

## BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

## HIGHLIGHTS

2022



I.Kapetanovic/ ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, doing everything it can to protect their dignity and relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. We also seek to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.

The ICRC has been present in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the beginning of the conflict in 1992. During the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the ICRC visited over 54,000 detainees in 520 places, exchanged 18 million Red Cross messages, reunited over 4,500 families, distributed over 100,000 tons of food, regularly supplied over 1,000 hospitals with emergency medical supplies and held seminars on international humanitarian law for thousands of soldiers. Most activities were conducted in close collaboration with the local Red Cross.

In 2022, the ICRC marked 30 years of its work in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The exhibition "30 Years Dedicated to Humanity" in Sarajevo and Tuzla highlighted the most significant ICRC activities and programs carried out in the country.

Today, the ICRC supports BiH citizens in their efforts to recover from the consequences of the conflict, particularly in relation to missing persons and mine threats.

## KEY CONCERNS OF THE ICRC

**7.611\*** people are still unaccounted for from the conflict.

Over **40 family** associations are in need of strengthening their psychosocial support and other capacities.

More than **27.000** migrants entered Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2022, with an estimated **1.300** remaining in the country.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance from the conflict endanger **1.369** communities across the country.

**132.000** people (**4%** of the total population) are directly affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance.

**The Red Cross** Society of Bosnia-Herzegovina needs more sustainable support from public funds and the authorities.

The ICRC works to strengthen the capacities of the Red Cross Society of Bosnia-Herzegovina to respond to the current needs in the country. We also support the authorities in implementing international humanitarian law (IHL) in domestic legislation.

\*According to the Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia-Herzegovina (MPI) upon the verification of its Central Records of the Missing in 2022. A total of 6,274 persons from this list were reported as missing to the ICRC. For the purposes of this brochure, we will use the official MPI figures.



More than 4,900 relatives of missing persons benefited from psychosocial support projects and educational workshops, supported by the ICRC in 2022.

## FAMILIES HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW

*“Since 1995, when my son disappeared, I have lived in the hope that the door would open and he would walk in.” - mother of the missing person, 2022.*

### Enhancing FA and MPI’s capacities

Families of the missing in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been living in uncertainty for 30 years, not knowing what happened to their loved ones.

The protracted ongoing search for missing persons and the need of their families for support is exhausting the capacities of the Associations of Families of Missing Persons (FA) and is tiring to BiH Missing Persons Institute (MPI) staff working on the search

The ICRC responded to these needs through its psychosocial support (PSS) program and active cooperation with local psychologists and psychotherapists, providing both partners with much-needed education, therapy, and training.

In an effort to enable them to maintain and further develop their capacities and resilience, **since 2018 the ICRC organized five tailored PSS workshops** for each partner. The series of workshops concluded in 2022, with one held **for 31 members of FAs** representing different ethnic groups in BiH, and the second one for **30 MPI employees**.

While FA representatives strengthened their capacity to accompany families and jointly represent their needs to competent authorities in BiH, the MPI staff learned to cope with their personal and professional challenges when searching for missing

