

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Organization: International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

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Description The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, collectively form the Movement. It seeks global fulfillment and advancement of the protections provided by International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to victims of armed conflict. The Movement is guided by seven "Fundamental Principles" — humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality.

The ICRC was founded by Henry Dunant in 1863 following his famous publication, *A Memory of Solferino* (1862/1986), describing a horrific Austrian-French battle leaving thousands of soldiers suffering from lack of medical attention. The ICRC helped catalyze the modern IHL framework, and it remains the Movement's international nucleus. It is a self-described "impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence." Its tasks include: visiting prisoners of war and civil detainees; searching for missing persons; transmitting messages between family members; and providing food, water, and medical assistance to victims. Owing to the ICRC's strict impartiality, IHL protects ICRC delegates displaying the Red Cross or Red Crescent emblem from interference and harassment. The Red Cross was the original emblem adopted in 1863. The Ottoman Empire decided to use the Red Crescent in 1876, but it was not granted official recognition until 1929. Recent proposals for a unifying emblem seek to avoid any political, religious or cultural connotations associated with the ICRC's work.

The broader Movement is active worldwide, comprising over 100 million members and volunteers. The National Societies provide a range of peacetime services (e.g. natural disaster relief) and more limited conflict-related services. The International Federation facilitates coordination and cooperation between National Societies. The ICRC coordinates with National Societies, and provides a range of technical and legal expertise. The Movement exemplifies the notion of global civil society. It is a non-governmental and transnational network devoted to addressing matters of fundamental global concern. Its funding comes from a combination of private and government sources, but strict procedures and policies ensure operational independence. Its protection, monitoring, and advocacy activities both impact and transcend governments, making it a significant non-state actor in contemporary global governance.

- Suggested Reading: **Bugnion, F.** 1989. The red cross and red crescent emblems. *International Review of the Red Cross* 272: 408-19.
- Dunant, Henry.** 1862/1986. *A memory of Solferino*. Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross.
- International Committee of the Red Cross website.** www.icrc.org (accessed 4 January 2005).
- International Committee of the Red Cross.** 2002. *Discover the ICRC*. Geneva: ICRC Production, Marketing and Distribution Unit.