

THE RESULTS

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Between 2010 and 2014, the ICRC and the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo collected and distributed more than 420,000 Red Cross messages, enabling people to receive news of their relatives, and they reunited 6,438 children with their parents.

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan the ICRC helps detainees keep in touch with their families. Between 2005 and 2014 it collected and delivered over 106,000 Red Cross messages from and to people detained by the Afghan armed forces and various armed groups.

Mali

In Mali, in 2014 the ICRC helped restore contact between family members through close to 4,000 phone calls and more than 1,000 Red Cross messages. Over 100 people sought by their relatives were located, and 22 children separated from their families were reunited with their parents.

Israel and the occupied territories

Between 2013 and 2014, through the ICRC's family visits programme, Palestinian detainees held by Israel received over 108,000 visits from their relatives living in the occupied territories of Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

Somalia

In Somalia, where the ICRC works with the BBC World Service, 71,000 names of missing people have been broadcast since 2005. The ICRC has also published 115,000 names on the website familylinks.icrc.org.

Mexico and Central America

National Red Cross Societies and the ICRC provide aid, including medical care, for migrants at different points along the migratory trail. Between January and August 2014 more than 11,000 migrants were helped to get back in touch with their families using phones provided by the Red Cross.

THE RESPONSE

Every year and in over 65 countries, the ICRC:

- forwards hundreds of thousands of Red Cross messages;
- ascertains the whereabouts of tens of thousands of prisoners and whenever needed, assists them in keeping in touch with their families;
- makes official enquiries on behalf of families trying to trace missing relatives;
- lets thousands of families know what has become of their relatives;
- reunites thousands of families, with particular focus on children; and
- issues thousands of ICRC travel documents to enable people without identity papers to reach host countries.



RESTORING LINKS BETWEEN DISPERSED FAMILY MEMBERS



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THE SITUATION

Armed conflict, other situations of violence and disasters leave more than physical wounds: in the turmoil, panic and terror, family members can be separated in minutes, sometimes leading to long years of anguish and uncertainty about the fate of children, spouses or parents. Migration may also lead to separation and loss of contact between family members.

Trying to locate people and put them back into contact with their relatives is a major challenge for the ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world. The work includes tracing people, exchanging family messages, reuniting families and seeking to clarify the fate of those who remain missing.

THE NEEDS

- To get back in touch with family members, be it through telephone, the Internet or written messages
- To be reunited with family members
- To receive clarification about the fate of a missing relative
- To receive support and understanding while coping with the disappearance of a relative



Mathias Depardon/Getty Images/ICRC

THE METHODS

- Putting people in contact by phone and through the Family Links Website (familylinks.icrc.org), radio broadcasts and hand-written messages
- Tracing individuals, including vulnerable groups such as children and detainees, in order to assist them and let their families know where they are
- Registering and keeping track of vulnerable individuals to prevent their disappearance and to inform their families of their whereabouts
- Reuniting and, sometimes, repatriating families
- Acting as a neutral intermediary between families and warring parties in order to find out what happened to persons reported missing
- Ensuring that the needs of missing persons' families are adequately met
- Collecting, managing and forwarding information on the dead