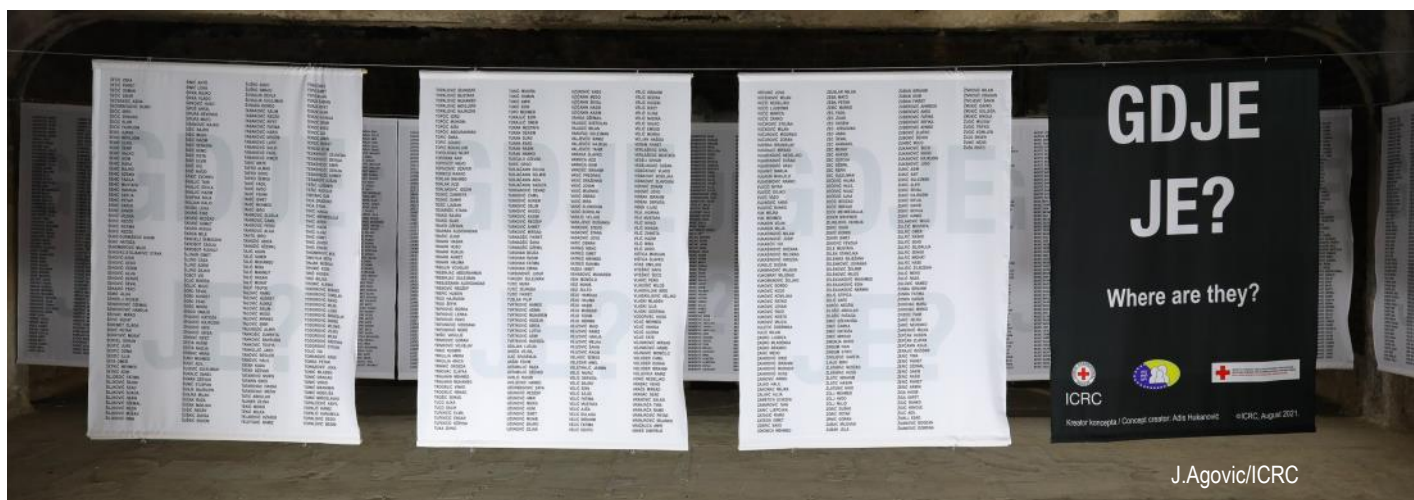
persons and to improve internal team communication. All this has resulted in a much higher quality of cooperation between FAs and MPI which will benefit the families of the missing.

### Support to the PSS and research projects

Since 2018, the ICRC has been systematically supporting FAs in implementing various accompaniments and advocacy activities in their local communities.

In 2022, **close to 4,900 relatives directly benefited from 35 psychosocial support projects** implemented by the FAs and local Red Cross branches. In total, **94 psychosocial and technical support projects** proposed by FAs were funded since 2018, enabling the associations to gather families, inform them about the tracing process, meet the authorities and organize PSS workshops with psychologists, and commemorations, thus increasing their visibility and positioning.

As part of the initiative to explore innovative ways to help families and find missing persons, **in 2022 the ICRC awarded scholarships for three post-graduate research projects** on topics relevant to the tracing process, the rights and the needs of families of the missing. Since 2018, the ICRC awarded **scholarships for 21 post-graduate and two interdisciplinary research projects**.



The ICRC's exhibition "Gdje je?" for the first time displayed the names of over 7,600 people still missing in the conflict in Sarajevo in 2021.

Additionally, **three educational and academic initiatives** have been supported by the ICRC, increasing social workers' and psychologists' knowledge and experience in working with families of the missing. These include support for the marking of the International Day of Social Workers and organizing a round table on ambiguous loss at the Congress of Psychologists of BiH.

### International Day of the Disappeared

*"The greatest obstacle to locating the remaining number of missing is a lack of information about gravesites"* – was the message sent from the main event, which marked the International Day of the Disappeared in 2022.

The ICRC marked International Day of the Disappeared by supporting and participating in a joint commemoration organized in Banja Luka by the Advisory Board of the Missing Persons Institute BiH. Participants wearing "Gdje je?" (Where are they?) visuals walked through the

city's main street to the central square, where the official part of the commemoration was held. On the main square the ICRC's exhibition "Gdje je?" was displayed — honouring more than 7,600 people who are still missing from the conflict.

All speakers conveyed a unifying message: *„Families have a right to know what happened to their loved ones, and anyone who knows where the missing are, should come forward and contact the appropriate authorities.“*

Families of missing persons from various ethnic backgrounds came together once more to commemorate the International Day of the Disappeared, this time in Banja Luka after the previous one was marked in Mostar.

In addition to the event in Banja Luka, the day was marked in more than **30 communities by family associations and local Red Cross organizations** using ICRC materials and key messages.

For the second time since the end of the conflict in BiH, families from all ethnic backgrounds organized a joint marking of the International Day of the Disappeared.





