



# NEWSLETTER

ICRC SOMALIA DELEGATION

ISSUE NO.4 MARCH 2015

## GARGAAR

### DETENTION ACTIVITIES IN SOMALIA

Visits to people deprived of liberty is a central and historic part of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) work around the world. The first-ever detention visits were to Western Romanian and Serbian prisoners of war during WW1 1914-1918 and visits since have ranged from seeing thousands of prisoners of war during the World Wars to visiting Nelson Mandela during his imprisonment. It has always been at the core of ICRC's mandate and a key component of our diverse response to armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies.

ICRC's thirty-eight year history in Somalia has included visits to prisoners during the Ogaden conflict, from 1977 to 1988 and more recently, since 2012, to persons detained in prisons, police stations and state security agencies. This complements our ongoing response to the protracted armed conflict and recurrent climactic shocks that

Somalia has endured. A response that has included emergency relief, basic livelihood support and health programs.

Detention poses many challenges to detainees, their families and the authorities responsible for places of detention. The ICRC works to support the unique needs of all of these groups. Detainees must benefit from humane and dignified treatment throughout their time in detention and families must at all times be aware of the fate of their relatives and have the chance to be in contact and visit them.

Detention authorities shoulder a complex responsibility that requires many resources and specialized skills. When gaps occur or concerns arise, we discuss them confidentially with those responsible, at various levels, as a tool to foster awareness and help them make improvements. Progress is rarely as fast as all concerned

would like, but in our experience this consistent, honest exchange over time is the best way to achieve a lasting impact.



**Patrick Vial**  
Head of ICRC Delegation for Somalia

**ICRC**

International Committee  
of the Red Cross

# PROTECTING THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF DETAINEES

Ahmed Zaroug, who is in charge of coordinating all ICRC detention-related activities in Somalia, explains about ICRC visits to places of detention.

## Q: Why does ICRC visit detainees?

A: Currently, the ICRC visits half a million detainees in more than 90 countries and territories in the world (such as in Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Colombia, Philippines, Guantanamo, Ethiopia and Kashmir among others). The aim of this humanitarian activity is to ensure that persons deprived of their freedom are treated with dignity and humanity. We also help detainees to maintain contact with their family and relatives.

Even though, we do not question the reasons for any given person's detention, we do stress the importance of full respect of relevant judicial guarantees such as fair trials and reasonable procedural delays. These issues can have a great influence on overcrowding which in turn effects almost every aspect of the conditions of detention and detainees' general wellbeing.

It should be underlined, that the detaining authorities have the sole responsibility to ensure the well-being and humane treatment of the people under their custody. Part of the reason ICRC visits detainees is to support the authorities, directly through recommendations, in meeting this critical responsibility.

## Q: How do these visits work?

A: The ICRC uses a standard visiting method throughout the world. It starts with a meeting with the director of the place of detention to discuss the purpose of the visit and the current situation from the authorities' perspective. The discussion covers administrative details such as the number of detainees but also any other issues the authorities would like to draw the ICRC's attention to.

Each such meeting is followed by a tour of the premises which of course includes the cells, but also other areas such as the kitchen and the infirmary, if there is one. The tour is followed by a more in-depth assessment of the cells themselves, and by



ICRC delegate talks privately with a detainee

meetings with detainees, either in groups or individually.

These private talks allow the detainees to speak freely and confidentially about their situation, which helps the ICRC delegates and specialists to better understand and assess their conditions and treatment. The information collected by the ICRC delegates during the private talks is only reported to the authorities with the consent of the concerned person.

The visits end with a further meeting with the authorities, in which the ICRC discusses its findings directly and confidentially and suggests measures to improve the conditions of detention. Follow-up visits are then conducted; this is essential to evaluate changes and impacts, or assess additional needs.

## Q: How can you be sure of your assessments? Don't authorities try to hide problems or detainees exaggerate the difficulties?

A: Detention work is driven by relationships of trust. With the detainees, families and authorities. Like any relationship, this grows and evolves over time. Everything can't be revealed or said at once. It can take time on

our side to get to know the situation and focus on the key issues. Repeating visits builds up this trust and maximizes our value-added. Our experience elsewhere has shown that as all sides start to understand each other better the exchange becomes more open.

## Q: Do you see any impact of your interventions?

A: In our detention-related program we have a multidisciplinary approach, it means we try to look at all aspects of the conditions and environment of detainees, from individual treatment, judicial guarantees, access to water, sanitation, health and nutrition aspects as well as family contacts. When ICRC specialists rehabilitate or install a water and sanitation network in a prison you can see the immediate impact on the health of detainees. When a prison clinic is assisted with medicines and equipment, the access to and the quality of the health service is also immediately impacted. Advice and suggestions to prisons' authorities and discussions with their hierarchy motivate the capacity building of the prison's staff at all levels. Capacity building is a long process which could take years or even decades given the complexity of detention systems.

