The ICRC has been present in Iraq since the outbreak of the Iran–Iraq war in 1980. In the current context, priority is given to protection activities, with a particular focus on persons detained/ interned by the multinational forces in Iraq and by the Iraqi authorities, and to providing emergency assistance to the civilian population affected by the conflict, either directly, or through partners, including the Iraqi Red Crescent, whenever possible. Assistance activities include the provision of emergency relief, support to hospitals, emergency repair work on health, water and sanitation infrastructure and restoring family links.

**CONTEXT**

The ongoing non-international armed conflict between the government/multinational forces and armed groups, along with sectarian killings, suicide bombings and other forms of violence, continued to cause widespread death and destruction. The second half of 2007 witnessed a reduction in the level of new population displacements in Iraq, as well as the return of limited numbers of Iraqis who had sought refuge abroad, particularly from the Syrian Arab Republic.

The violence in Baghdad subsided somewhat in the first months of the year before showing an upsurge in May, resulting in large numbers of casualties and further population displacement. Some Baghdad neighbourhoods were sealed off by walls and other means to control entry and exit, and civilians were often blocked in their homes because of security constraints. From September onwards, the level of violence in Baghdad dropped again, although several mass casualty attacks took place in the city towards year-end.

In central Iraq, the level of violence decreased significantly in Al Anbar province, particularly during the second half of the year. The situation remained precarious in Mosul and Kirkuk, as well as in the western part of Ninewa province, where mass casualty attacks occurred in August. The province of Diyala, particularly around Muqdadiya and Baquba, saw regular fighting between various armed groups, as well as operations by the Iraqi army and coalition forces.

In northern Iraq, tensions with Turkey escalated during the second half of the year, with Turkish forces amassing along the border with Iraq, launching air attacks and conducting limited small-scale ground operations targeting the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which had launched attacks on Turkish troops from northern Iraq.

Most provinces south-east of Baghdad were relatively calm compared with central Iraq. Further south, in the greater Basra area, attacks intensified against multinational forces in the first half of the year, and several clashes occurred between rival political groups. Levels of criminality also rose in the south, as did assassinations and kidnappings. By year-end, the official hand-over of responsibility for security to the Iraqi authorities by the multinational forces coincided with a decrease in the overall level of violence, although sporadic attacks continued to occur.
Unemployment and poverty levels remained high, and much of the population was still reliant on government food rations to cover immediate needs. Water, sewerage and electrical power infrastructure remained vastly inadequate to meet the needs of the population.

Tens of thousands of people remained in the custody of the Iraqi authorities and the multinational forces in Iraq, and many families were still without news of relatives who had gone missing during past or current conflicts.

ICRC ACTION

In 2007, the ICRC progressively expanded its geographical presence and humanitarian response capacity in Iraq in order to provide emergency protection and assistance to a maximum number of people affected by the violence. A new office was opened in Najaf to complement the ICRC’s permanent presence in Baghdad, Basra, Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah and regular missions to Iraq by ICRC staff from Amman, Jordan.

A budget extension appeal was launched in May, largely in response to the emergency needs of growing numbers of IDPs and the communities hosting them, as well as of other vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled people, orphans and households headed by women. It was also in response to the increased detention-related and family-visits workload resulting from the growing number of people detained/interned in various parts of the country, urgent additional needs in the water, sanitation and health sectors, and new livelihood-support projects.

The ICRC’s expanded capacity to handle relief distributions with the Iraqi Red Crescent, with local NGOs or directly enabled it to boost its assistance to cover the basic needs of 125,000 destitute households (some 742,000 people), both residents and IDPs. More than 3 million IDPs and residents benefited from water and sanitation projects, and support was given to scores of hospitals providing life-saving treatment to thousands of weapon-wounded.

In accordance with its standard practice, the ICRC in Iraq continued to operate without military protection in order to preserve its neutral and independent identity.

Coordination was reinforced with UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations operating in the country in order to avoid duplication or gaps in aid for those in need.

The ICRC publicly voiced its concern about the humanitarian situation and violations of IHL in Iraq. It also produced two public reports on the protection of the civilian population and on the plight of the families of the missing.

