



INFORMATION LEAFLET

about the International Red Cross
and Red Crescent Movement and
activities of the
Ukrainian Red Cross Society

Kyiv, 2024



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INTRODUCTION

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the world's largest humanitarian network. It provides assistance to victims of emergencies and armed conflicts. Comprised of 191 National Societies, the Movement has a global reach with 100 million of members, volunteers and staff. It is made up of three different components:



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) is a neutral, impartial, and independent humanitarian organization founded in 1863 with a mandate under international law to protect and assist victims of armed conflict and other violence.

It operates globally to provide aid to those affected by war, including civilians, prisoners of war, and the wounded, and promotes adherence to international humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Conventions.



International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.



THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC) is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to the development and support of National Societies in their efforts to prevent and alleviate human suffering, working outside of armed conflict zones. Its headquarters is in Geneva.



NATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (NS) are independent humanitarian organizations that operate within their respective countries as part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Each National Society is responsible for providing a wide

range of services, including disaster response, healthcare, social services, and support to vulnerable communities, while also promoting humanitarian values and international humanitarian law. Although they collaborate closely with their respective governments, National Societies maintain their autonomy to act according to the principles of the Movement, ensuring impartial and neutral assistance. In Ukraine, this role is fulfilled by the Ukrainian Red Cross Society.



Meeting of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society delegation with Theodor Meron, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in London. February 2024.

I. INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT



THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT is the world's largest humanitarian network, born from the initiative of Swiss humanitarian Henry Dunant in 1863.

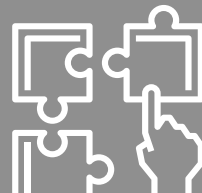
It unites **100 million** volunteers, staff, and supporters in nearly every country worldwide.

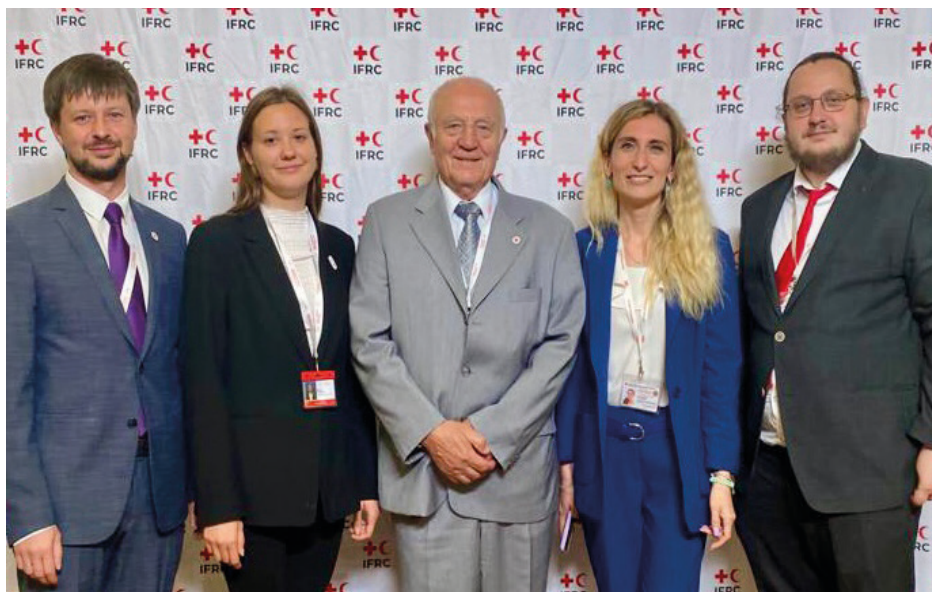
This global force works to **prevent and alleviate human suffering, provide assistance to all in need; especially during armed conflicts, natural disasters, and other emergencies.**

The activities of the International Movement are ensured by the coordinated interaction of its three key components:

- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC);
- The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

While all three components of the International Movement operate autonomously, each with its own distinct status, they work together to achieve common goals.





Delegation of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society representatives at the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Geneva. June, 2022.

II. STRUCTURE AND COMPONENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)

Founded in 1863, the ICRC is an impartial, neutral, and independent humanitarian organization. Its core humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflicts and other situations of violence, and to provide them with assistance.

The ICRC has a unique mandate, enshrined in the Geneva Conventions, which allows it to operate in areas of armed conflict, providing assistance and protection to all those who need it.

Main objectives of the ICRC:

- Coordinate the activities of the International Movement in armed conflicts;
- Protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence, including civilians, prisoners of war, and the wounded;
- Promote respect for and knowledge of international humanitarian law;
- Trace missing persons, reunite separated families, and restore communication between people affected by conflict;
- Conduct education and awareness programs to reduce the risks posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance in conflict zones.

The ICRC has a mandate, conferred by the Geneva Conventions of 1949, to act as a guardian of international humanitarian law and a neutral intermediary between parties to armed conflicts.



The ICRC is funded primarily by voluntary contributions from governments and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The ICRC is headquartered in Geneva. Today, the ICRC has over 21,000 staff working in more than 100 countries around the world.



