

YEMEN

Personnel:
5 expatriates
15 national staff

In Yemen, the ICRC visits detainees, focusing on their treatment under interrogation and their conditions of detention, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups such as women and the mentally ill. Another priority is to spread knowledge of IHL and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in cooperation with the Yemen Red Crescent Society, and to support the national committee on IHL in promoting national measures to implement IHL and its introduction into school and university curricula and armed forces and police training. Assistance is provided to physically disabled persons (prosthetic/orthotic programme) and in the field of tracing, in particular the forwarding of Red Cross messages to and from Somali refugees and Yemeni families who have a relative interned by the US authorities in Guantanamo Bay or Afghanistan. The ICRC has been working in Yemen since the outbreak of the civil war in 1962.

Expenditure (in Sfr)



1,835,133

of which: Overheads 112,005



ICRC delegation

CONTEXT

Refugees fleeing countries in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere plagued by war and internal violence continued to flow into Yemen as it struggled to contain a wave of attacks by militant groups and persistent tribal clashes in remote regions still under only limited central government control.

An influx of significant numbers of refugees from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea continued, exacting an ever greater economic burden on this already impoverished nation of 18 million inhabitants.

Yemen vowed to eradicate violent Islamic militancy amid an upsurge of armed acts carried out mainly against government and Western targets which unsettled the security environment in many areas. Under the terms of a military cooperation agreement with the United States linked to economic assistance and the strengthening of central government authority nationwide, Yemen allowed more US special forces into the country to train its military and security personnel.



A spate of bombings and assassinations led to stepped up security measures and an undisclosed number of arrests while scores of foreign Islamic militant suspects were expelled. A self-styled "sympathizers with Al-Qaeda" group claimed responsibility for bomb explosions in Sana'a near the US embassy and on the premises of the Political Security Department, where alleged Islamic militants are detained.

Further violence occurred during voter registration in October for parliamentary elections set for April 2003 when seven people were killed and 42 injured in 407 security incidents across the country, according to official sources quoted by the press.

A French oil tanker was rammed and set ablaze in October near the southern port of Mukalla in an attack reminiscent of the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, which killed 17 US sailors in the port of Aden. The incident left one dead and several injured and was a severe blow to Yemen's economy, greatly affecting export earnings and trade in the country's ports.

A helicopter from an American company was fired upon in November just after take-off from Sana'a airport. A month later the deputy secretary-general of the Yemeni Socialist party was assassinated and three American missionaries were shot and killed in an attack on a missionary hospital in the town of Jibba, near Ibb. The assassinations caused outrage among the population and all political parties.

In Marib governorate, a group of alleged Al-Qaeda members in Yemen were killed by a missile fired from an unmanned US drone in an operation endorsed by the Yemeni authorities.

Groups of high-ranking military personnel and politicians who went into exile in the wake of the 1994 civil war returned to Yemen under a presidential amnesty.

At the regional level, Yemen made a significant step toward becoming a full member of the Gulf Co-operation Council after its admission to four of the Council's main institutions, dealing with health, education, labour and social affairs.

Unlike previous years, no kidnappings of foreigners were reported in 2002.

In an encouraging development, the ICRC gained access for the first time to detainees held in Yemen by the Political Security Department.

ICRC ACTION

Key points in 2002

- access gained for the first time to people held in Yemen by the Political Security Department
- Red Cross messages (RCMs) forwarded between internees in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay and their families in Yemen, and between refugees from the Horn of Africa and their families
- vocational and literacy courses provided for women detainees and work completed to upgrade sanitation facilities in central prisons
- IHL courses held for Yemeni armed forces instructors and for instructors from the Ministry of Education in the framework of the EHL programme

CIVILIANS

Restoring family ties

Tens of thousands of refugees had poured into Yemen in recent years from countries in the Horn of Africa beset by war and internal violence.

Ascertaining the whereabouts of the families these refugees left behind and restoring and maintaining contact between them remained priority concerns. For many refugees the RCM network provided the only means available to stay in touch with their families.

To handle the growing demand for this service, the ICRC expanded its tracing and RCM work in March when a new tracing officer was assigned to Mukalla, where some 20,000 Somali refugees are located. A new ICRC tracing office was also opened at the UNHCR refugee camp in Kharaz, north of Aden.

Red Cross travel documents continued to be issued regularly, with the support of the emigration authorities, to assist refugees seeking resettlement in third countries.

Several Yemeni families asked for help to trace relatives reported missing in Afghanistan. Files for 20 such cases were opened; of these, 11 were resolved.

Tracing seminars were organized for Yemeni Red Crescent volunteers to enhance their ability to collect and deliver RCMs and to open new tracing requests. The volunteers who attended the seminar helped the ICRC to deliver and collect RCMs for the families of Yemeni internees held by the US authorities in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.

