

# **Rules governing access to the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross**

Adopted by the ICRC Assembly on 17 January 1996

## **Introduction — *Purpose***

- (1) The present Rules govern access to the ICRC's archives, which comprise:
- the archives of the ICRC's decision-making bodies;
  - the archives of Committee members;
  - the archives of the various units at headquarters;
  - the archives of individual delegations;
  - archival material from other sources which are kept at the ICRC.
- (2) The Rules also apply, by analogy, to current records, semi-current records and closed records which are not stored in the ICRC's archives.

## **Section I: General Provisions**

### **Article 1 — *Principle***

The present Rules lay down conditions for access to the ICRC archives by two categories of users:

- members of the Committee and ICRC staff;
- the general public.

### **Article 2 — *Limitations***

The various limitations on access to the ICRC archives by each of these categories are set out in Sections II and III.

Article 3 — *Access*

The ICRC Archivist sets out the practical terms and conditions for access to the ICRC archives in the *Regulations for users of ICRC archives*.

Section II: **Committee members and the ICRC staff**

Article 4 — *Members*

- (1) In accordance with Articles 2, 3 and 17 of the *Règlement intérieur du CICR du 2 mai 1991*, Committee members have access to the ICRC's current, semi-current and closed records, whatever the classification of those documents. They do not have general access to the personal files of ICRC staff.
- (2) The right of access by the *Commission de contrôle de gestion* (Management Control Commission) is reserved in accordance with the regulations governing its activities, as approved by the ICRC Assembly.

Article 5 — *Staff*

- (1) In pursuance of their professional duties, permanent ICRC staff have access to the current, semi-current and closed records that are classified "internal" or "confidential" and are protected during a set period.
- (2) Only the unit that has created the document or, where this is not possible, the ICRC's archivists, may authorize access by ICRC staff to archives classified as "strictly confidential". The minutes of meetings held in camera by the decision-making bodies may be consulted only with the express authorization of the ICRC President.
- (3) The right of access by the Management Controller is reserved in accordance with the terms of reference pertaining to that post which have been adopted by the ICRC Assembly.

Section III: **Public**

Article 6 — *Public archives*

The general public has access to archives classified as public<sup>1</sup> after a set period of time, to ensure that such access will in no way be

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<sup>1</sup> The ICRC archivists select and make an inventory of archives to be classified as "public".

detrimental to the ICRC, to the victims that it is its duty to protect, or to any other private or public interests requiring protection.

Article 7 — *Public archives*

- (1) Three types of document are to be found in the “public” archives:
  - General ICRC files dating back more than 50 years, including minutes of the decision-making bodies.
  - The minutes of the Recruitment Commission, the personal files of staff members and the record series containing personal or medical information dating back more than 100 years.
    - Access to biographical or autobiographical information on a specific individual is allowed after 50 years; such research, however, must be carried out by an ICRC archivist (see Article 10).
    - If permission is obtained from the individual concerned, the 50-year period may be shortened.
  - Access to archival material from other sources which has been stored in the ICRC archives is authorized from the date set by the individuals or institutions that deposited the material at the ICRC.
- (2) The period during which the public is barred from consulting a file runs from the date on which the file is closed.<sup>2</sup>
- (3) Documents that were open to consultation by the general public before being deposited in the ICRC archives remain so thereafter.

Article 8 — *Special access*

- (1) The Executive Board may, before expiry of the time limits set in Article 7, grant special access to facilitate academic work which the ICRC itself wishes to see successfully completed or which it finds of interest.
- (2) The Executive Board adopts the *Rules governing special access to the ICRC’s classified archives*.

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<sup>2</sup> See the annex to the *Rules* for a table of public record groups kept up to date by the ICRC archivists and approved by the Committee.

**Article 9 — *Restrictions***

- Public access to ICRC archives may be temporarily delayed
- in order to permit necessary conservation work to be carried out on the documents requested, or
  - if no space is available in the reading room.

**Article 10 — *Fees***

A charge is made for research carried out by ICRC staff at the request of persons outside the organization (see Article 7).