CIVILIANS

Promoting respect for IHL

Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the hostilities, in terms of casualties, displacement and lost livelihoods. Despite security constraints limiting direct access to the victims of the conflict and hampering sustained dialogue with all parties to the hostilities, the ICRC continued to monitor public sources regarding IHL violations and intensified its networking with external contacts potentially able to influence events in Iraq. It also made public calls on the parties to ensure the protection of civilians and the medical mission.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</th>
<th>Detainees visited</th>
<th>Detainees visited and monitored individually</th>
<th>of whom females</th>
<th>of whom minors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37,370</td>
<td>5,052</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visits carried out</td>
<td>102</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of places of detention visited</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESTORING FAMILY LINKS</th>
<th>RCMs collected</th>
<th>RCMs distributed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</td>
<td>42,846</td>
<td>33,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People reunited with their families</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</td>
<td>403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People for whom a tracing request was newly registered</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of whom minors at the time of disappearance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracing cases closed positively (persons located)</td>
<td>240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2007 (people)</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which for females</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which for minors at the time of disappearance</td>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENTS ISSUED</th>
<th>People to whom travel documents were issued</th>
<th>People to whom a detention attestation was issued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIVILIANS</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic security, water and habitat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>741,938</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential household items</td>
<td>732,803</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural inputs and micro-economic initiatives</td>
<td>31,267</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, sanitation and habitat projects</td>
<td>3,340,000</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WOUNDED AND SICK</th>
<th>Hospitals supported</th>
<th>Structures</th>
<th>Patients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RCMs collected</td>
<td>42,846</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCMs distributed</td>
<td>33,297</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical rehabilitation</th>
<th>Patients receiving services</th>
<th>Patients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>23,202</td>
<td>3,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostheses delivered</td>
<td>2,522</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthoses delivered</td>
<td>6,447</td>
<td>1,001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1. All detainees known through the authorities’ notifications and followed up by the ICRC
2. Include only the weapon-wounded reported by the ICRC-supported hospitals that provided data
Assisting IDPs, host communities and other vulnerable groups

Around 742,000 people, both residents and IDPs, received food, hygiene kits and other essential relief commodities through distributions carried out directly by the ICRC or through the Iraqi Red Crescent and local NGOs. Among the beneficiaries were the inhabitants of 11 IDP camps, including Palestinians and Iranian Kurds stranded in camps along Iraq’s borders with Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

In northern and southern Iraq, the economic security of 4,800 vulnerable resident and IDP families was restored or strengthened through the implementation of livelihood-support projects and the rehabilitation of irrigation canals.

- 741,938 people (124,522 households), including 445,163 IDPs (74,337 households), received food
- 732,803 people (123,073 households), including 439,682 IDPs (73,498 households), received essential household items
- 31,276 people (4,823 households) benefited from agricultural livelihood-support initiatives

Ensuring adequate water supply and sanitation installations

Water infrastructure rehabilitation and development

Water storage and distribution networks and sewage treatment plants were upgraded or rehabilitated, primarily in areas with large numbers of IDPs, including camps, or where infrastructure had been damaged during hostilities. Several water supply and sewage evacuation and sanitation facilities were either rehabilitated or constructed, thus contributing to the prevention of outbreaks of disease.

Assistance to primary health care centres

Health facilities that had ceased to operate or were on the point of breaking down were rehabilitated or upgraded in various parts of the country, particularly in provinces affected by military operations or sectarian violence and those hosting large numbers of displaced families. In addition, a number of primary health care centres were built in areas lacking such services.

- 6 primary health care centres (capacity: 750 patients per day) built in Basra, Diyala, Erbil and Nineawa
- 19 primary health care centres (total capacity: over 4,000 patients per day) treating the wounded throughout Iraq, including 10 centres in Baghdad, repaired or upgraded

Summary

Over 3 million people benefited from more than 140 water/sanitation projects, many of them completed in the areas most affected by the armed conflict, such as 41 in Baghdad, 18 in Diyala, 14 in Anbar and 17 in Ninawa, including:

- 25 primary health care centres in Anbar, Babel, Baghdad, Diwaniya, Karbala, Salah Al Deen and Wasit provinces serving an average of more than 3,820 patients per day had their sanitation facilities and vital electro-mechanical components repaired or upgraded
- 13 hospitals, with a combined capacity to treat over 2,800 inpatients, had their water and/or sanitation systems restored and 7 hospitals received regular supplies of water by trucks and in bags
- 9 hospitals and medico-legal institutes had their mortuary fridges repaired/rehabilitated

Restoring family links and clarifying the fate of the missing

The Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-committee dealing with cases of persons missing from the 1990–91 Gulf War held three meetings, chaired by the ICRC. The security situation in Iraq prevented any work at gravesites.

- the fate of 9 Iraqis and 3 Kuwaitis clarified in the framework of the Tripartite Commission, bringing to 293 the number of cases resolved since 2003

Discussions with both parties on a future mechanism to tackle the issue of people unaccounted for in relation to the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war were stepped up.

The capacities of the Medico-Legal Institutes in Baghdad, Basra and Diyala and of hospitals to deal with the daily caseload of dead bodies were enhanced through the rehabilitation of 9 mortuary fridges, the provision of forensic equipment and further data collection/management training.

