

## YEMEN

Personnel:

5 expatriates

10 locally hired staff

In Yemen, the ICRC concentrates on activities for detainees, in particular on monitoring their conditions of detention, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, namely women, minors and the mentally ill. A second priority is to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law (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 in promoting the adoption of national measures to implement humanitarian law.

### Expenditure (in Sfr)

Protection	545,381
Assistance	465,081
Preventive Action	355,114
Cooperation with National Societies	128,340
General	80,977
Overheads	98,684

**1,673,577**



 ICRC delegation

## CONTEXT

Yemen continued to suffer from the effects of a number of conflicts – the 1994 civil war between northern and southern Yemeni forces, the Gulf war and the conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Increased economic hardship and a feeling of insecurity caused by frequent tribal clashes created a bleak outlook for much of the population, despite Yemen's natural resources, tourist attractions and improved diplomatic and economic relations with its neighbours, particularly Saudi Arabia. The economic difficulties, combined with the effects of a rapidly growing population, had a severe impact on the health sector.

Moreover, in certain parts of the country water became an increasingly scarce resource.

In 2001, Yemen put through a number of reforms, which included the adoption of a constitutional reform package and the introduction and election of local and regional councils. These and other measures seemed to confirm the government's determination to modernize and decentralize, and the importance it attached to human rights and the implementation of international law. The issue of women's rights increasingly became a subject of public discussion, and the new post of Minister for Human Rights was assigned

to a woman. Taking advantage of a presidential amnesty, high-ranking military personnel and politicians who had gone into exile during the 1994 civil war returned to the country. This was a further step towards political normalization.

The situation remained relatively calm following the 11 September attacks with the security forces tightening controls and surveillance, particularly in the capital. Arrests of al-Qaeda suspects led to clashes in eastern Yemen causing casualties among the security forces and other bearers of weapons. Tribal clashes claimed a high number of victims.

## ICRC ACTION

### CIVILIANS

The tens of thousands of Somalis who had taken refuge in Yemen as a result of conflict in their own country needed help to restore links with their relatives at home. At the beginning of the year, the ICRC hired and trained a Somali refugee as a tracing officer to collect and distribute Red Cross messages (RCMs) in Aden and in the refugee camp of Al-Kharraz located 160 kilometres west of Aden. In September, the ICRC undertook an evaluation mission to Mukalla in order to establish networks for its future tracing activities for the benefit of 15,000 Somalis living in this isolated area. Tracing activities also continued in Sana'a and in the rest of the country. In 2001, the ICRC distributed 4,277 RCMs countrywide and issued 27 travel documents to people who had received entry visas to third countries for resettlement.

### PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

In January, the ICRC presented the authorities with a summary report based on observations made during ICRC visits to central prisons in 2000. Following preliminary talks with the authorities in February, the ICRC was granted access to interrogation centres and places of provisional detention under the authority of the Prosecutor General's Office and the Ministry of the Interior. In July, the ICRC started a series of visits to such detention centres in Sana'a and Aden. In parallel, visits to central prisons continued.

The ICRC visited 17 places of detention in 2001. During visits in Aden, Al-Mahwit, Mukalla, Seyoun and Sana'a, prisoners in central prisons and in provisional detention places were provided with hygiene articles and educational and recreational materials. Some 1,350 people benefited from such distributions.

The ICRC completed the rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems in Saada and Al-Hodeida central prisons, and sanitized the water reservoir in Dhamar central prison. In July, the organization installed a bread oven in the central prison of Sana'a. At Aden central prison, it carried out an assessment of the sanitation system and a rehabilitation of the sewerage system that included a new sewerage line for the women's section of the prison. Rehabilitation work on the sewerage system at Lahj central prison began in December.

### Detained women

Together with the Yemen Red Crescent, the ICRC launched a pilot project to provide female detainees in Al-Mahwit central prison with assistance. This project involved regular visits and training in sewing. The ICRC supplied sewing machines, other supplies and incentive payments to the National Society volunteers taking part. The goal was to relieve the isolation of female prisoners through regular visits from female National Society volunteers, and prepare the prisoners for their future return to society by teaching them a skill. The pilot project was considered a success and the ICRC and the National Society planned to set up similar projects in two other central prisons in 2002.

**Psychiatric patients**

An average of 300 mentally ill detainees in the central prisons of Sana'a, Taiz and Ibb continued to benefit from a psychiatric-care programme launched in 1995 and delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross. The programme has led to a considerable improvement in the detained patients' hygiene conditions, nutrition and medical treatment. The ICRC carried out monthly field visits to the three prisons' psychiatric sections. On these occasions, problems were discussed and recommendations were made with a view to encouraging the authorities to take over responsibility for the patients' psychiatric care. Following a visit by the ICRC psychiatric consultant and the appointment of a new Netherlands Red Cross project manager, a long-term approach was adopted which focused on reactivating the Mental Health Care Department of the Ministry of Health and phasing out ICRC support. It was agreed with the new State Minister for Human Rights and other authorities that psychiatric patients without criminal records should not be imprisoned but instead should benefit from psychiatric care provided by specialized institutions.