In August, the ICRC helped reunite 10 people with their loved ones when cross-border travel between Eritrea and Ethiopia was suspended. Instead, they transited via Sana'a on their way from Asmara to Addis Ababa. Logistical support was provided for three medical cases travelling the same route in December.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detainee welfare

Delegates continued to visit particularly vulnerable detainees, i.e. women, the mentally ill, those not receiving family visits, and foreign nationals, in order to monitor their treatment and conditions of detention.

The ICRC repaired and maintained sanitary facilities and bread ovens, and distributed hygiene items to detainees. When combined with work undertaken by the authorities themselves, this led to an overall improvement in detention conditions. Work was completed to upgrade the sewage networks of the main prisons in Hajja and Saada.

In August, the ICRC gained access for the first time to detainees held by the Political Security Department in Sana'a in connection with what had become known as the "war on terror". In October, the ICRC also for the first time visited detainees held by the Political Security Department in Al Hodeida, Ibb, Taiz, Zinjibar and Aden.

Visits continued to places of detention under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior and the attorney-general's office. The ICRC carried out several series of visits in the governorates of Sana'a, Amran, Aden, Ibb, Taiz and Mukalla, including central prisons, police stations, criminal investigation departments and provisional detention centres. The purpose of the visits was to obtain a comprehensive picture of detention conditions and, in particular, the treatment of persons under interrogation. Regular reports containing recommendations were submitted to the authorities concerned. However, at the end of the year the ICRC was notified by the Ministry of the Interior that visits would be restricted to central prisons as of 2003.

The ICRC's aid programme for women detainees, initiated in 2001 in conjunction with the National Society as a pilot project in Al-Mahwit, was extended to two more places of detention in Al Hodeida and Dhamar. The aim was to break the isolation of women detainees, who often have no contact with their families, by promoting improved medical care for female inmates and their children, and organizing literacy and sewing courses to enhance their reintegration prospects upon release. The ICRC provided sewing machines and other materials needed to implement the project as well as financial incentives for the teachers involved.

In conjunction with the Yemeni Red Crescent, the ICRC continued to support a programme for mentally ill detainees in the central prisons in Ibb, Sana'a and Taiz. This project was delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross. Psychiatric care for some 300 patients in the psychiatric sections of those prisons was monitored and National Society volunteers received training at two ICRC workshops.

As planned, the process of handing over this project to the Ministry of Public Health and Demography was initiated. To this end, a round-table discussion was held with Yemeni organizations involved in mental health care. The Ministry accepted

proposals made at the round table as a basis for future mental health policy and re-established a mental health-care department.

The Charitable Society for Social Welfare admitted non-convicted inmates of the Sana'a central prison into their psychiatric hospital in Sana'a. In Taiz, a new psychiatric hospital was planned to open early in 2003.

Overall, ICRC support in 2002 contributed to greater involvement on the part of national and regional health-care authorities in the development of a sound mental health policy.

WOUNDED AND SICK

Fitting amputees

Aid was increased to speed up the introduction of ICRC polypropylene-based technology and to step up the production of good-quality, lower-limb prosthetic appliances for amputees in Yemen.

An ICRC prosthetic/orthotic specialist gave a presentation illustrating ICRC polypropylene technology at the Ministry of Health's Artificial Limbs and Physiotherapy Centre in Sana'a. In addition, on-the-job training was given to staff at the prosthetic/orthotic centres in Sana'a. The ICRC also provided raw materials, components and equipment to fit 250 amputees.

The Mukalla workshop, opened in September in the remote Hadramout governorate, enabled amputees from the area who could not afford to travel to the Sana'a centre to be fitted and receive physical rehabilitation, and also reduced pressure on the Sana'a centre.

The ICRC carried out assessments to determine the training and equipment needs of the Sana'a and Mukalla workshops and to discuss possible future cooperation with the health-care authorities in this field, since there were as yet no professional prosthetic/orthotic training facilities in Yemen despite the substantial demand for artificial limbs and physical

rehabilitation. An agreement was reached on measures to significantly step up ICRC prosthetic/orthotic assistance in Yemen in 2003, focusing on the training of Yemeni technicians at the Sana'a and Mukalla centres.

In 2002, a total of 392 prostheses were produced, using ICRC technology.

AUTHORITIES

In March, the ICRC and the national committee for the implementation of IHL held a round-table discussion, under the auspices of the president's office, on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The talks ended with a strong recommendation urging Yemen to ratify the Statute.