- 21,389 RCMs collected from and 11,303 RCMs distributed mainly to families of detainees/internees, in cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent
- new tracing requests registered for 403 people (5 females and 12 minors at the time of disappearance); 240 people located; 3,400 cases (48 females and 142 minors at the time of disappearance) still being processed, including 1,163 cases (9 females and 9 minors at the time of disappearance) from the 1990–91 Gulf War
- 9,398 names of people and their present whereabouts or requests for information on the whereabouts of relatives published on the website www.familylinks.icrc.org
- 22 people issued with an ICRC travel document
- 28 official documents relayed between family members across front lines or borders

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detention facilities under the authority of the multinational forces in Iraq

By the end of 2007, more than 20,000 people continued to be held in permanent places of internment controlled by the multinational forces in Iraq (Camp Cropper and Remembrance II, both located near Baghdad Airport; Camp Bucca near Um Qasr, southern Iraq; and the Divisional Internment Facility of the UK forces in Basra). Detainees were regularly visited by ICRC teams, except in Camp Bucca owing to security constraints. The detaining authorities and the ICRC maintained a constructive dialogue on detainee treatment, living conditions and legal issues.

- 32,033 internees known through the authorities’ notifications followed up, mainly internees in Camp Bucca
- 3,209 internees visited and monitored individually (including 18 females and 423 minors) and 2,684 newly registered (including 16 females and 419 minors), during 26 visits to 6 places of detention

Detention facilities under the authority of the Kurdish regional authorities

Detainees were visited in the northern governorates in detention centres under the authority of the Kurdish regional authorities. Following the submission of an ICRC report on the basic judicial
guarantees afforded to detainees, the Kurdish judicial authorities intensified their dialogue with the ICRC in order to find practical solutions to the problems identified. Medical assessments conducted in each place of detention resulted in the ICRC providing support to the detaining authorities in their efforts to improve medical services for inmates.

- 3,614 detainees visited, of whom 1,741 monitored individually (including 14 females and 14 minors), and 853 newly registered (including 10 females and 13 minors) during 72 visits to 16 places of detention controlled by the Kurdish regional authorities and 1 visit to 1 place of detention controlled by an armed group called the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan
- detainees received hygiene kits and sets of clothing

Detention facilities under the authority of the Iraqi central government
Following negotiations with the Iraqi Ministry of Justice, the ICRC visited for the first time people detained at the Fort Suse Federal Penitentiary close to Sulaymaniah in northern Iraq. Given the security constraints, no other places of detention under the authority of the Ministry of Justice could be visited.

Dialogue with the Iraqi central government continued regarding access to people held under the authority of other ministries.

- 1,723 detainees visited, of whom 102 monitored individually and 70 newly registered, during 3 visits to 1 place of detention

Family news
The exchange of family news was enhanced by the salamat plus short message relay system and the establishment of a new telephone help line.

- 11,622 internees visited by their relatives with ICRC support
- 21,457 RCMs collected from and 21,994 RCMs distributed to detainees/internees
- 10,206 salamats relayed from detainees/internees to their families
- 21 people, mostly released detainees/internees, repatriated to their country of origin at their request through the ICRC
- 554 detention certificates issued to former detainees/internees or their families, enabling them to qualify for social welfare benefits

WOUNDED AND SICK

Assistance to hospitals
ICRC action boosted the capacity of Iraqi emergency medical services to cope with mass casualty situations, and in several cases enabled medical facilities to continue functioning. Over 80 hospitals and other health centres received drugs, medical consumables, and essential emergency room and/or operating theatre equipment. In an integrated approach, the water and sanitation systems of numerous hospitals and primary health care centres treating the wounded were repaired or upgraded and a number of main hospitals were supplied with water on a daily basis.

Health facilities received more than 100 tonnes of medical supplies in response to cholera outbreaks in Baghdad, Basra, Sulaymaniyah and Ta’mim provinces.

In total, 96 health facilities (84 hospitals and 12 health centres) received support for water and sanitation projects (see Civilians):
- 28 hospitals received medical supplies for the treatment of over 5,500 weapon-wounded
- 69 hospitals received essential emergency room equipment
- 27 hospitals received fully comprehensive operating theatre equipment
- 80 Iraqi health professionals participated in ICRC seminars on advanced first aid, emergency room trauma management and war surgery
- the Al-Rashad Psychiatric Hospital, Baghdad, received support for its occupational therapy programme

In the 35 ICRC-supported hospitals that provided data, 5,100 wounded people were admitted. Owing to the difficult situation, no other reliable information was made available in 2007 by these or other health facilities, although it is expected that such data will become available in the near future.

Assistance to the physically disabled
Physical rehabilitation centres in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Hilla, Mosul and Najaf continued to receive ICRC technical and material support, and similar assistance to the centre in Tikrit started at the request of the Ministry of Health. Following the signing of an agreement with the Iraqi authorities, construction began on a physical rehabilitation centre in Falluja.

