



ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

ICRC REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR
THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL
COUNTRIES



Background

The ICRC Regional Delegation for the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) works to promote and ensure respect for the rules of war and facilitates ICRC operations worldwide through dialogue with government, civil society, military and diplomatic officials. It works in places of detention, helps clarify the fate of missing persons, reunites families separated by armed conflict and migration, and works closely with the National Red Crescent Societies/ Authorities of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and other partner organizations. The ICRC Regional Delegation was established in Kuwait during the 1990–1991 Gulf War, and it maintains a presence in Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, with activities across all six GCC countries.¹ The following document provides an overview on regional activities and key achievements in 2021.

Humanitarian Diplomacy and Policy

The ICRC policy objectives and positions on humanitarian issues are based on our operational experience. Through humanitarian diplomacy, the ICRC aims to facilitate operations and raise awareness of the needs of people affected by conflict and violence. We work through diplomatic channels and global policy arenas to inform and influence policy debates on key humanitarian issues, including International Humanitarian Law. In 2021, the ICRC participated in global and regional forums and high-level meetings and events to address key humanitarian issues of concern.



More than **70** regional and local events where ICRC contributed to key humanitarian issues.



4 dialogue events represented by ICRC President Peter Maurer.

ICRC Participates in the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Manama Dialogue

The ICRC participated in the [IISS Manama Dialogue](#) with high-level panelists to debate the Middle East's most pressing security challenges. The conference took place in Bahrain during November 2021 where President Maurer delivered a keynote [speech](#) entitled, “Changing Multilateralism and Regional Security.” He urged states to keep human needs at the centre of humanitarian, security, stability and peace-building agendas.

¹ ICRC 2020 annual report: https://www.icrc.org/en/download/file/180064/icrc-annual-report-near-middle-east_full_2020.pdf

ICRC President Peter Maurer delivering a keynote speech at IISS Manama Dialogue.



IHL Symposium in Doha “Contemporary Dilemmas in International Humanitarian Law: Exploring Global Issues in the Arab and Islamic World”

On 15 September, the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, the Embassy of Switzerland in Qatar and the ICRC organized a symposium on Contemporary Dilemmas in International Humanitarian Law under the title, “Exploring Global Issues in the Arab and Islamic World”. The event brought together prominent experts of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to discuss the challenges of IHL in the Middle East and North Africa region, the role of women, Islam and the arming of children and their protection under IHL. Following the symposium, an art installation curated by the Musée de l’Elysée in Lausanne, Switzerland exploring ‘[Humanitarian Principles Here and Now](#)’ was inaugurated in Doha. The award-winning photo exhibition was jointly held with the Qatar Red Crescent Society to reflect humanitarian crises and ICRC daily action.

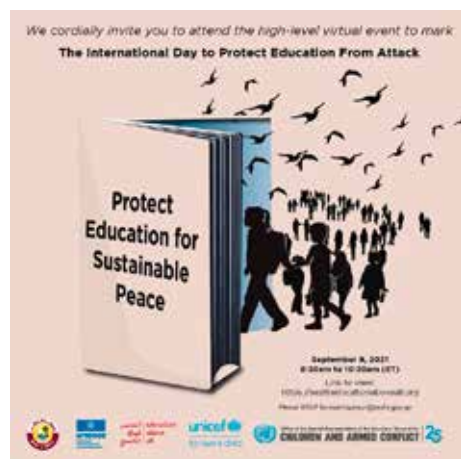


Humanitarian Negotiations in Oman

In December, the ICRC and the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) conducted a week-long workshop focusing on humanitarian negotiation, with specialized sessions on crisis negotiations. Co-organized in collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University and Oman Charitable Organization, the workshop aimed to support humanitarian professionals in planning and conducting negotiations in humanitarian contexts. [Please click here to read more about Frontline Negotiations.](#)

Digital Dilemmas Debate #6: Forensic Archaeology and New Tools in the Humanitarian Search for the Missing

To mark the International Day of the Disappeared, ICRC organized a panel discussion on “Clarifying the fate of the missing in the digital age,” to discuss how remote sensing technologies are changing forensic work in the search for missing persons. Omar Odeh, Head of Regional Delegation for the GCC, gave an opening speech highlighting that “the search for missing people is one of the emblematic issues of today’s Middle East.”



