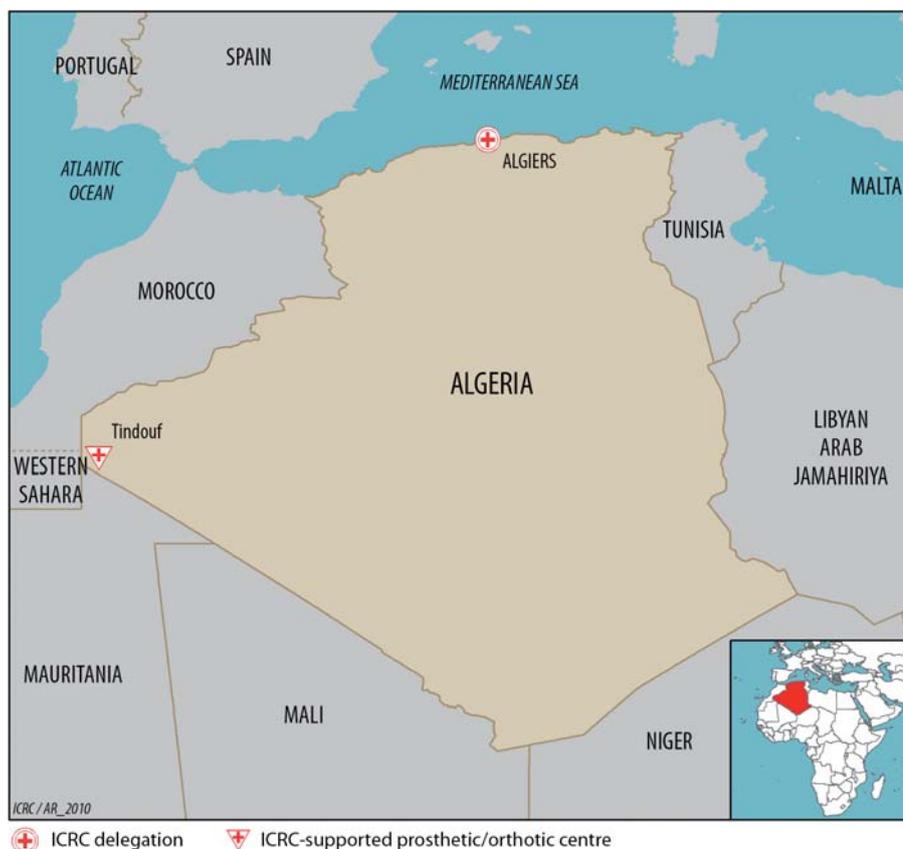


# ALGERIA



## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	1,099
Assistance	-
Prevention	517
Cooperation with National Societies	173
General	-

▶ **1,790**

of which: Overheads 109

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	82%
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## PERSONNEL

Expatriates	5
National staff (daily workers not included)	8

## KEY POINTS

In 2010, the ICRC:

- ▶ shared with the detaining authorities its findings and recommendations following 71 visits to persons deprived of their freedom in prisons, police stations and *gendarmeries*
- ▶ submitted summary reports to the authorities covering key issues related to detainees' treatment and living conditions identified during its visits to prisons (2007–09) and police stations/*gendarmeries* (2008–10)
- ▶ with the National Society, enabled families to exchange news with relatives detained/interned abroad by means of RCMs as well as 18 telephone/videoconference calls
- ▶ enabled 86 foreign nationals detained in Algeria to contact their families or notify their consular representatives of their whereabouts
- ▶ provided 60 army officers, 25 trainee and 27 practising magistrates, 200 parliamentarians and 40 journalists with IHL training

The ICRC has been working in Algeria, with some interruptions, since the 1954–62 Algerian war of independence. It carries out visits to people held in places of detention run by the Ministry of Justice and to people remanded in custody in police stations and *gendarmeries*. The ICRC also works to promote IHL among Algerian civil society, the authorities and the armed forces. The ICRC supports the Algerian Red Crescent's reform process and tracing activities.

## CONTEXT

Localized clashes between national security forces and armed groups persisted throughout the year, particularly east of Algiers, leaving hundreds of people dead or wounded and triggering multiple arrests. Scores of civilians were reportedly among the casualties, mainly the victims of roadside bomb attacks attributed to armed groups.