- 23,202 patients (including 3,900 women and 6,515 children) received services at 8 ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centres
- 1,760 new patients (including 276 women and 116 children) fitted with prostheses and 5,060 (including 754 women and 2,980 children) fitted with orthoses
- 2,522 prostheses (including 334 for women, 123 for children and 802 for mine victims), 6,447 orthoses (including 1,001 for women, 3,701 for children and 143 for mine victims), 724 crutches and 28 wheelchairs delivered

AUTHORITIES

Following talks with the ICRC, Iraqi government officials recommended the setting up of a preparatory committee to draft a law on the establishment of a national IHL implementation mechanism.

Relations with local authorities were developed in various parts of Iraq, particularly in the south and the north, aimed at spreading knowledge and acceptance of IHL and the ICRC’s mandate and activities.

- political authorities representing southern provinces attended a workshop on IHL and the ICRC

UN agencies, NGOs and the ICRC met regularly to coordinate and streamline humanitarian action, with the ICRC maintaining its observer status as a neutral and independent organization.
ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Networking with the various parties to the conflict was intensified to broaden acceptance of the ICRC and enhance its access to victims.

Contacts with high-ranking commanders of the Iraqi army paved the way for the development of a constructive dialogue regarding the need to disseminate IHL. The Kurdish military and police authorities expressed interest in integrating IHL into their training programmes.

- 14 senior Iraqi officers attended a workshop on IHL
- Members of the armed and security forces under the control of the Kurdish regional authorities attended briefings on IHL at military academies and IHL training courses

US military officials in Baghdad and the ICRC prepared the ground for the participation of the ICRC delegation in Washington, United States, in briefings to US troops prior to their deployment in Iraq (see Washington regional).

CIVIL SOCIETY

Contacts were expanded with leaders of religious and tribal structures throughout Iraq, especially following the opening of the Najaf office, in view of their potential influence on public opinion and their role in political life.

- Tribal community leaders and Muslim scholars from all over Iraq attended workshops providing them with basic information on ICRC neutral and independent action

Following the signature of an agreement with the Union of Arab Jurists, an IHL documentation centre was opened and 20 participants attended the first seminar for civil society members from various Arab countries, including Iraq, on “Horizons and limits of humanitarian action”.

Meetings with Iraqi NGOs were followed up by the production of a leaflet to help them promote IHL within civil society.

The deans of Iraqi law colleges were engaged in a consultation process on the integration of IHL into university curricula. To encourage Iraqi law lecturers to set up a nationwide network recognized as a reference on IHL studies, the ICRC sponsored the creation of a website, thus providing a virtual forum for the exchange of information between teachers unable to meet owing to insecurity.

- Iraqi law colleges received IHL libraries
- 2 law lecturers attended an ICRC regional seminar on IHL in Cairo (see Egypt)

Regular information was provided to the media and two seminars on IHL and the ICRC for Iraqi journalists contributed to better media coverage of the ICRC’s main concerns and activities. The ICRC’s public report Civilians without protection: The ever-worsening humanitarian crisis in Iraq, issued in April, helped raise awareness of the humanitarian consequences of the conflict.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Working from its Baghdad headquarters and 18 branches country-wide, the Iraqi Red Crescent played a pivotal role in responding to humanitarian needs in Iraq. Joint ICRC-Iraqi Red Crescent cooperation programmes enabled thousands of separated family members to stay in contact via the ICRC tracing network and brought urgently needed relief to IDPs and other vulnerable groups (see Civilians). The Iraqi Red Crescent also developed plans to set up two pilot emergency medical service stations in Baghdad, with ICRC support.

Strengthening the capacity of the Iraqi Red Crescent to respond to the needs in the country remained a top priority, as was the safety of Iraqi Red Crescent volunteers.

Annual cooperation agreements were signed with the Iraqi Red Crescent in the fields of emergency assistance, restoring family links, mine action, and the promotion of IHL and the Fundamental Principles. The National Society received technical tools to boost its capacity to undertake economic security needs assessments, carry out relief distributions and provide accurate reporting and to develop its warehouse and logistics management systems for the storage and rapid deployment of emergency supplies. On-site training and materials were provided to the two national Iraqi Red Crescent warehouses in Baghdad used as the principal storage areas for the ICRC pipeline. Iraqi Red Crescent personnel also underwent further tracing training.

The Iraqi Red Crescent office in Amman played a key role in the coordination of and support to operations in Iraq. It received technical and material support from the ICRC.

However, following discussions in November 2007, the ICRC and the Iraqi Red Crescent faced difficulties in agreeing on a common operational approach for 2008.