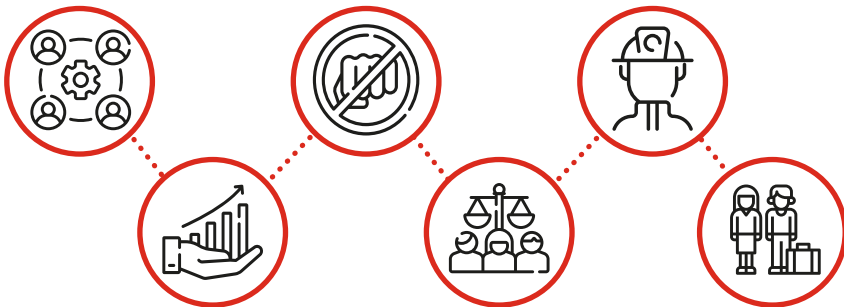
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)

The IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian network. The IFRC's secretariat that supports local Red Cross and Red Crescent action in more than 191 countries.

Its **mission** is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity.

Main objectives of the IFRC:

- Coordination and provision of international humanitarian aid to victims of natural and man-made disasters in peacetime;



- Support and development of National Societies;
- Combating discrimination and violence;
- Promoting humanitarian principles and values;
- Implementation of emergency response, healthcare and care programmes;
- Promoting assistance to refugees and internally displaced people in their places of residence.

The IFRC comprises 191 National Societies that recognize the IFRC's authority to set policy in humanitarian areas and coordinate cooperation between National Societies. The IFRC holds permanent observer status at the United Nations. The IFRC is headquartered in Geneva.



NATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

191 National Societies around the world form the network of the the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. National Societies are deeply embedded within local communities and act as auxiliaries to public authorities in the humanitarian field.

Each National Society relies on the dedication of humanitarian aid workers and volunteers who deliver a wide array of services: from emergency response and assistance to victims of armed conflict to first aid training and family reunification.

Main objectives of the National Societies:

- Providing assistance during armed conflicts, natural disasters, catastrophes, epidemics and other emergencies;
- Implementation of healthcare programmes (e.g. disease prevention, first aid, blood donation);
- Implementation of social projects, assistance and support for the elderly, people with disabilities and other socially vulnerable groups;
- Promoting international humanitarian law and humanitarian values, etc.

Acting as independent partners, National Societies collaborate with their authorities to support the delivery of humanitarian policies.



Their knowledge, experience, community engagement, and extensive structure enable the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to respond quickly to people's needs and provide timely assistance.

III. THE UKRAINIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY



The Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS)

is the largest humanitarian organisation in Ukraine and has been delivering comprehensive humanitarian aid to vulnerable communities for more than a century. The Society works alongside Ukrainian state authorities and local self-governing bodies to support humanitarian efforts.

The URCS is recognized as a fully independent and the only one Red Cross Society of Ukraine. The Society conducts its humanitarian work in alignment with national legislation, in particular the Laws of Ukraine “On the Ukrainian Red Cross Society”, “On the Symbols of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal in Ukraine”, and the Presidential Decree “On the Ukrainian Red Cross Society”.

Furthermore, the Society’s activities are guided by the Fundamental Principles of the International Movement, the URCS Charter, the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and resolutions adopted at International Conferences.

Headquartered in Kyiv, the Society is comprised of regional and local branches overseen by the National Committee of the URCS.

The Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS) network spans 24 regions of Ukraine, encompassing 200 organizations and over 8,000 volunteers.





*URCS President:
Mykola Polishchuk*



*URCS Director General:
Maksym Dotsenko*

Main objectives of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society:

- Providing humanitarian aid to vulnerable communities (food, drinking water, hygiene products, etc.);
- Psychosocial support and psychological rehabilitation, implementation of care programmes for people with disabilities and the elderly;
- Supporting the state's response to emergencies, including evacuation efforts, providing relief, and restoring damaged infrastructure;
- Providing trainings and workshops for the public on first aid skills;
- Implementing state and local programs for the development of blood donation and its components;
- Raising awareness of international humanitarian law and values, thereby fostering a humanitarian culture within society;
- Implementing care programs for people with disabilities and the elderly.

IV. INTERACTION OF COMPONENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT IN UKRAINE

The effectiveness of the International Movement, especially in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine, relies on clear coordination and interaction between its components.

This cooperation is legally grounded in the Seville Agreement (1997), its second iteration (2022), and the “Joint Statement on Contextualization of Seville 2.0 Agreements Implementation in Ukraine” of July 29, 2022. These documents define the roles and responsibilities of each component within the International Movement, ensuring coordinated action and maximized effectiveness in delivering assistance to the population.

URCS

convener of all International Movement components in Ukraine for the protection and assistance of the population

IFRC

key partner in supporting the URCS, particularly in resource mobilization and the implementation of long-term programs

ICRC

co-convener of activities directly related to the armed conflict

V. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT

The work of the International Movement is grounded in seven Fundamental Principles. These principles serve not only as ethical guidelines, but also as practical tools for providing assistance to those in need.

