



israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories

The ICRC has maintained a permanent presence in Israel and the Occupied and the Autonomous Territories since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It works towards ensuring the faithful application of and respect for IHL, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians in times of war and occupation. In the current climate of violence, the ICRC monitors the situation of the Palestinian civilian population, carries out visits to detainees and makes representations to the relevant authorities, both Israeli and Palestinian. It provides direct assistance to Palestinians whose houses have been demolished and to people worst affected by curfews, closures and other restrictions in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. As lead agency in this context, the ICRC is coordinating the relief response of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It also supports the activities of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the Magen David Adom.

EXPENDITURE IN CHF

Protection

13,923,726

Assistance

13,571,508

Preventive action

2,697,730

Cooperation with National Societies

5,982,297

General

-

► **36,175,261**

of which: Overheads **2,207,477**

PERSONNEL

65 expatriates

180 national staff

KEY POINTS IN 2004

- The ICRC visited thousands of Palestinian detainees held by Israel in order to monitor their treatment and living conditions and enable them to maintain contact with their families.
- Hundreds of Palestinian families made homeless by Israeli house demolitions or damage caused to their dwellings during military operations received emergency shelter and household kits from the ICRC.
- ICRC water deliveries were made to thousands of West Bank families in areas not linked to water-distribution networks.
- ICRC food and other essential supplies were provided to destitute Palestinian families in the West Bank.
- Improved coordination between the ICRC, the Palestine Red Crescent and the Israeli authorities facilitated ambulance access to the wounded and sick in Gaza and the West Bank.
- The ICRC continued to support the life-saving work of the Palestine Red Crescent emergency-response service in the West Bank and Gaza and intensified operational cooperation with the Magen David Adom.

CONTEXT

The year 2004 was marked by the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Israel's decision to dismantle its settlements in Gaza and a limited number in the West Bank, the political and legal debate over the West Bank barrier, and continuing Israeli-Palestinian hostilities.

Hostilities were particularly intense in the Gaza Strip where Israeli forces carried out several military operations in response to frequent Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks on targets in Israel. Several prominent Palestinian militants, including the spiritual leader and founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and his successor, were killed in targeted Israeli attacks in Gaza.

Israel maintained a heavy military presence and stringent restrictions on the movement of people and goods, particularly in the West Bank, severely hindering the population's access to the workplace and basic services.

Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank and the construction of the separation barrier in and around the territory resulted in further expropriations or destruction of Palestinian housing and land. A growing number of Palestinian communities found themselves isolated on the Israeli side of the barrier in areas where its path crossed the Green Line into Palestinian territory.

Sporadic skirmishes across the Israeli-Lebanese border continued between Israeli forces and Hezbollah militants, particularly in the disputed Israeli-occupied Sheeba Farms region.

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC's operation in Israel and the Palestinian territories remained one of its largest worldwide, reflecting the sharp deterioration of the situation since the start of the second Palestinian intifada against Israeli occupation in September 2000. ICRC action centred on providing increased protection and assistance to civilian victims of the violence and those suffering extreme hardship as a result of the hostilities.

Pursuant to its mandate, the ICRC sought greater compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) in the face of persistent violations of its provisions by all parties engaged in the hostilities. In particular, it reminded Israel of its obligation under IHL to provide for the welfare and protection of the Palestinian population living under its occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. As an absolute priority, all parties concerned were exhorted to spare the lives of civilians not participating directly in the hostilities.

ICRC delegates visited thousands of people held by Israel to monitor their treatment and conditions of detention, and to enable them to maintain contact with their families. Similar visits were made to persons held in detention centres controlled by the Palestinian Authority. In both cases, assistance was provided to detainees experiencing acute hardship.

Under an emergency water-supply programme initiated in 2002, the ICRC organized deliveries of water by tanker to rural West Bank communities not connected to water-distribution networks. It also installed cisterns to increase water-storage capacity in areas subject to chronic water shortages.

Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC helped speed up Israeli security clearance procedures for Palestine Red Crescent ambulances and medical staff evacuating the wounded and sick. It similarly assisted the Palestinian health authorities in transporting emergency medical supplies to hospitals and health centres.

The Red Cross message (RCM) service enabled Lebanese nationals who fled to Israel following Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000 to maintain contact with their families in Lebanon. Efforts were also pursued to clarify the fate of Israelis unaccounted for or missing in action during past conflicts in the region.