The government stepped up its efforts to combat criminal activity and eradicate violent armed groups in the Sahel region. In order to develop a common strategy to address these issues, it convened a meeting of regional peers, leading to the establishment of a regional intelligence cell and a joint operational base in the southern city of Tamanrasset.

There were reports in the press that key members of the self-styled Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb, formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, had turned themselves in to the authorities.

Against a backdrop of ongoing social unrest linked to high levels of unemployment and poverty and political sensitivity regarding future electoral processes, the government adopted a five-year plan aimed at boosting the economy and improving public infrastructure.

According to official figures, around 55,000 detainees were being held in 127 prisons across the country. To alleviate overcrowding, the government took steps to implement alternatives to imprisonment while embarking on the construction of new detention facilities.

Algeria continued to serve as a point of departure or transit for irregular migrants seeking entry into Europe, including many sub-Saharan Africans as well as Algerian nationals. Unable to reach their destinations owing to tighter entry restrictions and border controls, many faced arrest or deportation.

### MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

#### PROTECTION

CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)			
Red Cross messages (RCMs)	Total	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected	103		
RCMs distributed	76		
Phone calls facilitated between family members	18		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)			
ICRC visits	Total	Women	Minors
Detainees visited	25,655		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	69	2	
Detainees newly registered	9		
Number of visits carried out	71		
Number of places of detention visited	70		
Restoring family links			
	Total		
RCMs collected	1		
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	28		

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

In 2010, the ICRC maintained its focus on visiting detainees in Algeria to monitor their treatment and living conditions. Dialogue with the authorities, particularly within the Justice Ministry, was further developed based on the findings of such visits. In parallel, the ICRC reinforced its cooperation with the national IHL committee, military training institutions and civil society actors to foster widespread understanding of humanitarian principles and the Movement.

Delegates visited detainees in prisons and other facilities country-wide, sharing findings and recommendations confidentially with the authorities. Over the year, the ICRC also submitted two summary reports to the authorities, drawing their attention to key issues identified during its visits over a two- to three-year period. The first, submitted in February, focused on the welfare of detainees in prisons. The second, regarding the welfare of people held temporarily in police stations or *gendarmeries*, was submitted

in September. The reports laid the groundwork for constructive discussions with the Justice Ministry and the penitentiary administration, with the ICRC offering expert input to support them in improving detainees' physical and psychological well-being in the context of wider penal and penitentiary reforms. Such dialogue contributed to new government directives aimed at reducing overcrowding in prisons and introducing confidential medical consultations for persons held in temporary detention. A procedure was developed to notify families more systematically of a relative's detention. The Defence and Interior Ministries were formally invited to engage in a similar dialogue regarding detainees under their jurisdictions. Meanwhile, the ICRC pursued efforts to gather information about and gain access to detainees held by Algeria's intelligence and security services.

Following visits to foreign nationals awaiting deportation in Algerian retention centres, the ICRC submitted a note to the authorities to initiate a dialogue with them on the welfare of such people.

With ongoing ICRC back-up and encouragement, the Algerian Red Crescent provided Algerians with the opportunity to exchange news through its tracing and RCM services with family members detained/interned abroad or living in conflict-affected countries. Some detainees enjoyed the first direct contact with their families in 10 years.

Together with the authorities, the ICRC helped build the capacities of Algerian officials and structures to implement IHL independently in due course. To accelerate the incorporation of IHL into national legislation, it trained national IHL committee members, parliamentarians and magistrates in their role in supporting the process. To strengthen the integration of IHL into military training, the ICRC consolidated its working relationship with the Defence Ministry's training department, particularly by helping it enhance the quality of IHL instruction at the Cherchell Military Academy.

Meanwhile, efforts continued to build public awareness of and support for IHL and the Movement, notably by developing existing relationships with influential contacts in the media and religious and academic circles through seminars and discussion groups. Such activities gave rise to numerous articles in the press highlighting humanitarian issues and ICRC activities.

## CIVILIANS

Families in Algeria were able to exchange news with relatives detained/interned in the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba or in countries such as Iraq and Lebanon, and visited by ICRC delegates, through telephone and RCM services facilitated by the Algerian Red Crescent. Such services were also made available to Algerians with relatives living in conflict-affected countries where communications were limited, and to former detainees/internees in efforts to ensure their welfare upon release. Families had the opportunity to see and speak to relatives currently held in the Guantanamo Bay internment facility via videoconference calls organized by the National Society in cooperation with the ICRC. For some, this was their first direct contact in over 10 years.