International Day to Protect Education from Attack

In September, the ICRC participated in the second High-Level Virtual Event to mark the International Day to Protect Education from Attack. The event was led by the Qatar-based Education Above All Foundation. Global leaders and Ministers jointly advocated to protect education during insecurity and conflict. ICRC President Peter Maurer, delivered a [statement](#) highlighting ICRC’s efforts to enhance access to education in situations of conflict.

Plan-of-Action signed with Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

The ICRC signed a Plan of Action 2021–2024 with OIC Representatives in February with the aim of combining the ICRC’s unique humanitarian and IHL expertise and programmes, with the significant influence and outreach that the OIC has within the Islamic world. The plan of action is a result of a longstanding and fruitful cooperation between the two organizations in addressing the humanitarian needs of communities affected by conflict and other situations of violence.



Plan-of-Action for 2021–2024 signed with Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Riyadh.

Regional Think Tank Summit features ICRC Regional Director

Fabrizio Carboni, Regional Director for Near and Middle East, participated in a virtual MENA Think Tank Summit titled, “New Partners & Paradigms in the Age of Conflict and COVID.” The Summit was co-organized by the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat) and the Think Tank and Civil Societies Program of The Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania. The event featured 30 speakers, including Bahrain’s Minister of Youth and Sports Affairs and some of the region’s top thought leaders, researchers and foremost experts.

Women’s Plight in Conflict Zones

In a webinar on women empowerment organized by Intisar Foundation, Omar Odeh, Head of Regional Delegation for the GCC Countries, spoke of the multifaceted challenges of conflict that women face in Yemen, Iraq and Syria. [Please click here to read more information on Women in War from the ICRC perspective.](#)

Leadership Meetings to Reinforce Humanitarian Cooperation in Oman

The ICRC President Peter Maurer conducted a series of meetings with high-level officials in Oman in July. President Maurer held official meetings with HE Sayyid Badr Bin Hamad Al Busaidi Minister of Foreign Affairs, and other senior Omani officials including the Chairman of the Oman Charitable Organization, H.E. Mr. Mohammed Bin Homoud Bin Saeed Al Thehli. [Please click here to read more about the humanitarian cooperation with Oman.](#)



ICRC President Peter Maurer and Head of Mission in Oman with the Omani Authorities.

Promoting Respect for IHL and Relations with Armed Forces

As part of the ICRC mission to protect and assist the victims of war and other violence, the ICRC seeks to ensure respect for their rights. This includes reminding authorities and others of their legal obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law. In 2021, despite various pandemic-related constraints, the ICRC’s regional delegation strove to strengthen support among GCC member states for IHL and for the ICRC’s humanitarian activities in the wider region.



143 military officers from different corps in 3 GCC countries benefitted from various ICRC courses on IHL.



22 military officers from the Ministry of Defense attended a debut course on Rules of Engagement in collaboration with Kuwait Military Justice Authority.



665 representatives from judicial, legal, diplomatic, academic, media, health-care & humanitarian sectors attended **15** IHL trainings conducted in 5 GCC countries.

Over the past year, the ICRC organized or participated in regional forums and high-level meetings on IHL. These included the Regional Symposium on the Role of the National Judge in the Implementation and Promotion in Bahrain, an IHL webinar about the criminal responsibility for environmental crimes during armed conflicts, and multiple IHL trainings with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait National Commission of IHL and the Ministry of Defense of Kuwait and Qatar. The ICRC also delivered four sessions to NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative during its Civil Military Cooperation course, with participants from the Gulf countries, and the NATO Joint Forces Command in Naples.



A course on the "Rules of Engagement" was conducted for the first time by ICRC for the Kuwait Ministry of Defence, in collaboration with the Kuwait Military Justice Authority.

Local Engagement: Collaboration with Red Crescent Societies/Authorities

Globally the ICRC works with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to ensure a concerted, efficient and rapid response to conflict or violence. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest humanitarian network in the world.



390 participants from National Societies joined activities related to International Humanitarian Law.



300 new volunteers benefitted from ICRC's volunteer integration programme to learn about humanitarian operations in places of conflict.



40 participants from National Societies attended a Workshop on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiations.



34 staff from National Societies in Bahrain & the UAE completed a First Aid training.



35 participants from National Societies participated in a communications workshop to enhance visibility and reporting on humanitarian crises.