Dialogue with the Israeli armed forces, the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian militant groups was reinforced to promote better understanding of and respect for IHL. The integration of IHL into the planning, training and operational guidelines of the Israeli armed and security forces, and the incorporation of its basic principles into the academic curricula of the Israeli and Palestinian education systems, were other priorities.

The ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies stepped up support for the activities of the Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent and strengthened their capacities to deliver emergency humanitarian services.

CIVILIANS

Protection of the civilian population

In 2004 Israeli and Palestinian civilians were again the main victims of the failure of all parties engaged in the hostilities to make a clear distinction between the civilian population and combatants or others taking a direct part in hostilities. Fighting frequently occurred in densely populated urban areas, heightening the risk of death or injury among the civilian population.

The ICRC made repeated representations to the parties concerned to spare civilian lives and property, as well as vital infrastructure. In particular, Israel was urged to reconcile its legitimate security concerns with its overriding responsibility under IHL, most notably the Fourth Geneva Convention, to ensure the welfare and protection of the civilian population living under its occupation. Specifically, the ICRC called on Israel to ease restrictions on the movement of people and goods, which have severely eroded living standards in the Palestinian territories. The ICRC also conveyed its concern to the Israeli authorities about the legal and humanitarian implications of the West Bank barrier, particularly the destruction or expropriation of Palestinian property and land and the forced displacement and isolation of Palestinian communities living in its path or vicinity.

Economic security aid

ICRC teams conducted surveys in hundreds of communities in the West Bank and Gaza to assess local economic needs and residents' access to a means of livelihood and to essential goods and services.

In 2004 the ICRC increased the number of beneficiaries in the Hebron region receiv-

ing monthly food parcels and household essentials from 2,000 to 2,500 families. The beneficiaries were amongst the poorest families living in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron Old City (H2) which continued to be severely affected by curfews, closures, military operations and violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians.

Drawing on a contingency stock of emergency relief supplies, the ICRC provided food and other essential aid to Palestinian communities cut off from basic necessities during hostilities in Gaza and to destitute Palestinian families.

- ▶ 2,500 destitute families in Hebron Old City received regular food and other basic aid
- ▶ food aid provided on an ad hoc basis to destitute Palestinian families during ICRC assessments of economic needs
- ▶ hundreds of Palestinian families confined to their homes during hostilities in Gaza and destitute Palestinian households received emergency ICRC food aid

Access to clean water

Almost 40% of households in the West Bank and Gaza were not connected to water-distribution networks and relied on makeshift rooftop rainwater-harvesting systems or low-capacity underground cisterns to meet their needs through the dry summer months. With the majority of the population unemployed and poverty-stricken, few households could afford to buy tanker-delivered water when rainwater supplies ran out.

Between late May and December, in continuation of an emergency water-supply programme initiated in 2002, the ICRC ensured the delivery of water by tanker to thousands of families in rural parts of Salfit, Hebron, Nablus and Tubas worst affected by water shortages.

Rehabilitation and construction work was completed on water and sewage facilities serving several West Bank cities. This work ranged from the provision of spare parts in Bethlehem, Jenin and Tulkarem to the building of water-supply infrastructure in Nablus and Qalqiliya. The ICRC also rehabilitated or upgraded water-storage systems in areas without piped water in order to reduce their dependency on expensive tanker-delivered supplies.

Emergency repair and maintenance work was carried out on water and electricity installations damaged during hostilities in

Gaza, and emergency water supplies were delivered to communities unable to access basic needs during incursions by Israeli military forces.

The ICRC drew the attention of the Israeli civil administration and local water boards to problems identified during assessments of water needs. These included the pollution of water sources by the uncontrolled discharge of wastewater and sewage, and disputes between Israeli settlers and Palestinian communities over access to water outlets.

- 14,000 Palestinian households (80,000 people) and 3,700 schools, as well as individual hardship cases, received tankered water deliveries subsidized by the ICRC
- 110,000 Palestinians in rural areas of the West Bank benefited from the rehabilitation or construction by the ICRC of water and sewage facilities
- water-storage capacity increased for destitute families in Palestinian communities not linked to piped water facilities in order to reduce their dependency on expensive trucked water supplies
- emergency water supplies delivered to Palestinian households cut off from basic necessities during military operations

Household relief programme

Hundreds of Palestinian families were made homeless by the destruction or confiscation of their dwellings in Gaza and the West Bank. This problem was particularly acute in Gaza following confrontations between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in the northern and southern parts of the territory. As it has for many years, the ICRC issued household kits containing mattresses, blankets, cooking equipment and hygiene items to several hundred homeless families thus affected.