The Algerian Red Crescent continued to work with the ICRC on enhancing and expanding its family-links services, although at a slower pace than anticipated owing to internal reorganization (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*). Through contacts with foreign communities resident in Algeria and with national and international actors working in the field of migration, the ICRC gained a better understanding of the challenges facing migrants, enabling it to apprise relevant actors of the Movement's family-links services at their disposal.

Within the framework of the 2005 Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, the Algerian authorities proceeded with the financial compensation of the families of persons unaccounted for from the internal strife of the 1990s. In this respect, they were reminded of the ICRC's readiness to share its experience in responding to the needs of such families.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detainees held in prisons under the authority of the Justice Ministry and in police/*gendarmerie* custody received visits from the ICRC, according to its standard procedures, to monitor their treatment and living conditions and respect for their judicial guarantees. Five weeks' notice of any such visits was required by the authorities.

Foreign nationals, including those detained after being refused entry to Algeria, were the focus of special attention given the particular risk of their becoming isolated. Through delegates, 86 of them informed their families or consular representatives of their situation.

Following visits, delegates shared their findings and recommendations, in confidence, with the authorities. A summary report submitted in February, covering key issues identified during visits to prisons between 2007 and 2009, served as a basis for discussions aimed at supporting the authorities in making lasting improvements to detainees' conditions. At a round-table convened to spearhead these efforts, the Justice Ministry, the prison service and the ICRC discussed the report findings and reviewed progress made towards implementing planned penal and penitentiary reforms. In particular, they examined issues relating to overcrowding and to disciplinary procedures in prisons with a view to preserving detainees' physical and psychological well-being.

A second summary report, submitted in September to the Foreign Affairs Ministry for distribution to the relevant authorities, focused on the welfare of people in police/*gendarmerie* custody, based on ICRC visits to such detainees between 2008 and 2010. The report aimed to support the development of a sustained dialogue between the relevant ministries and the ICRC, including on ways to ensure systematic adherence to complaints and investigation procedures provided for in the Criminal Procedure Act, with a view to reinforcing existing regulations designed to preserve inmates' legal rights. The authorities' response had not been received by year-end.

Visits to foreign nationals awaiting deportation in Algerian retention centres, complemented by information collected by the Mali Red Cross during contacts with migrants on the Algeria-Mali border (see *Niamey*), contributed to a greater understanding of their needs and the terms of their return to their countries of origin. The ICRC's initial observations from these visits regarding the material conditions of persons awaiting deportation aimed to give impetus to a discussion with the authorities on their welfare.

The ICRC pursued its efforts to seek information about and gain access to people detained by Algeria's intelligence and security services.

### Authorities take steps to improve detainees' conditions

Detainees in prisons, numbering around 55,000 across 127 facilities, continued to suffer the repercussions of severe overcrowding. While progressing with the construction of new prisons, the authorities also took more immediate steps to alleviate the problem in coordination with the ICRC and other international bodies. These included making use of new legislation permitting the use of alternatives to

imprisonment when handing down sentences for minor offences and facilitating the partial or conditional release of detainees where appropriate. At local level, prison directors benefited from ICRC advice on implementing short-term measures to improve conditions in facilities under their management, such as enhanced aeration, better access to natural light and improved hygiene.

As part of efforts to raise prison health care standards, 60 prison health personnel attended a refresher seminar organized by the penitentiary administration, with ICRC participation. Training focused on the diagnosis and treatment of common health problems in prisons to pave the way for dialogue on medical ethics. After being briefed on the ICRC's detention-related activities, participants welcomed the prospect of closer cooperation.

Following discussions with the ICRC on how to improve the treatment of people held in police stations and *gendarmeries*, the Justice Ministry issued an instruction providing for these detainees to have a private medical consultation prior to their release. Relevant authorities were also reminded of the importance of allowing detainees to contact their relatives immediately after their arrest, resulting in more systematic notification of families.

## AUTHORITIES

National and international authorities, diplomats and the ICRC maintained regular contact, exchanging information regarding Movement activities and mutual concerns such as penitentiary reform, irregular migration and regional insecurity.

