

## Crossing the desert-the ICRC in Iraq: analysis of a humanitarian operation

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Deskripsi Lengkap: <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20496743&lokasi=lokal>

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Abstrak

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For almost 60 years, the International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC has been doing its best to provide humanitarian assistance to those groups in Iraq that need it most. This article describes the humanitarian operations of the ICRC in Iraq from 1950 to the present day, in particular the support it has given to different minorities in

the country and its humanitarian responses to the various armed conflicts. It shows that the legal framework that provides the basis for the ICRCs humanitarian activities also limits its ability to take action in situations beyond the scope of its mandate. In armed conflicts the ICRC faces the risk of being used by governments for their own ends. The challenge for the ICRC is to strike a balance between meeting its treaty based obligations and exercising its right of humanitarian initiative, and to avoid selecting the recipients of its aid on the sole basis of opportunities made available by governments.