- ICRC household relief kits distributed to hundreds of families whose homes had been destroyed or confiscated by Israeli forces

Restoring family links

Lebanese citizens living in Israel since the IDF withdrawal from Southern Lebanon maintained contact and exchanged official papers with family members in Lebanon through the ICRC tracing and RCM service. The remains of Lebanese nationals who had died in Israel were repatriated under ICRC auspices and handed over to their families for burial.

ICRC mediation and logistical support enabled inhabitants of the Israeli-occupied Golan to travel to Syria for study and religious purposes and engaged couples living on opposite sides of the demarcation line to wed. ICRC efforts to secure agreement from the authorities concerned to allow residents of the occupied Golan to meet family members in Syria once a month made no headway (see also *Syria*).

The ICRC interceded with the Israeli authorities on several occasions to enable Palestinians to visit or be reunited with family members living in other parts of the Palestinian territories. It remained particularly concerned about the effect of travel restrictions on Palestinian minors with specific medical needs, minors separated from both parents, single women with young children, and elderly persons and women living alone.

- 31 students and pilgrims from the Israeli-occupied Golan travelled to Syria for study or religious purposes through ICRC mediation with Israeli and Syrian authorities
- 4 weddings arranged for couples separated by the demarcation line between the occupied Golan and Syria

Clarifying the fate of the missing

The ICRC pursued efforts to shed light on the fate of Israelis still unaccounted for from past conflicts in the region and kept in regular contact with their families and the Israeli authorities. It focused on the cases of five Israelis reported missing in action, including the pilot Ron Arad.

In January the ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary during the exchange and repatriation of released prisoners and mortal remains between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon brokered by the German government. An ICRC team accompanied 22 Lebanese citizens and seven persons of various other nationalities to Germany after their release from Israeli detention. The group was handed over to the German authorities for repatriation or resettlement in third countries. The ICRC team then flew back to Israel with an Israeli citizen and the remains of three Israeli soldiers previously in the hands of Hezbollah.

In a simultaneous operation, the ICRC monitored the release of some 400 Palestinian detainees from Israeli detention to their homes in the West Bank and Gaza and repatriated the remains of 60 people from Israel to Lebanon.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Visits to detainees

At the end of 2004 the Israeli authorities were holding 11,322 Palestinians in various places of detention in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, including interrogation centres, military detention camps, provisional detention centres, police stations and central prisons.

ICRC delegates regularly visited these detainees and others held by the Palestinian Authority to monitor their treatment and living conditions. Following the visits, they conveyed their observations to the detaining authorities with recommendations for corrective action where appropriate.

Detention visits intensified between 15 August and 2 September when more than 500 Palestinian detainees went on hunger strike to demand better living conditions. An ICRC team, which included medical doctors, made 22 visits to these detainees during and after the hunger strike to check on their state of health.

The ICRC arranged for thousands of family visits to Palestinian detainees, although these visits were occasionally disrupted by Israeli closures in parts of Gaza and the West Bank. Israel lifted a ban on visiting rights for residents of Nablus in force since the start of the intifada in September 2000. It also announced a new travel permit system which should enable numerous West Bank families to visit detained relatives for the first time.

In addition to receiving family visits, detainees were able to correspond and exchange power-of-attorney documents with their relatives through the RCM service.

Israel's widespread use of administrative detention, whereby detainees may be held for six-month renewable periods without trial, remained an issue of concern to the ICRC, as did the question of respect for judicial guarantees.

Several presentations on IHL and the mandate and work of the ICRC were given to officers and trainees of the Israeli Prison Service. Similar presentations were given to the Palestinian security forces in Gaza and the West Bank.

