistrates and trainee security officers learn more about IHL and human rights law**

Though occupied with the post-election transition, the new authorities pursued dialogue with the ICRC on IHL/human rights issues and training for people involved in the implementation of IHL. At ICRC-organized events: 80 magistrates refreshed their knowledge of IHL and the ICRC's mandate; trainee officers at a national training institution for security forces strengthened their understanding of international human rights law applicable to police practice; and government officials, senior military officers and a law professor – a dozen people in total – learnt more about recommended practices for incorporating IHL in domestic legislation, military training/operations and academic curricula, respectively (see *Lebanon*). Although progress in this connection was also hampered by the exigencies of the transition period, the interior ministry continued to draw on the ICRC for adopting best practices and drafting standard operational procedures to improve the treatment of persons in police custody (see *People deprived of their freedom*).

Around 150 law students discussed IHL-related issues, such as the protection of cultural property and the legal protection due to displaced persons, at conferences organized by the ICRC and various law faculties. Two academics furthered their understanding of the relationship between IHL and Islam at an ICRC-organized colloquium abroad (see *Niger*).

#### **Polisario Front officials and Sahrawi journalists add to their knowledge of ICRC activities**

Various events served to increase awareness of the needs of vulnerable Sahrawis – and foster support for ICRC activities addressing them, such as restoration of family links – among Polisario Front officials and Sahrawi civil society (see also *Civilians and Wounded and sick*). Around 40 health/judicial/military/social affairs officials of the Polisario Front became more familiar with ICRC-supported rehabilitation services for disabled Sahrawis. A representative of the Polisario Front learnt more about IHL at a course in San Remo.

After attending ICRC-organized information sessions, some 20 Tunisian and 15 Sahrawi journalists were better equipped to report on humanitarian matters such as ICRC activities for detainees and for disabled Sahrawis, respectively. They were also briefed on the protection afforded to them by IHL during armed conflict.

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

The Tunisian Red Crescent continued to develop its capacities with financial/material/technical assistance from the Movement. It strengthened its first-aid services by sending volunteers to a regional workshop in Senegal and by taking steps to update its working procedures in situations of violence. It reviewed its response to the major security incidents of 2015 and developed/adopted measures to improve it. With ICRC help, National Society branches on the migration route or in tension-prone areas enhanced their family-links services, furthered their volunteers/members' understanding of the Movement's work and strengthened their grasp of the Safer Access Framework, recruited staff, and advanced the authorities' understanding of the National Society's role and secured their support for its activities. The National Society also fostered support for Movement action and volunteerism: a countrywide video-making competition promoted understanding of the Fundamental Principles.

The Tunisian military, the National Society and the ICRC discussed the proper use of the red crescent emblem to ensure uniformity of current practice.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>					
<b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>			UAMs/SC*		
RCMs collected		27			
RCMs distributed		55			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		783			
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		15	3	2	
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		3			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		152	12	12	6
<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>		55			
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>					
<b>ICRC visits</b>			Women	Minors	
Detainees visited		17,145	675	37	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		305	19	1	7
Detainees newly registered		167	9	1	7
Number of visits carried out		48			
Number of places of detention visited		15			
<b>Restoring family links</b>					
RCMs collected		133			
RCMs distributed		69			
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		323			

\*Unaccompanied minors/separated children

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)</b>				
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	3,165		
<b>Health</b>				
Number of visits carried out by health staff		23		
Number of places of detention visited by health staff		5		
Number of health facilities supported in places of detention visited by health staff		2		
<b>WOUNDED AND SICK</b>				
<b>Physical rehabilitation</b>				
Projects supported	Structures	1		
Patients receiving services	Patients	733	182	180
New patients fitted with prostheses	Patients	9	1	1
Prostheses delivered	Units	25	2	1
	<i>of which for victims of mines or explosive remnants of war</i>	16		
New patients fitted with orthoses	Patients	49	16	12
Orthoses delivered	Units	94	21	16
	<i>of which for victims of mines or explosive remnants of war</i>	17		
Patients receiving physiotherapy	Patients	728	180	180
Crutches delivered	Units	102		
Wheelchairs delivered	Units	59		