

## International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Annual Report

Millions of people affected by armed conflict have become more vulnerable because of the combined effects of war, natural disasters and continued high food prices. The report shows that ICRC spending hit an all-time high in 2008, rising to over 1 billion Swiss francs. Africa accounted for 47% of field expenditure, while 20% went to the Middle East. The increase in expenditure is due to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in many countries, such as Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Pakistan, but it also reflects improved ICRC access to people affected by wars. "2008 clearly showed that the ICRC's neutral and independent humanitarian action does bring significant benefits for victims of armed conflicts," said Mr Kellenberger, ICRC President. "It allows the ICRC to have access to and help people in places others often can't reach. Notable examples include Iraq, the Sahel region, Somalia and Georgia." The ICRC President deplored the fact that in 2008 untold numbers of civilians continued to suffer either because they were deliberately targeted or because conflict parties failed to distinguish sufficiently between civilians and civilian objects on the one hand, and combatants and military objectives on the other: "Much of this suffering could have been avoided if conflict parties had improved their compliance with international humanitarian law." Looking ahead, the ICRC President said it was hard to predict the exact impact of the global economic crisis on people already made vulnerable by war. However, he expressed concern that the increase in the number of people living in extreme poverty, rising unemployment worldwide and a significant drop in remittances from migrant workers to their families in conflict areas could have a particularly severe effect on the poorest victims of armed conflicts. Mr Kellenberger said the organization had the capacity to step up its humanitarian activities if required. Last year, the ICRC distributed over 121,000 tonnes of food, more than twice as much as in 2007, with the number of people receiving food aid rising from 2.52 million in 2007 to 2.79 million. Seventy-two per cent of these were internally displaced persons (IDPs), a six per cent increase over 2007. The ICRC's water, sanitation and construction projects benefited more than 15 million people, while

health facilities supported by the organization treated nearly 3.5 million patients. The ICRC visited almost half a million detainees in 83 countries and handled over 667,000 Red Cross messages, including 218,000 exchanged between detainees and their families.

The Report:

[http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/section\\_annual\\_report\\_2008](http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/section_annual_report_2008)

Basic Information:

<http://www.icrc.org/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Cross)