Two Yemeni IHL experts attended an international meeting of national committees on IHL held in Geneva in March and presented a working paper on the activities of the Yemeni committee. Yemen also participated in a second meeting of Arab experts on the implementation of IHL, held in Cairo in October under the auspices of the League of Arab States.

Finally, three members of the Yemeni national committee on IHL took part in a symposium held in Khartoum on the IHL's incorporation into national legislation.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

In August, in an important step forward, the armed forces chief of staff issued a general order instructing all military institutions to incorporate IHL into their training. This followed an ICRC seminar on IHL held in March at the Defence Ministry, organized in close conjunction with the Ministry's Moral Guidance Department, and attended by 43 senior officials, including the defence minister, the chief of staff, the vice chief of staff for training and educational institutions, and the head of the Moral Guidance Department.

Basic and advanced courses on IHL were

held in October for instructors from all Yemeni armed forces units as well as for the Central Security Forces and Coast Guards of the Interior Ministry.

Sections of the ICRC's *Law of War* teaching file for instructors were published in the monthly army magazine *Al-Jaish*, in accordance with an agreement between the ICRC and the Moral Guidance Department of the Ministry of Defence.

The ICRC also supported a training workshop on human rights and IHL for police officers, organized by the Yemeni Human Rights Information Training Centre in Sana'a. It focused on the basic tenets of IHL, the responsibilities of the police and armed forces in the event of international and non-international armed conflict or internal disturbances, and during law-enforcement operations.

CIVIL SOCIETY

A technical committee was set up by the Educational Research and Development Centre and other representatives of the Ministry of Education to deal exclusively with the "Exploring Humanitarian Law" programme.

In accordance with a plan of action agreed upon with the technical committee, the ICRC and the Educational Research and Development Centre organized the first training workshop on the EHL programme in September.

The training workshop, held in Sana'a under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, brought together 36 experts from the Yemeni Ministry of Education involved in teacher training, curriculum development and school inspection. EHL documentation was distributed to the participants, who explored the content and objectives of EHL as well as teaching methods and mechanisms for encouraging respect for IHL and the principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. At the end of the workshop a consensus prevailed that there was no contradiction between Islamic *sharia* law

and IHL. This had a significant impact on the acceptance of IHL. The workshop received widespread media coverage in Yemen.

In October, four experts from the Ministry of Education participated in two EHL teacher-training seminars held in Morocco for Arab educators to discuss the EHL programme. In December, ICRC delegates met with senior officials of the Ministry to determine the date, standards and outline of the second training workshop to be held, in March 2003, for teachers selected from each of the eight governorates.

A children's painting booklet was issued under the title *War and violence in the eyes of Yemeni children*. Intended to support the EHL programme as an evocative expression of how children have experienced conflict and violence during their lives and through the media, it contained 27 paintings, each of which was accompanied by an appropriate quotation from the Geneva Conventions.

These activities were backed up by increased support for Yemeni human rights NGOs working to raise awareness in civil society of women's rights and the specific needs of women detainees.

Talks were held in October with the Minister of higher education and scientific research to provide information on the ICRC plan of action regarding universities, which aims to establish a comprehensive IHL-teaching programme at the three main State universities, in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden. Several follow-up meetings were held with the deans of law faculties at these universities in order to develop relations with academic circles and to promote the formal incorporation of IHL teaching in their curricula as a compulsory subject or at least an optional one.

In order to promote IHL through national television, the five-part ICRC series "Century on trial" was broadcast by the Yemeni satellite channel. Moreover, the ICRC kept the media informed of its activities in Yemen and worldwide. Publication agree-

ments were signed with three high-profile magazines in which several articles on IHL and the International Criminal Court were published.

NATIONAL SOCIETY

In 2002, the Yemen Red Crescent Society and the ICRC renewed their IHL-promotion agreement for another year. The programme included training sessions for Society volunteers, publication of the bi-monthly information magazine *Al-Ithar* and publication of the 2003 calendar. In addition, a cooperation agreement was signed with the Society on the "Women in prisons project" (see *People deprived of their freedom*).

The first in a series of three-day EHL training workshops was held in September for IHL-promotion volunteers from all 10 National Society branches. The Society and the ICRC co-sponsored a tracing seminar attended by one representative from each branch. The seminar aimed to provide participants with the basic tools needed to support the ICRC in restoring contact between dispersed families and collecting and delivering RCMs.

Two workshops were held in Aden for volunteers from National Society branches in Ibb, Sana'a and Taiz involved in the psychiatric care programme. Topics were the role of the volunteers in the programme and the role of psychology in mental health care. Representatives of the Yemeni Mental Health Association, a group of psychologists from Aden University, also addressed the workshops.

An International Federation official was in Yemen from April to September. Regular meetings were held to harmonize Movement efforts to strengthen the National Society's operational capacity.