

## YEMEN

Yemen became the focus of international attention following the suicide bombing of the American destroyer USS Cole in the port city of Aden on 12 October 2000. The attack killed 17 sailors and seriously injured 39. The suicide bombing occurred as Yemen struggled to deal with potential internal violence and the lasting effects of three conflicts: the 1994 conflict between northern and southern forces, the Gulf war and the conflicts in the Horn of Africa. The volatile situation led to increased economic hardship and a growing sense of insecurity among the population, despite the resolution of a border dispute with Saudi Arabia in an agreement signed in June.

Active in the country since 1962, the ICRC continued to strengthen the delegation's operational activities throughout the year. Priorities included ongoing support for refugees from the Horn of Africa, visits to detainees, and promoting humanitarian law.

### Helping families stay in touch

An estimated 100,000 Somalis and Ethiopians who had sought refuge in Yemen as a result of conflict continued to require help in restoring and maintaining links with family members at home. The ICRC forwarded Red Cross messages and processed cases of missing persons throughout the year. It cooperated with UNHCR, the Ethiopian Embassy in Yemen and local authorities in preparing for the repatriation of 177 Ethiopians. The delegation also regularly assisted minors and disabled and elderly people from Ethiopia or Eritrea during their transit through Yemen for family reunifications organized by the ICRC's offices in Addis Ababa and Asmara.

### Visits to detainees

The ICRC continued its efforts to ensure adequate conditions of detention for detainees.

A series of complete and follow-up visits to prisons under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior was undertaken in 2000. During its visits, the ICRC repaired sanitary facilities and provided material assistance, including hygiene articles and recreational and educational materials. In November 2000, the ICRC handed over its annual report on conditions of detention and treatment to the relevant authorities.

An estimated 250 mentally ill detainees in the central prisons of Sana'a, Taiz and Ibb continued to receive care under the psychiatric project delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross, with assistance from volunteers of the Yemen Red Crescent Society, who visited the detainees on a daily basis. The project team in Sana'a prison had to cope with a 150% increase in the number of inmates in May, shortly before and after the celebrations marking the 10th anniversary of Yemen's unification. A great effort was required to deal with the extremely poor health of those temporarily detained.

A mission by an ICRC psychiatrist and the arrival of a new project director in midyear provided an opportunity to redefining project priorities. Attention was also given to improving the organization of the project teams working in different sections of the prison and of the assistance given to them by various partners, in particular the ICRC, the Netherlands Red Cross, the Yemen Red Crescent Society, and the Ministries of Health and the Interior.

### Stepping up dissemination activities

The ICRC intensified its efforts within the country to promote humanitarian law among national authorities and to strengthen mechanisms supporting the implementation of the Geneva Conventions. Following the establishment of a National Committee for the Implementation of Humanitarian Law in 1999,<sup>18</sup> the ICRC assisted in the setting up of a permanent office on the premises of the Yemen Red Crescent Society by providing funds for the purchase of equipment. During a training seminar for the members of the National Committee, the ICRC helped draft a plan of action.

The delegation took a variety of initiatives to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and the ICRC's mandate within the country. A one-day training course on humanitarian law, the ICRC's mandate and activities, and minimum standards of treatment of persons deprived of their freedom, was organized for 50 security officers from Aden governorate. Representatives of the national media attended a conference on the role of the media in humanitarian action. In the academic world, the ICRC maintained its dialogue with the university authorities in Aden and Taiz on the incorporation of humanitarian law and principles into the curriculum of public international law courses. Lastly, the ICRC, in cooperation with the French Centre of Yemeni Studies, commissioned an analysis of customary law applied by local tribes in time of conflict.

The main goal of the study is to gain more thorough understanding of the cultural context and to make the rules of humanitarian law better known, understood and accepted.

<sup>18</sup> See the ICRC's 1999 *Annual Report*, p. 329.

## Involving young people

In line with its policy of disseminating humanitarian law more systematically among young people, the ICRC organized workshops in 10 schools with the support of the Ministry of Education. Some 800 children took part in the programme in 2000.

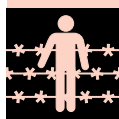
## Raising the profile regionally

A special issue of the ICRC's regional magazine *Al-Insani* (The Humanitarian) was produced with a focus on Yemen. The delegation worked closely with the Regional Promotion Office in Cairo on the production of this issue, whose main focus was on the ICRC's mandate and activities in Yemen since 1962. It also featured articles on Yemen's civil society, history and culture. Over 5,000 copies were distributed.

## Supporting the National Society's dissemination efforts

The ICRC supported a variety of dissemination initiatives of the Yemen Red Crescent Society. These included holding a four-day training workshop for 15 volunteers from six branches, co-producing and financing a quarterly magazine *Al-Ithar*, and organizing a number of conferences for National Society staff and volunteers in Sana'a and Hodeida on the practical application of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and of humanitarian law. The overriding objective in all dissemination activities was to enhance the ability of the Yemen Red Crescent Society to promote humanitarian values within the community.

## IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- carried out complete visits to 12 central prisons, holding approximately 4,000 detainees including

243 monitored individually, and conducted 15 follow-up visits;

- distributed hygiene articles and recreational material to 8,700 prisoners;
- continued the psychiatric-care project for mentally ill detainees in 3 central prisons, in partnership with the Netherlands Red Cross and the Yemen Red Crescent Society;
- maintained sanitary facilities in the prisons of Sana'a, Hodeida, Ad Dali, Lahej and Dhamar;



- collected 1,280 and distributed 1,185 Red Cross messages, primarily on behalf of Somalis and Ethiopians;



- financed and co-chaired a training seminar for the members of the National Committee for the Implementation of

International Humanitarian Law, which was attended by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Legal Affairs, during which a plan of action was drafted;

- organized painting workshops on humanitarian themes for 800 children in 10 schools across the country, in preparation for the introduction of "Exploring Humanitarian Law" modules;
- organized a conference for 30 journalists on the role of the media in humanitarian action;
- provided humanitarian law training for volunteers from 6 branches of the Yemen Red Crescent Society;
- co-produced and financed 3 issues (5,000 copies each) of the National Society's quarterly magazine *Al-Ithar*.