Together with the ICRC, the Algerian authorities carried out activities to build the capacities of relevant officials and structures to incorporate IHL into national legislation. National IHL committee representatives shared their experiences with peers at an ICRC meeting of IHL experts in Beirut (see *Lebanon*) and attended regional courses, thereby acquiring the skills to pass on their knowledge to colleagues. Alongside some 200 parliamentarians, committee members also learnt about their role in supporting IHL implementation, and discussed the legal protection of the red cross and red crescent emblems at a study day organized by the People's National Assembly, the Commission for Foreign Affairs and the ICRC. Based on positive feedback, the People's National Assembly suggested collaborating with the ICRC on future events.

Twenty-seven practising magistrates enhanced their IHL expertise at one of a series of seminars planned by the Algerian Magistrates' School and the ICRC aimed at creating a future pool of specialists able to teach IHL independently.

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

IHL having been formally integrated into the curricula of military training establishments countrywide, the Defence Ministry and the ICRC worked together to support such facilities, particularly the Cherchell Military Academy, to reinforce military instructors'

capacities to teach IHL systematically and effectively to all sectors of the armed forces. To strengthen teaching resources, the ministry's training unit was supplied with IHL reference books.

Sixty IHL instructors enhanced their teaching techniques at a train-the-trainer course organized by the Cherchell Military Academy and the ICRC. Participants also learnt about the ICRC's support to the Algerian authorities in ensuring detainees' welfare. With ICRC sponsorship, one high-level officer further advanced his skills at the fourth Senior Workshop on International Rules governing Military Operations in Lucerne, Switzerland (see *International Law and Cooperation*). To enhance their awareness of humanitarian principles, some 300 cadets at the Academy attended an introductory briefing by the ICRC on IHL and the Movement.

Following changes within the Interior Ministry hierarchy, a similar briefing planned for police, *gendarmes* and security service officers was postponed with a view to combining it with a training exercise in 2011.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Existing ICRC contacts with the media, NGOs and academic and religious circles were strengthened, helping build support for the Movement among a broad cross-section of society.

To enhance reporting on humanitarian issues, one journalist received sponsorship to attend an IHL seminar abroad, while 40 others deepened their understanding of IHL and the Movement's neutral, impartial and independent role at a seminar co-organized by the ICRC and El Djazair News. This event, which prompted an animated debate about journalists' responsibilities during armed conflict, generated several articles in the press on ICRC activities. El Djazair News also published ICRC press releases weekly, while the ICRC's Arabic-language quarterly *Al-Insani* featured articles highlighting the links between IHL and Islamic law. One such contribution was commissioned from the president of the High Islamic Council. To focus resources on these activities, plans to broadcast radio spots were put on hold.

An influential Muslim Sufi order invited the ICRC to address its members for the second time, allowing more in-depth discussion of IHL-related issues and ICRC operations. Local NGOs also maintained dialogue with delegates, including on the humanitarian consequences of irregular migration.

Within the framework of the ICRC's ongoing partnership with the Algerian Magistrates' School, 25 trainee magistrates attending the third seminar of its kind learnt about the protection afforded to detainees under IHL. Magistrates previously trained by the ICRC contributed to the event.

Lecturers and students at the 14 Algerian law faculties teaching IHL received ICRC reference materials to support their work; many also made use of the delegation's research library. Three lecturers ben-

efited from sponsorship to join national IHL committee members at an IHL event abroad. To encourage further institutions to introduce IHL in their curricula, the dean of Algiers's Islamic Sciences faculty and the ICRC agreed to co-host a seminar in 2011 to promote the topic among law faculties countrywide; this was postponed from 2010 to facilitate maximum participation.

## **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

The Algerian Red Crescent remained in a transition phase in anticipation of major management and structural changes. With the International Federation, the ICRC stood ready to support the National Society's efforts to regularize its governance, legal base and operational structures in line with the Movement's Fundamental Principles and the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures, and to facilitate its participation in statutory Movement meetings.

National Society personnel strengthened their capacities to restore family links (see *Civilians*), growing in confidence with the help of ICRC expertise and encouragement. In particular, family-links coordinators worked with delegates to advance progress on unresolved cases, refining record-keeping procedures to facilitate follow-up and drawing up action plans to guide field missions.