M.Matovic/ICRC

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the ICRC and the Ministry of Defense of BiH allows the ICRC to access the military records of the armies that took part in the 1992–1995 conflict.

## ICRC SUPPORT TO THE TRACING PROCESS

### Search for undiscovered gravesites

One of the major focuses of ICRC's work in 2022 was searching for new information about the whereabouts of people who have gone missing as a result of the conflict.

As a neutral and independent organization, the ICRC has access to many international archives and searches through them for new information about the potential mass and individual gravesites.

The archive of the International Residual Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) in The Hague is the largest one. In 2022, ICRC experts searched through the IRMCT archives based on names of **947 missing persons** from Bosnia-Herzegovina, collecting thousands of documents. Furthermore, the ICRC obtained, through direct access, documents from the UN archives in New York and the UNHCR in Geneva.

In 2022, the ICRC collected more than **60,000 pages of documents** bringing the total amount collected to more than **115,000 pages since 2018**. Relevant documentation, along with analytical and

summary reports, was transmitted to the Missing Persons Institute (MPI) for potential further action.

The ICRC continues to support MPI with the interpretation of the received documents and their subsequent use.

### Access to the domestic archives

The importance of access to domestic archives in the search for information that might help clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons has been constantly highlighted by their families.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the **BiH Ministry of Defense** signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2022, allowing the ICRC to search for relevant information in the military archives created by former armies that participated in the country's conflict in 1992–1995.

The Ministry of Defense is the **first institution in the Western Balkans** that has granted the ICRC direct access to military archives. With the agreement signed, procedures and modalities were defined for

ICRC researchers to access the archive depots of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Croatian Defense Council, and the Army of Republika Srpska that are held by the Ministry. The search in the archives is set to begin in 2023.

### Forensics

Throughout 2022, the ICRC continued to work on the improvement of forensic capacities, as well as on ensuring dignified treatment and management of exhumed human remains in facilities across BiH.

Within those efforts, the ICRC purchased and donated a **portable digital X-Ray machine**, as well as **protective gear** to the **Department of Forensic Medicine at the Medical Faculty of the University of Sarajevo**.

The X-Ray machine can be used during the process of autopsy and identification of a variety of human remains, including persons who went missing due to the conflict in the country and deceased migrants.

In addition, the ICRC purchased and donated **autopsy kits and an oscillating au-**

**topsy saw** to the **Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tuzla**, enhancing their ability to conduct autopsies and investigations, as well as financially supported **six members of the Association of Forensic Medicine in BiH** to attend an advanced course on **Skeletal Pathology and Traumatology** at the Odyssey Field School in Cyprus. It was an opportunity for forensic medicine specialists, particularly those less experienced, to gain additional practical knowledge during a ten-day intensive course.

In 2022, the International Research and Development Centre for Publication presented the **"Young achiever award"** to a forensic practitioner who had previously, on several occasions, received support for her work from the ICRC.

In 2021, the ICRC supported renovation works and equipping of the autopsy room at the Department of Forensic Medicine at the Medical Faculty of the University of Sarajevo, which was the first significant renovation of the facility since it was built in 1945.

The portable X-Ray machine will be used to identify a variety of human remains, including those who have gone missing as a result of the conflict and deceased migrants.



N.Sarajlic/ICRC

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE TRACING PROCESS

*“It is important to us, representatives of the missing person families, to have the best possible communication with the prosecutors, the MPI and the forensic practitioners because we are the ones who need to support the families in their search. I emphasize that we all have the same goal, however, in the field we have different experiences and ways of communication”* – Semina Alekić, Coordination of the Association of Families of the Missing Persons in Bosnia–Herzegovina.

### Communication among actors

One of the priorities of ICRC's work in 2022 was communication between families of the missing and representatives of the institutions involved in the tracing process in Bosnia–Herzegovina.

The ICRC organized **three workshops** gathering **families of the missing, prosecutors and investigators from the BiH Prosecution Office, representatives of the Missing Persons Institute and forensic experts** involved in searching for more than 7,600 people still missing from the country's conflict in order to improve the flow of information and communication.