- 369 visits made to 19,539 Palestinian detainees held in 40 Israeli places of detention

- ▶ 279 visits made to 1,466 Palestinian detainees held in 50 places of detention under the control of the Palestinian authority
- ▶ 6,703 Palestinian detainees benefited from the ICRC family visits programme
- ▶ 34,791 RCMs and *salamat* (short greetings messages) relayed between Palestinian detainees and their families
- ▶ 3,210 power-of-attorney documents relayed between Palestinian detainees and their families
- ▶ 14,409 certificates of detention issued to Palestinian detainees after their release
- ▶ IHL presentations held for the first time for Israeli Prison Service training officers

Assistance for detainees

Sets of winter and summer clothing were issued to detainees held by both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. The ICRC also provided newspapers, magazines, recreational items and medical appliances such as spectacles, dentures and orthopaedic devices to detainees in Israeli military camps and central prisons.

Detainees whose families were unable to assist them, either because they could not afford to or because travel restrictions prevented them from visiting, received a small monthly allowance to pay for basic necessities.

WOUNDED AND SICK

The ICRC remained at the forefront of efforts to ensure that Palestinians had access to health care and that medical service providers could reach the wounded and sick through coordination with the authorities concerned.

Medical supplies were distributed to hospitals treating the wounded during hostilities following several large-scale IDF incursions in the Gaza Strip. ICRC mediation with the Israeli authorities also enabled Palestine Red Crescent ambulances to evacuate the dead from combat zones and transport the wounded to hospitals.

Close liaison with the Israeli and Jordanian authorities facilitated the transport of patients in need of emergency medical care between the West Bank and Jordan. The remains of Palestinian militants killed during the fighting were handed over to their families for burial.

Four seminars on the latest war-surgery techniques were held in Ramallah, Nablus, Gaza City and Khan Younis for specialist medical personnel from surgical hospitals

in the West Bank and Gaza. ICRC surgeons conducted the seminars with the support of surgeons from the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Surveys were carried out to assess the impact of movement restrictions on access by the Palestinian population and medical staff to hospitals and other health facilities.

Imitation of the Palestinian Red Crescent emblem persisted, especially among private medical and transport companies, creating confusion at checkpoints and increasing the risk of security-clearance delays for Red Crescent ambulances. To ensure the immediate identification of ambulances at checkpoints, the ICRC and the Palestine Red Crescent revised procedures for the coordination of their movements.

As in past years, the ICRC provided selected hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza with surgical and nursing journals and other relevant publications to help medical professionals keep pace with developments in their sphere of expertise. It also consulted local health authorities and hospital directors on which other medical publications and textbooks they might find useful.

- ▶ medical supplies delivered to Palestinian hospitals treating the wounded
- ▶ ambulance movements coordinated to evacuate the dead and transport the wounded to hospitals
- ▶ 180 doctors, surgeons and anaesthetists from West Bank and Gaza hospitals attended 4 war-surgery seminars organized by the ICRC

AUTHORITIES

The ICRC pursued its dialogue with the Israeli authorities on Israel's obligation under the Fourth Geneva Convention to provide for and protect the population of the occupied Palestinian territories. Representations were also made to the Palestinian authorities to remind them of their obligations under IHL and other applicable legal standards.

The Israeli authorities were urged to accede to IHL instruments to which Israel is not yet party and to enact implementing legislation for treaties already ratified. For its part, the Palestinian Authority was urged to incorporate IHL principles into its domestic legislation, including the adoption of a law on the protection of the emblem.

Close contacts were maintained with diplomatic missions in Israel to convey the ICRC's main concerns regarding the Israeli-Palestinian crisis and to secure the international community's continuing support for its work in this context. The ICRC regularly briefed local representatives of foreign governments and key non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on its activities in the region and participated in bi-weekly meetings chaired by the European Commission delegation in Jerusalem and attended by EU member States, donors and UN agencies.

A Hebrew translation of the 1977 Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions was completed with the Research Centre for the Interplay between International Norms and Israeli Law and the law faculty at the Management College for Academic Studies.

An IHL library was donated to the recently created Palestinian committee for the implementation of IHL.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The ICRC reinforced contacts with the IDF command structures to promote respect for the provisions of IHL concerning the protection of civilians in all circumstances. It gave presentations on the ICRC, the Palestine Red Crescent and the Magen David Adom and on the Movement's Fundamental Principles to operational commanders and other members of the Israeli armed and security forces, including border and checkpoint personnel, civil administration officials, IDF instructors and recruits and police performing prison duties.

