

# Rules governing access to the archives of the international Committee of the Red Cross

Adopted by the ICRC Assembly on 17 January 1996

Revised by the ICRC Assembly on 29 April 2004

## **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 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 24 juin 1998, 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 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 has 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 Archivist, 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 Head of Internal Audit 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 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 40 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 60 years.
    - Access to biographical or autobiographical information on a specific individual is allowed after 40 years; such research, however, must be carried out by an ICRC archivist (see Article 10).
    - If permission is obtained from the individual concerned, the 40-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>

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<sup>1</sup> The ICRC archivists describe and arrange archives classified as "public".

<sup>2</sup> The Committee approves the table of public record groups kept up to date by the ICRC's Archivist.

- (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 Assembly Council 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 Assembly Council adopts the Rules governing special access to the ICRC's classified archives.

#### 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 May 2004, the Rules governing access to the archives of the international Committee of the Red Cross of 17 January 1996.