More than **60 participants** discussed the main barriers to successful communication while exchanging best practices. Participants noted that while missing persons' relatives frequently are not aware of the sophisticated institutional procedures and practices, other actors would benefit from opportunities to increase their understanding of the specific needs of families. The workshop's output will be a set of consolidated guidelines for communi-

cating with the missing person's family, which will be used by prosecutors, investigators and other staff members involved in the process and when interacting with relatives during a search for the missing, their exhumations and identifications.

### Online communication for families of missing

For **25 members of the families** of the missing, the ICRC conducted a “**Communicating with the media**” workshop, that included online communication skills, still a largely unexplored area of communication for the families. The participants learned how to set up a Facebook page, write for online publications, and post on Facebook and overall improved their abilities to successfully communicate not only with the media and journalists but also with members of the associations they represent and the broader public.

Those who expressed eagerness to learn more tips and tricks will be supported to engage with experts in their local communities in 2023.

More than 60 participants attended three ICRC workshops to discuss the main barriers to successful communication during the tracing process.





M.Matovic/ICRC

Through the workshop "Contribution of BiH media to the tracing process," a total of 22 journalists and editors from BiH's daily media learned more about the missing persons' issue.

### Missing persons in media

In 2021, the ICRC started a more active program of cooperation and trainings on missing persons for journalists, in collaboration with the Balkan Investigating Reporting Network (BIRN), which included how to report on these topics.

The program started with a workshop for **17 young journalists** from all over the country, who got the chance to learn from professionals and speak with the relatives of the missing. After intensive training and preparations, participants produced **34 stories about missing persons and their families, out of which 21 are included in the booklet "Living with uncertainty."**

In 2022, the ICRC and BIRN continued this collaboration with journalists and editors, focusing on those working in the daily media in Bosnia-Herzegovina, by hosting a workshop titled "**Contribution of BiH media to the Tracing Process.**"

The workshop brought together 22 participants with the goal of improving their skills and increasing their understanding of the issue of missing persons. Additionally, the workshop aimed to emphasize the importance of responsible journalism, based on professional codes and principles, with all the nuances that this type of reporting entails.

Journalists and editors underlined the variety of challenges they face while reporting about missing persons, such as the need to produce content within a short period of time and a lack of finances for travelling that would allow them to speak with family members. The main output of the workshops is a **guidebook/ set of recommendations** for media professionals that report on missing persons, which was developed from analyses, suggestions, and findings made during the workshop.



M.Matovic/ICRC

The "Living with Uncertainty" booklet includes 21 articles authored by 17 young journalists, about missing person's families.



USC Red Cross

Red Cross mobile teams in Una-Sana, Sarajevo and Tuzla cantons carried out 1,568 interventions in 2022.

## RED CROSS HELPS MIGRANTS

Over **27,000 migrants** entered Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2022, looking for a way to a better future in Western Europe. According to official data from the Ministry of Security of BiH, around **1,300** remained in the country at end of 2022. The Red Cross Society of Bosnia-Herzegovina (RCSBiH), supported by its partners from the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as other international organizations, plays a prominent role in humanitarian relief efforts for migrants. a

### Restoring family links (RFL)

Migrations can cause the separation of families, alongside conflict and natural disasters. They can leave many without news about the fate and whereabouts of their relatives for years. Within its RFL program, the ICRC supports Red Cross mobile teams for RFL in the Una-Sana, Sarajevo, and Tuzla cantons to assist people on the move to re-establish lost contacts and stay in touch with their loved ones.

In 2022, the teams interacted with over **2,500 migrants** informing them about Red Cross RFL services and specific tools such as the Trace-the-Face website tailored to the needs of migrants. They helped **1,568** of them to have internet access, charge mobile phones or initiate a tracing of their relatives. The ICRC, in cooperation with RCSBiH, responded to **30 tracing inquiries** in BiH initiated by relatives of missing persons through National Societies abroad.