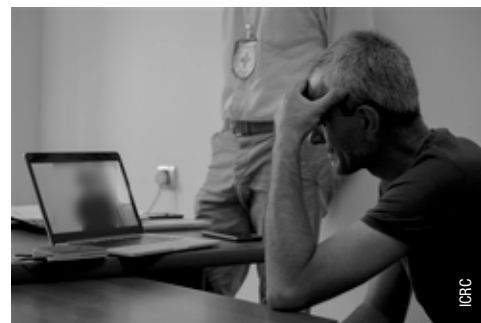


46 staff from National Societies in Bahrain & Kuwait received training on decision-making, teamwork & problem-solving processes in the humanitarian context.

In 2021, the ICRC and National Societies expanded collaboration through exchanges on humanitarian diplomacy and policy, as well as a series of technical trainings on humanitarian-related programming. Initiatives were undertaken to support conflict-affected populations in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, as well as Afghanistan refugees in Qatar. The ICRC and National Societies in the region remain focused on complementary action from a local to international level, in order to achieve effective humanitarian action.

Restoring Contact between Family Members and the Missing Persons File

Every year, armed conflicts or other situations of violence, natural disasters and migration separate countless families. People suffer terribly when they lose contact with their loved ones and do not know where they are or whether they are safe. It is a tragedy for families when persons remain unaccounted for. As long as they are not located, sought persons are considered missing. When missing persons are neither confirmed as being alive nor dead, families must learn to cope with this uncertainty and are also often faced with pressing humanitarian needs. For more than 150 years, The ICRC has undertaken a wide range of activities to help reconnect separated families and address the issue of missing persons.



73 Tracing requests from missing persons resolved.



141 Red Cross Messages Exchanged.



92 Phone and video calls facilitated between Guantanamo detainees and their family members in the Gulf region.



21 emergency travel documents issued to support family reunification.

In 2021, the ICRC arranged video calls between people in the region and their relatives detained at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. The Saudi Red Crescent Authority was a key partner for the ICRC, conducting 19 video calls with families inside Saudi Arabia out of 92. Related to the Restoring Family Links (RFL) file, the Kuwait and Qatar Red Crescent Societies incorporated RFL activities into their national emergency response plans. The Emirates and Saudi Red Crescent co-organized 3 workshops on RFL together with the ICRC, in the aim of expanding awareness and technical knowledge on the programme.

The ICRC has been following the humanitarian situation of Afghan civilians evacuated to Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE in close coordination with the respective national societies. The main priority was to assess the evacuated Afghan civilians' needs to connect with their family members and prevent, as early as possible, the separation of family members and/or cases of missing persons. With support from the ICRC, the Afghan civilians in camp Al-Sayliyah in Doha were able to connect with their families. The ICRC has also provided technical support for a team of staff and volunteers from the Qatar Red Crescent Society working on restoring family links. Find out more: [Restoring Family Links - Home \(icrc.org\)](https://www.icrc.org)

Emergency Travel Documents

In December, 20 family members hosted in the Humanitarian Village in Abu Dhabi were finally reunified with their children staying at the Camp Al Sayliyah in Doha, thanks to the issuance of 20 ICRC Emergency Travel Documents and the close collaboration between the ICRC, the authorities in Qatar and the UAE, the US Embassy, the US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Missing Persons

Following the end of the 1990–91 Gulf War, the ICRC, Iraq, Kuwait and Coalition members – Saudi Arabia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States – established the Tripartite Commission to search for missing persons. Today, the Commission and its Technical Sub-Committee with United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq serving as an observer and the ICRC as chair, aims to ascertain the fate of missing persons in connection with the war and provide answers to families. In the intervening 31 years, the Tripartite Commission officially closed 60 missing cases and repatriated two human remains from Kuwait to Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In 2021 the ICRC and the Tripartite Commission achieved the following:



Iraq receives remains of missing persons found in Kuwait.



60 missing cases closed by the Tripartite Committee.



2 human remains repatriated from Kuwait to Iraq and Saudi Arabia.



5 Technical Sub Committee and **3** Tripartite Committee meetings conducted.

At the 52nd meeting of the Tripartite Commission in December, it was announced that 30 cases of missing persons and Prisoners of War were formally closed. The remains were found at a burial site in the desert of Al Muthanna Governorate (Samawa) between March 2019 and January 2020. The thirty cases were officially closed based on DNA analyses conducted at Kuwait Department of Forensic Evidence, and are a result of joint efforts between the Ministries of Defense and Health of Iraq, Kuwait and the ICRC.