Based on feedback received from families, authorities and the detainees themselves in various countries around the world, the ICRC detention-related activities are well appreciated.

**Q: Do you help the families of the persons detained?**

A: ICRC and the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) use various tools, free of charge, to help families establish and then maintain contact with separated relatives. This service is also provided to persons deprived of their liberty in places of detention and their families in Somalia or abroad.

When a person is arrested and detained, the authorities should notify the close family. In addition, families should be allowed visits to their detained relatives. When such visits cannot take place, because of security or economic constraints or the sheer distance of the trip, the ICRC helps detainees and their families to establish and maintain contact through Red Cross Messages (RCMs) and short telephone calls known as 'Salamats'.

**Q: Are you ever afraid to visit prisons in Somalia? Can they be dangerous?**

A: The basis of our work is to ensure dignity in detention and once everyone involved understands this then visits go well. Not everyone is always happy with our visits all



ICRC team discusses its findings with the Prison Director

the time and there can be understandable frustration from both detainees and authorities but engaging with them about this is a critical part of our role and not a source of danger. The really scary thought is what might happen if the detention system doesn't get the support it needs, especially in terms of infrastructure. This unfortunately is something beyond the scope of ICRC but we try to keep other actors informed and get them involved.

**Q: How many visits have taken place in Somalia? Are you able to visit all the places you would like?**

In 2012 the ICRC carried out 16 visits to

various places of detention in Somalia. The number of visits increased in 2013 to 45 and in 2014 to 66. There are limits to how much we can visit but we have national coverage and visit most authorities. The reality is that you would always like to be able to visit more and provide more support and help. It's our ambition to visit all places of detention regardless of the type of authority or group responsible.

**Q: Do you visit 'transition camps' where individuals that have stopped fighting are sent for rehabilitation?**

A: In fact we do not. The ICRC's focus is on people deprived of liberty and the camps



ICRC delegate hands over a family message

in question are not considered places of detention. There is a period, before individuals arrive at such camps (when individuals are first captured or immediately after they have surrendered) that they are indeed being held in a state of detention. The ICRC has worked with authorities to develop procedures requiring proper conditions and treatment for individuals during such detention. Once, the person has been transferred to a transition camp however, their situation changes and it is no longer a situation of detention.



ICRC delegate talks privately with a detainee

## THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING A HEALTH SYSTEM FOR DETAINED PERSONS

The role of ICRC prison health teams is to advise on improvements to the overall functioning of prison health systems. They do not undertake direct diagnosis and treatment however, they do advise prison medical staff on the general treatment of diarrhoeal disease (cholera), tuberculosis, beri beri, typhus, skin diseases (scabies), sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and other infections that thrive in prison environments.

### ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE

Although people deprived of their freedom have a right to healthcare services, they usually encounter many challenges to access these in the same way that they would in their communities. If a place of detention does not have a functioning clinic or health staff then detainees often have to rely on their families for medicine or treatment. If doctors have difficulty accessing detainees then this makes treatment difficult and if detainees do not have family who can visit them, then they may not get appropriate medical care.

### SUPPORTING PRISON HEALTH FACILITIES

ICRC provides regular support to health facilities in Mogadishu and Baidoa Central Prisons as well as emergency response as needed. Since February 2014 the Baidoa Prison health clinic has been regularly

receiving medical supplies, equipment and training. ICRC Health teams work on-site with clinic staff on consultations, pharmacy management and treatment of the most commonly diagnosed illnesses. A similar program exists in Mogadishu Central Prison where the health staff is supported by the ICRC in order to increase their ability to address various health conditions amongst the detainees.

When necessary the ICRC facilitates emergency medical response in prisons.

After an outbreak of Acute Watery Diarrhoea in Mogadishu Central Prison in April 2014, the ICRC provided necessary medical supplies and clean potable water. In addition, several hand-washing points were set up and technical advice and training on hygiene management was given to prison staff and detainees.



ICRC health staff checking medical items in the Central Prison of Mogadishu

# THE IMPORTANCE OF HYGIENE IN DETENTION FACILITIES

Every detained person needs water in sufficient quantity to drink, shower, clean his surroundings and perform religious ablutions. Regular washing with clean water and soap prevents the occurrence of many diseases, especially skin conditions and diarrhoea. Prison kitchens also need enough water to prepare food and keep equipment clean.

## WATER AND SANITARY SYSTEM

After thorough assessment and discussions with detainees and prison management, ICRC specialists may help places of detention to maintain or rehabilitate existing water and sanitation systems. For example, in Baidoa Central Prison the ICRC water and habitat specialists undertook construction and rehabilitation work to improve water infrastructure. First, to increase the quantity of available water, an

elevated water tank was constructed and linked to the prison water network. In order to improve the hygiene and for the comfort of detainees, the toilets and showers were completely rehabilitated. Finally, the ICRC built a whole new kitchen providing a cleaner environment for food preparation.