The ICRC participated in a workshop "RFL, protection, gender equality and inclusion in migration" organized by the RCSBiH for the members of all Red Cross mobile teams in BiH. Participants increased their understanding of the RFL services to migrants and developed a closer working relationship with their colleagues in Red Cross RFL teams.

### International Academic Conference on migrations

The International Academic Conference on Migrations was organized in Sarajevo, in collaboration between the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN), the ICRC, Harvard University and International Burch University.

**Over 100 academic researchers and key actors** dealing with migrations, as well as humanitarian actors, attended the conference, which aimed to map the current situation in the field as well as the scope of scientific knowledge in order to form a sectoral alliance for better migration management. Participants combined academic knowledge and field expertise to







I.Krijestorac/ RCSBiH

Red Cross volunteers learned how to write press releases, create online campaigns and content for social networks.

analyse existing practices and policies and address migration-related challenges in BiH and around the world.

Additionally, the ICRC held consultations with **24 humanitarian actors** involved in BiH's response to increased migrations to discuss the idea of establishing an inter-agency centre of expertise in Sarajevo where various practitioners will exchange experiences and information.

### **MHPSS for Red Cross volunteers/staff**

In 2022, the ICRC, in collaboration with the RCSBiH, held three mental health and psychosocial support workshops for **45 Red Cross volunteers and employees**, as part of its "Help the Helpers" program, which began in 2020.

The workshops provided them with the necessary skills to deal with daily stress and to be more effective in assisting beneficiaries, including migrants. It resulted in the strengthening of the

network of mental health and psychosocial experts within the Red Cross structure, which resulted in the Red Cross conducting four additional workshops for **64 of their volunteers and staff**.

### **Effective communication for effective response**

As a part of efforts to strengthen RCSBiH's communication capacity and help them to position themselves as the auxiliary body to the government in crisis situations, the ICRC organized **online communication training for 25 Red Cross volunteers and staff members**.

Training covered segments such as the writing of press releases for media and public performance, features of digital marketing such as creating online campaigns, monitoring for results and optimization of the content, as well the creation of the content for social networks, such as videos and photos, by using a cell phone.

## **WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

With the support of the ICRC, the RCSBiH organized a summer camp for **40 young people** from all over Bosnia-Herzegovina as a way to further strengthen their capacities and increase unity.

The camp covered a wide range of subjects, including the founding and activities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, its core values, the significance of protecting its symbols, active listening and communication, the promotion of humane values, empathy, and others.

Additionally, the RCSBiH's annual "Think Mines" competition for primary school students, gathered approximately **25,000 children** from across the country in 2022.

Through the competition, students learned how to protect themselves from landmines and other unexploded ordnances.

The high level of interest and the methods used to implement the competition place "Think mines" at the top of the country's educational competitions.

# WORKING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

## First aid for police officers

In order to strengthen the capacities of the country's police forces to respond to increased migrations and provide first aid in *ad hoc* situations, the ICRC supported the Red Cross Society of Bosnia- Herzegovina in providing first-aid training for **564 police officers from Una-Sana Canton** in 2022. This was a continuation of the collaboration between the ICRC, RCSBiH, and police structures that began in 2021 when the RCSBiH provided first-aid training to nearly **1,400 police officers from Sarajevo Canton Ministry of Internal Affairs**.

## Community Policing

In continuation of its cooperation with law enforcement agencies in the country, the ICRC organized the "Community policing" workshop for **20 junior patrol police officers** from the Una-Sana Canton (USC), which was the third workshop of its kind, held in collaboration with USC's Police Administration/Education Department.

Topics covered during the workshops related to human rights principles applied in policing duties, main principles of community policing, diversity and conflict management, as well as citizens' participation in public security. The workshop also included sessions on ICRC protection principles and RFL services with a focus on migrants.

## Detention

As a part of its mandate, the ICRC has been visiting detainees for more than 140 years, traditionally focusing on people held in connection with armed conflict and other situations of violence.