IHL sessions were also held for members of the Palestinian security forces and newly recruited Palestinian police staff. Similar presentations were given for staff of the Palestinian General Intelligence Bureau in Hebron and for members of the Palestinian Marine Association in Gaza.

The ICRC gave presentations on IHL and the Movement to:

- ▶ more than 2,800 members of the Israeli military and security forces;
- ▶ members of the Palestinian security forces, Palestinian police recruits, Palestinian General Intelligence Bureau staff and members of the Palestinian Naval Association.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The ICRC kept the Israeli and Palestinian media abreast of its activities through briefings, newsletters and monthly reports and encouraged them to report on humanitarian issues. It also gave several presentations on its mandate and work to Palestinian journalists, Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, human rights associations and lawyers' associations, as well as to Palestinian militant leaders and representatives of Israeli settlers.

Progress was made in introducing the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme in secondary-school curricula in Israel. In pursuance of this goal, a second seminar to acquaint national education supervisors with the programme was held in October 2004. The education pack was translated into Hebrew and submitted to the Israeli Ministry of Education. The programme was expected to be introduced as a pilot project during the 2005–06 school year in selected Israeli schools.

In the Palestinian territories, the programme was extended to schools in Gaza following its successful integration into West Bank secondary schools in 2003. The Palestinian education authorities decided to introduce the subject in five new schools per district during the 2004–05 school year, thus doubling the number of schools teaching the programme. Some 1,000 Palestinian teachers were due to be trained in the programme by the end of 2005.

Palestinian Ministry of Education officials participated in the third regional seminar on the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme held in Cairo in November (see *Egypt*).

At the university level, the ICRC continued to promote the teaching of IHL as a separate subject in Israeli and Palestinian law faculties, and to this end professors and students in several major Israeli and Palestinian universities attended presentations on IHL. Israeli and Palestinian academic circles were also encouraged to play a more prominent role in the public discourse on IHL-related issues.

- plans finalized to extend teaching of the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme to 150 schools attended by 5,600 students throughout the West Bank and Gaza
- 15 Israeli education supervisors introduced to the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme expected to be pilot-tested in Israel during the 2005–06 school year

NATIONAL SOCIETIES

As in past years, cooperation with the Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent was a major component of ICRC activities in Israel and the Palestinian territories. The aim was to ensure that both these organizations possessed the means and expertise to carry out the full range of activities of a well-functioning National Society.

ICRC cooperation activities were based on agreements with the Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent covering key areas such as emergency preparedness and response, tracing and mine-risk education.

In June the ICRC renewed cooperation agreements concluded with the Magen David Adom in 2003 covering training and material support for its emergency medical service (EMS), tracing, disaster response and management and the promotion of the Movement's Fundamental Principles and the basic rules of IHL.

A cooperation agreement with the Palestine Red Crescent was also signed focusing on joint operational implementation of three key ICRC programmes in the occupied territories: food distributions in Hebron, family visits to Palestinians detained by the Israeli authorities and the provision of household kits to Palestinian families made homeless by the destruction or confiscation of their property (see *Civilians*).

During Israeli military operations in the Rafah region of Gaza in May, the ICRC and the Palestine Red Crescent worked closely to ensure the wounded and sick had access to medical assistance, coordinating ambulance movements in order to speed up security clearance by the Israeli authorities.

ICRC education materials to alert young people to the dangers of explosive remnants of war were field-tested by teams of Palestine Red Crescent volunteers. The ICRC also trained the volunteers in gathering mine-victim data.

Jointly with the International Federation, the ICRC provided training and material assistance to strengthen the capacities of the Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent to respond to emergencies, in particular through their ambulance services.

Also with the International Federation, the ICRC helped to coordinate the work of numerous National Societies active in the region. The two international organizations offered guidance to National Societies start-

ing new projects in the region and served as a platform for those with programmes under way to exchange information with the Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent.

ICRC logistical expertise and services helped ensure that relief supplies donated by various National Societies reached targeted beneficiaries in the Palestinian territories.

The ICRC facilitated and financed a Movement Youth Summer Camp bringing together seven National Societies and the Magen David Adom under the theme "Protecting Human Dignity: Youth Response to Disasters". Youth volunteers from the American, British, Bulgarian, Danish, Jordanian, Norwegian and Ugandan Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies participated in the event.