



armed conflict and
FAMILY LINKS



ICRC

| The situation |

Families split up, children alone with no one to look after them, parents who are imprisoned or dead or whose fate is unknown – these are some of the consequences of armed conflict, internal unrest and violence. And the suffering is much greater when communications break down.

Faced with the distress of these families, for more than a century the ICRC has been giving them new hope through its thousands of staff based in conflict areas and at headquarters in Geneva, and also through the tracing services of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.





Jean-Patrick Di Silvestro/ICRC

| The needs |

- To restore and maintain contact between family members
- To reunite families
- To ascertain the whereabouts of detainees and find out what has happened to missing persons



Sandor Horvath/ICRC



| The methods |

- Establishing a Red Cross/Red Crescent communication network that enables people to restore contact and correspond with their families via Red Cross messages, cell/satellite phones, radio broadcasts, and the family links website on the Internet
- Collecting information on people affected by armed conflict and internal violence, such as separated children and detainees, in order to let their families know what has become of them
- Making every effort to trace people who are unaccounted for, or whose families have no news of them
- Acting as a neutral intermediary between families and warring parties in order to find out what happened to people reported missing
- Organizing, coordinating or facilitating the reunification of families across front lines and national borders
- Issuing ICRC travel documents for people who no longer have identity papers as a result of armed conflict



| The results |

Afghanistan

Between 2001 and 2003, over 22,000 Red Cross messages were exchanged between civilians, enabling them to restore and maintain contact with relatives. In addition, over 35,000 messages were exchanged between people deprived of their freedom and their families.

Angola

Since May 2002, over 190,000 Red Cross messages have been exchanged between family members, enabling them to restore contact after the long civil war. Over 10,000 names of people sought by their families can be found on the ICRC's family links website and in a book widely distributed both within and outside the country.

Over 1,500 children separated from their families have been registered, and over 600 of them have already been reunited with relatives.

Iraq

Since March 2003, over 31,000 Red Cross messages have been exchanged, 11,000 of which were written by people deprived of their freedom. In addition, over 30,000 satellite telephone calls have been made to 76 destinations worldwide. Nearly 8,000 names of people sought by their families or seeking their relatives can be found on the ICRC's family links website.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Between 1998 and 2003, over 1,338,000 Red Cross messages were exchanged between civilians enabling thousands of them to restore and maintain contact. Over 6,000 children separated from their families were registered, and over 4,400 of them were reunited with relatives.



All persons (...) shall be enabled to give news of a strictly personal nature to members of their families, wherever they may be, and to receive news from them.

(Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, Article 25)

The High Contracting Parties and the Parties to the conflict shall facilitate in every possible way the reunion of families dispersed as a result of armed conflicts (...).

(Protocol I of 1977, Article 74)



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