In 2022, the ICRC continued to visit detainees in BiH prisons as well as migrants detained at the Immigration Centre in Istocno Sarajevo on a regular basis. **Seven visits were made in total**. The findings and recommendations were discussed in a confidential dialogue with the authorities.

In addition, the ICRC conducted training on medical ethics, titled "**Health in Detention**," for staff at **the Penitentiary for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions, the Pre-Trial Detention Centre, and the Immigration Centre in Sarajevo**.

Furthermore, the ICRC sponsored participation of the management and medical staff of the Centre in the first **Health in Detention Worldwide Conference**, held in Geneva, providing an opportunity for participants to exchange experiences with their peers from other countries.

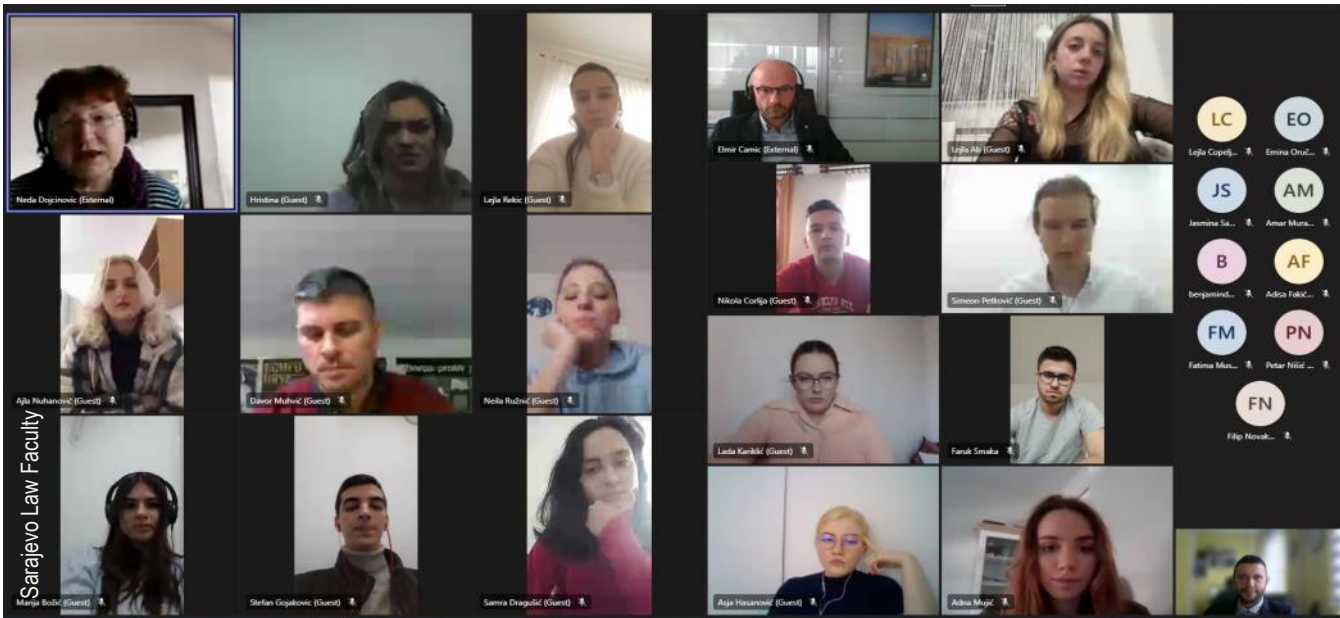
The ICRC donated 200 mobile phone cards to the Immigration Centre, in order to improve family contact of migrants, and medical equipment to support the work of its medical staff.

In 2021 and 2022, nearly 2,000 police officers from Una-Sana and Sarajevo cantons completed Red Cross first-aid training.



RC Sarajevo Canton

# IHL PROGRAMME FOR STUDENTS



In 2022, the School of International Humanitarian Law was organized online and it was attended by 34 students and government officials.