Visiting Places of Detention

The ICRC aims to secure humane treatment and conditions of detention for all detainees, regardless of the reasons for their arrest and detention. We also seek to alleviate the suffering of their families, particularly by restoring communication between detainees and their relatives.



3 detention facilities holding **6652** detainees visited in **2** countries.



41 detainees visited and individually monitored.



5 detainees notified to their respective embassies for counseling and support.



2 attestations of detention issued to fulfill legal and other requirements.

In 2021, the ICRC teams conducted seven detention visits in Bahrain and Kuwait, in accordance with standard procedures, to monitor the treatment and living conditions of inmates. Findings were communicated confidentially to the authorities concerned.

In the framework of its cooperation with health and detaining authorities in the Gulf region, the ICRC Regional Delegation also arranged its first webinar on COVID-19 Management in Prisons. 17 senior officials representing detention and health authorities in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar attended the virtual meeting. Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar presented their COVID-19 preparedness and response plans, the epidemiology of the disease in their prisons, the challenges they faced, and the lessons learned.

Raising Awareness on Humanitarian Issues

In 2021, the ICRC broadened awareness on some of the most pressing humanitarian issues worldwide by engaging with traditional and online media across the Gulf region. The ICRC engaged with leading newspapers in Kuwait including Al-Rai, Annahar and gave more than 11 interviews to media outlets such as Kuwait TV. The ICRC received 571 positive mentions or coverage in local media outlets in the Gulf, highlighting ICRC activities with strategic partners. In Qatar, the ICRC worked closely with the pan-Arab media outlet Al-Jazeera. Cumulatively in the region, throughout 2021 the ICRC conducted more than 52 interviews and reports on humanitarian crises, including Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia.



Interview for Fabrizio Carboni, ICRC Regional Director for Near and Middle East on AlJazeera.

Salalah Logistics Hub

The ICRC Logistics Hub in Salalah, Oman, was established in May 2015 to support and alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The geographic location of Oman at the center of global shipping routes makes Salalah a natural logistical hub for the circulation of products between East and West. From late 2017 onwards, and due to the unprecedented upsurge in humanitarian emergencies in Yemen, the Salalah logistics hub shifted from being a transiting point and started mobilizing humanitarian assistance to Aden and Sanaa governorates by road. Today, the Salalah logistics hub is considered one of the most reliable transshipping pipelines in the region with expanded joint logistics operations supporting Yemen, Horn of Africa and beyond. The operational activities carried out and facilitated by the ICRC at Salalah logistics hub help mitigate the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and its reverberating consequences on millions of Yemenis across the country.



2,215 metric tons valued over CHF **1.73** million of humanitarian items delivered to Yemen.



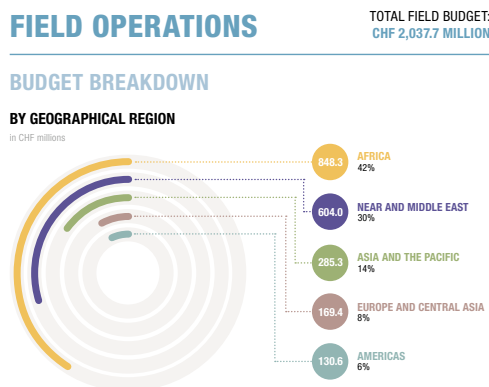
2044 metric tons of food items delivered to Yemen.



171 metric tons of essential household items delivered to Yemen.

Global and Regional Financial Overview

During 2021, the ICRC has [appealed for 2.3 billion](#) Swiss francs for its activities in favour of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence around the world.





Wish to Support ICRC Efforts in the GCC and around the World?

The ICRC is a sign of hope to those whose lives have been shattered by war. The ICRC Regional Delegation has a dedicated resource mobilization team which would be happy to hear from you if you wish to support the ICRC's work. You can support us through a onetime donation or by becoming a friend of the ICRC. Friends bring together those who are committed to helping the ICRC find new ways to help victims of armed conflict. You may wish to partner with us. We work with businesses, governments, and philanthropic organizations to support the needs of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.

Please support us today by contacting us at kow_ koweitcity@icrc.org or visiting us online at <https://www.icrc.org/en/support-us>

The ICRC helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything it can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. The organization also seeks to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.

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