**WOUNDED AND SICK**

During the course of the year, the ICRC helped the Ministry of Health's prosthetic/orthotic workshop in Sana'a to adopt ICRC technology. In March, the organization delivered orthopaedic materials (components, machinery and polypropylene) to the workshop, the National Artificial Limbs and Physiotherapy Centre, which produced 284 polypropylene prostheses and 1,870 orthoses in 2001.

The ICRC was requested by the Ministry of Health to continue this assistance and possibly extend it to another prosthetic workshop under construction in Mukalla, which was intended to serve patients from the isolated Hadramout governorate. In response, the ICRC conducted an in-depth evaluation in Sana'a, Aden and Taiz in November and discussed its findings with Ministry of Health representatives.

**AUTHORITIES**

Implementation of IHL is an ongoing process. Many important measures have already been adopted in Yemen. The country's military penal code penalizes war crimes, legislation to protect the red cross and red crescent emblems has been adopted and in 1999 Yemen set up a national committee for the implementation of IHL. The ICRC supported the committee's work by providing it with literature on IHL implementation, subsidizing its acquisition of equipment and stationery, and by making other financial contributions.

In September, a round-table conference involving the Yemeni and Jordanian national IHL committees took place in Amman to evaluate the work of the two committees and draw up action plans for 2002. This event was covered in a special issue of the Yemen Red Crescent's magazine published at the end of the year.

The ICRC funded in full the publication of a compilation of the different texts in Yemeni legislation dealing with IHL. In all, 3,000 copies were produced and distributed to ministries and universities. In addition, the ICRC funded the creation of an IHL documentation centre at the national committee's secretariat. This was officially opened in October under the auspices of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is also the committee's president. The event was attended by high-level representatives from various ministries, the Prosecutor General of the Republic, and representatives of the Yemen Red Crescent and the ICRC. The ceremony was well covered by the press and television.

**ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS**

In contrast with the positive results obtained by the national IHL committee, the dissemination and promotion of IHL among Yemen's armed forces did not advance as intended. The ICRC therefore stepped up its efforts to persuade the Ministry of Defence to organize seminars on IHL for army trainers. The trainers' course for military officers that the ICRC had planned to give was postponed until 2002. However, in coordination with the national IHL committee, it did reach an agreement with the Ministry of Defence's Moral Guidance Department on activities planned for 2002.

Some 8,000 copies of the Yemen Red Crescent magazine, which was funded and co-produced by the ICRC, were distributed in the different military regions throughout the year.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

In 2001, Yemeni human rights organizations, academic circles and intellectuals began to devote more attention to IHL. This was the result of a progressive attitude towards human rights, IHL and international treaties on the part of the authorities, as well as the situation in the Near East and the 11 September attacks. Much still needed to be done, however, to raise awareness of IHL among the Yemeni population as a whole.

### Non-governmental organizations and the *Centre Français d'Etudes Yéménites*

In order to promote IHL among Yemeni human-rights organizations such as the Human Rights Information and Training Centre, the Women's Forum for Research and Training and the Arab Sisters Forum, the ICRC gave presentations at various seminars conducted by these organizations and provided them with IHL publications for their libraries.

A study on traditional judicial customs in Yemen, commissioned by the ICRC in cooperation with the *Centre Français d'Etudes Yéménites*, was near completion. The aim of the study was to reach a better understanding of the central role of customary law in the predominantly tribal Yemeni society.

## Universities

After introductory courses in humanitarian law were added to the curriculum of the University of Aden's law faculty, the ICRC approached the University of Taiz to determine whether similar courses could be given there. In October, Taiz became the first university in Yemen officially to make IHL an independent and compulsory subject in its law faculty. At a seminar held at the university to mark the occasion, the ICRC gave presentations on IHL attended by high-level representatives of the central and local authorities, law professors and some 300 students. The organization also provided documentation and teaching materials.

## Media

The ICRC briefed the media regularly on its activities and featured in several press articles in Yemen. On 8 May, World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, the weekly *Yemen Times* published an article on Movement volunteers. The government newspaper, *26 September*, published an interview with the ICRC head of delegation in Yemen on the importance of promoting IHL. The delegation continued to write articles for the Yemeni press on a regular basis.

An agreement was reached with the Ministry of Information to broadcast the ICRC television programme "Century on Trial" on the Yemeni satellite channel. Each of the five episodes is on a different theme: children, women, prisoners of war, the environment and IHL concepts.

## NATIONAL SOCIETY

The National Society continued to suffer from a severe lack of financial means which prevented it from developing programmes and furthering branch development. Nevertheless, many National Society volunteers from the Sana'a, Taiz, Ibb and Al-Mahwit branches continued to provide important support for the ICRC's psychiatric-care programme delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross and its pilot project for detained women. The extension of the latter to two more central prisons in 2002 will provide another two National Society branches with an opportunity to increase the range of their activities and raise their image considerably.

At the beginning of 2001, the Yemen Red Crescent Society and the ICRC renewed their dissemination agreement for another year. Within the framework of this agreement, 6,000 copies of the National Society magazine *El-Ithar* were published and distributed each quarter to various audiences, including the armed forces. The magazine has enhanced the National Society's profile and has proved an effective tool for disseminating the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. The ICRC continued to provide the Taiz and Aden branches with ad hoc technical and financial support to enable them to publish news bulletins on their respective activities.

Volunteers previously trained by the ICRC conducted 52 dissemination sessions attended by 2,083 people, including scholars and government officials from various governorates.