**Article 11 — *Use***

No use may be made of the archives for commercial purposes unless a specific contract to that effect has been concluded with the ICRC.

**Section IV: Entry into force**

**Article 12 — *Abrogation***

The present Rules replace, as of 1 January 1996, the *Rules concerning the consultation of ICRC records* of 22 May 1981.

## Annex

**Categories of historical archives open to the public**

Period	Classification: archives group	Linear metres
1863-1945 (-1995)	Procès-verbaux Minutes of meetings of the Committee, executive committees and special commissions (certain series still running)	4
1863-1914	AF: Ancien Fonds All archives originating from those bodies other than the minutes	8
1870-1871	Agence de Bâle Archives constituted by the Basel Agency and forwarded to the ICRC when it closed	12
1877-1878	Agence de Trieste Archives constituted by the Trieste Agency and forwarded to the ICRC when it closed	1
1914-1918	C-S: Comité-Secrétariat Committee business other than that concerning the International Prisoners-of-War Agency	1
1914-1918	400: Agence internationale des prisonniers de guerre	11
1916-1922	[Versements tardifs] Various files without a structured filing plan (source and date of arrival unknown)	5

RULES GOVERNING ACCESS TO THE ARCHIVES OF THE ICRC

Period	Classification: archives group	Linear metres
1919-1921	FAW: Fonds d'archives de Watteville Protection of prisoners following the Armistice	4
1919-1950	CR: Croix-Rouge Archives from the ICRC General Secretariat, including files on legal and administrative matters and operations between 1932 and 1939  – National Society series  – International Red Cross series (1928-1950)  – Operational series Chaco, Ethiopia, Spain, Sino-Japanese War  – Other series Mainly legal matters and those concerning the International Red Cross before 1928	60  10  4  8  38
1919-1932 (1948)	Mis.: Missions Most before 1925; matters concerning Russia up to 1948	22
1919-1950	Classement décimal Relations with international institutions, in particular those concerned with social welfare	2
1919-1950	Files classified as confidential when the 1973 <i>Rules concerning consultation of ICRC records</i> entered into force (declassified)	3
1919-1922	MSB, Mission en Sibérie (Mission to Siberia)	2

## INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF THE RED CROSS

Period	Classification: archives group	Linear metres
1919-1922	S.V.: Secours Vivres (Food aid)	2
1920-1927	U.I.S.E.: Union internationale de secours aux enfants Missions carried out by ICRC delegates for the Save the Children Fund International Union	2
1921-1931	CR 87: Secours aux réfugiés russes (Relief for Russian refugees)	4
1921-1926	Commixt: Commission mixte de secours Operations to combat famine, mostly in Russia	3
1939-1950	G.: Archives générales du Comité Files on operational matters produced by the Central Secretariat	164
	– Delegations series (G.3, G.8)	35
	– POW/CI camps series (G.17)	20
	– Series on the treatment of POWs/CIs (G.25)	7
	– Series on Jews (G.44, G.59)	9
	– Series on relief, general (S.G)	8
	– Series on civilians, general (C.G.)	4
	– Correspondence series (G.85)	12
	– Other series	69
1939-1950	[Archives from the various ICRC units]	159

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Period	Classification: archives group	Linear metres
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service des camps (Camps unit) Collection of reports on visits by delegates in two series, original reports (RO) and revised reports (RT), with a number of cardfiles</li> <li>- Division des secours (Relief Division)</li> <li>- Secours en Grèce (Relief action in Greece) ICRC archives relating to the work of the Management Commission</li> <li>- Division Assistance spéciale (Special Assistance Division)</li> <li>- Division Transport (Transport Division)</li> <li>- Chronologies (divers Unités) (Chronological files, various units)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">48</p> <p style="text-align: center;">75</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">11</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p>
1941-1947	CMS: Commission mixte de secours Archives of the joint ICRC/League Relief Commission kept in the ICRC archives	26
1939-1950	Archives des Délégations Files originating from the delegations, for the most part after 1944; also contains files closed after 1950 (not included)	32