## HYGIENE COMMITTEE

An important aspect of improving hygiene in places of detention is the prison staff

and detainees' capacity to manage hygiene procedures to maintain a clean and healthy environment. To better supervise, manage and respect these procedures a hygiene committee made up of inmates and prison staff is created to fulfil this shared responsibility. A practical plan of collaboration is established to ensure that all important places such as toilets, showers, kitchens and cells are cleaned regularly and that solid wastes, one of the many causes of disease, are well managed.

After being trained, the committee's members have the duty to train the other inmates on the use of hygiene products and chemicals which are provided by ICRC. A representative is designated in each cell to report sanitation/hygiene problems when they occur.



**KA HORTAGA CUDURADA SHUBAN BIYOODKA IYO DAACUUNKA (PREVENTING AWD/CHOLERA)**

Siyaabaha looga hortaji karo cudurka daacuun caloolaha ama shuban biyoodka:

- Ku maydh gacmahaaga marwalbo saabuun iyo biyo isticmaalka suuliga ka dib
- Ku maydh gacmahaaga marwalbo saabuun iyo biyo ka hor diyaarinta cuntada iyo inta aadan cunin cuntada

**WAAJIBAAD SHAQO**

ee Guddiga Caalamiga ee Laantaarirta Cas ICRC waa urur isah oonan, madaxdaasna ahayd ihsaasinta ah kaasoo howshaha aadanimo kulliga kulliga iyo dhowrka hawlaha iyo dhowrka dhowrka (dhowrka) iyo xaaladaha kale ee qalalaasho iyo xaaladaha qalalaasho dhowrka dhowrka. ICRC-ka waxay kalsooni ku dadaalshaa inay ka hortagto dhowrka dhowrka horumarinta iyo xoojinta xoojinta aadanimo iyo xoojinta caalamiga ee aadanimo. Iyadoo la aasaday sanadka 1963dii, ICRC-ku waa aalka Aasiyada kamaala iyo dhowrka dhowrka Laantaarirta Cas iyo Bisha Cas. Waxay jiraan ayaa iku dhowrka hawlaha caalamiga ah oo ay qabsato dhowrka dhowrka iyo xaaladaha kale ee qalalaasho.

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FAAHFAAHIN GAABAN

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Leaflet used by the ICRC to promote hygiene in Somalia.

# VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN PRISON

ICRC vocational training programs in prisons are fundamental to the wellbeing, rehabilitation and social reintegration of detainees. Productive work is integral to an individual's sense of self-worth and contributes to general physical and mental health. The range and type of activities available to detainees will enable them to become productive members of society after release by providing them with practical job skills and thus greater employment opportunities.

The ICRC has been implementing a vocational training program in Bossasso Prison since 2013 and is looking to expand these activities to other detention places. Currently 60 detainees, male and female, are enrolled in six-month carpentry (furniture making), masonry and tailoring skills training.

## LEARNING A JOB WHILE IN PRISON

"My name is Mohamed. I am originally from Mudug where my wife and my two young sons live. I have been detained in this prison already for 2 years.

In 2012 I witnessed for the first time the ICRC team in the prison. They had come with the aim of visiting the cells to discuss

with detainees about our daily life, our conditions, and our health. Among the hygiene materials that were distributed by ICRC included soaps, buckets and cleaning products. Also the detainees that did not have access to receive news from families such as me were able to receive messages from ICRC delegates. The items that were given to us by ICRC may sound little but can change lives of many. A year later I heard that the ICRC in collaboration with the management of the prison wants to initiate vocational training for detainees. I could not believe it at first. Who takes care of detainees to train them?

In my environment I have never had any opportunity to be train for a job, but the



Learning tailoring skills in the female ward.

use of weapon. For this reason I became a soldier and later assigned to the security of important persons.

Thanks to ICRC and the management of the prison, I have been included in the carpentry training. Others were in masonry or tailoring. It was still hard to believe that we will have an activity in the prison. A training needs place, equipment, trainers a lot of motivation to move the project onward."

## LIFE AFTER PRISON

"I began 6 months ago and today I am able to make lot of things with my hands. Look, for example this table and this chair were entirely made by me. You can check them, use them, they are perfect. I make anything you need for your house out of wood.

That skills changed my entire life, it even improved my health in prison. Before I was sick all the time with no energy to move around. Now I am full of energy, I am a new person with a new job. In future when I get my freedom am planning to work in carpentry workshops. With a bit of investment I can plan my own business and to be independent. I will also expand the lessons I had learnt from prison to educate my sons to better use their ten fingers and make wooden playthings and toys."



Mohamed (red uniform) learning how to make furniture

## MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.