Even wars have their limits. They are defined by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which requires the protection of all non-combatants and limits the means and methods of warfare. During the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, many provisions of this law were violated, mostly in relation to the protection of the civilian population, prisoners of conflict, detained and wounded people, and humanitarian workers.

Each year, for students from public universities in BiH, the ICRC hosts the School of International Humanitarian Law.

In 2022, the school was attended by **34 law and political science students as well as government officials**, and it marked the 30th anniversary of the ICRC's presence in

the country. The lecturers at the event were prominent IHL experts from the country and abroad, some of them working for the ICRC. They provided a variety of perspectives on a range of legal issues related to IHL and elaborated on the significance and applicability of IHL, as well as how it interacts with other areas of international law.

The goal of the school is to expand students' knowledge of IHL and stimulate their interest in continuing to study more about this field in the future. The occasion highlighted the value of collaborations with universities in BiH and gave the ICRC the chance to develop and deepen its network of professors and its presence within this region.

## ADVANCING IHL UNDERSTANDING

The ICRC delivered a lecture on IHL to participants in the UN Military Observers Course (PSOTC) at the Regional Peace Support Training Center. The UN-certified course lasted two weeks, during which military personnel have been trained for deployment in UN peacekeeping missions. Participants came from the BiH Armed Forces, Germany, Albania, Serbia, and Guatemala.

The participation of the ICRC in the course was part of its partnership with the Ministry of Defense/PSOTC, which further

strengthened the ICRC's cooperation with military structures in EURASIA and beyond.

Additionally, the ICRC and the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees held consultations to discuss the establishment of the National Commission on IHL in BiH. In total, **19 representatives from relevant ministries** participated in the meeting and discussed the mandate, functions, composition, and structure of the future commission.

# ICRC FACTS & FIGURES 2022

## MISSING PERSONS

**4,900**  
relatives of missing persons benefited from **35** psychosocial support projects



**61**  
MPI employees and family association members benefited from ICRC's educational psychosocial workshops



**60,000**  
pages of documentation on potential gravesites collected from international archives in 2022



**21**  
scholarships awarded to MA and PhD students, conducting research on missing people and the needs of their families



**30**  
family associations and local Red Cross branches marked the International Day of the Disappeared



**7,600+**  
names of people still missing in BiH's conflict, displayed as part of the ICRC's exhibition "Gdje je?"



## SUPPORTING THE LOCAL RED CROSS

**2,500**  
migrants approached by the **Red Cross Restoring Family Links** teams that provided **1,568** interventions



**64**  
Red Cross volunteers benefited from ICRC's „Help the Helpers“ program on mental health



**25,000**  
primary school students participated in the Red Cross annual competition „Think mines“



**25**  
Red Cross volunteers and staff members improved their online communication skills



## SUPPORTING THE WORK OF OTHER LOCAL ACTORS

**1,900+**  
police officers from Una-Sana and Sarajevo cantons completed Red Cross first-aid training in the last two years



**100**  
experts attended the international scientific conference on migrations, co-organized by the ICRC



**20**  
police officers from Una-Sana Canton improved their knowledge of community policing



**1**  
portable digital X-Ray machine donated to the Department of Forensic Medicine at the University of Sarajevo



**60**  
prosecutors, investigators and relatives of missing persons improved mutual communication through **3** ICRC workshops



**27**  
detention facility staff learned about medical ethics and confidentiality through the ICRC workshop „Health in detention“



## INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL)

**34**  
students and government employees participated in the IHL online seminar



**19**  
representatives of relevant ministries participated in consultations on establishing a national IHL commission



## COMMUNICATION

**30**  
years of the ICRC's work in BiH marked through outdoor exhibitions in Sarajevo and Tuzla



**22**  
journalists and editors trained in reporting about missing persons in the country



**34**  
articles about missing persons and their families published by **17** journalists; **21** of them included in the booklet "Living with uncertainty"



**25**  
members of the missing person families learned more about online and public communication with the support of the ICRC



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