Conceptualised by ICRC jurist **Jean Pictet**, the Principles were adopted at the 20th International Conference in Vienna on October 8, 1965.



HUMANITY

Born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, the International Movement strives, under all circumstances, to prevent and alleviate human suffering at both the international and national levels.



IMPARTIALITY

The International Movement makes no distinction as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, or political opinion. It endeavors to relieve the suffering of individuals, basing its decisions on their needs and prioritizing the most urgent cases of distress.



NEUTRALITY

To maintain public trust, the International Movement upholds a stance of neutrality, refraining from taking sides in armed conflicts or engaging in disputes of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature.



INDEPENDENCE

National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the International Movement.



VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The International Movement's work is entirely non-profit, driven by a selfless commitment to assisting those in need. It unites millions of volunteers who dedicate their time and effort without seeking personal gain.



UNITY

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. This National Society must be accessible to all and conduct its humanitarian work throughout its territory. Other National Societies may operate in Ukraine, but only with the consent of the Hosting National Society.



UNIVERSALITY

The International Movement is worldwide. All National Societies operate under the same principles, hold equal standing within the International Movement, and share equal responsibilities and rights in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

These principles foster trust, facilitate access to those affected by conflicts and disasters, and underscore the International Movement's solely humanitarian mission.

VI. INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW



International humanitarian law (IHL)

is a body of international law that sets out rules for warfare, striving to limit violence and alleviate suffering in armed conflict. IHL safeguards both combatants and non-combatants, including civilians, the wounded, and prisoners of war.

The URCS is one of the leading organizations in Ukraine disseminating knowledge of IHL. This aligns with the state's obligation, as explicitly stated in the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, to ensure the widespread understanding of these vital legal frameworks.

Ukraine has ratified the four Geneva Conventions and their three Additional Protocols.



EMBLEMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT

The International Movement employs three emblems of equal significance:

- the red cross,
- the red crescent,
- the red crystal.

These emblems embody the International Movement's commitment to impartiality and neutrality, enabling it to provide assistance to all those in need without discrimination based on nationality, religion, social standing, or political convictions.



The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols affirm the equal legal standing of all three emblems under international law. These emblems serve two primary functions: protection and identification.

1. Protective use of the emblems

The emblem signifies protection under international humanitarian law, safeguarding medical personnel, facilities, and transport.

Its use is governed by strict regulations:



Right to use: the URCS, medical service and religious personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, civilian medical units (with permission from the Ministry of Health), foreign National Societies (with the consent of the URCS and permission from the Government of Ukraine), Hospital and Safety Zones and Neutralized Zones.



Protection: an attack on individuals or objects marked with an emblem constitutes a war crime.



Prohibition of misuse: the misuse of the distinctive emblems in order to kill or wound an enemy by treachery (an act of perfidy) is prohibited and constitutes a war crime.



2. Indicative use of the emblems

The emblems visually identify individuals, objects, and activities as having a link to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and adhering to its Fundamental Principles:



Right to Use: the URCS and other components of the International Movement.



Other Use (in peacetime, with URCS permission): healthcare facilities (marking buildings, vehicles, etc.), first aid stations, and refugee areas.



VII. HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT



The International Movement actively employs humanitarian diplomacy to protect the interests of vulnerable populations. This approach involves influencing decision-makers and shaping public opinion to encourage actions that address the needs of those affected by armed conflicts or emergencies, and to ensure the adherence to humanitarian principles.

The International Movement's humanitarian diplomacy is based on:

- **Primacy of humanity:** the needs and well-being of people affected by armed conflict or emergencies must always be paramount;
- **Independence and impartiality:** the Movement's independence allows it to act impartially and objectively, advocating for vulnerable populations regardless of political or other interests;
- **Global volunteer network:** millions of volunteers worldwide help amplify the voices of vulnerable people and bring their concerns to decision-makers;
- **Breadth of humanitarian action:** the Movement's wide range of humanitarian activities provides deep insight into the challenges faced by vulnerable people, enabling effective advocacy on their behalf;
- **Auxiliary role to public authorities:** National Societies' auxiliary role to governments in the humanitarian field provides access to and facilitates direct dialogue with government officials and local authorities;

- **International cooperation:** partnerships with other National Societies and international organizations enable the Movement to coordinate efforts and ensure a comprehensive approach to humanitarian issues.



Maksym Dotsenko, Director General of the Ukrainian Red Cross at "Through Ukrainian Eyes" seminar. April 2024, Stockholm.



34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. October 2024, Geneva

VIII. INTERACTION BETWEEN NATIONAL SOCIETIES AND THEIR GOVERNMENTS

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies serve as essential partners to governments in humanitarian endeavors. UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/55 (II), adopted on November 19, 1946, urges UN Member States to support National Societies by fostering conditions conducive to the effective delivery of humanitarian aid and the fulfillment of their mandated duties.

This cooperation with governments does not limit the independence of National Societies. This principle of independence is clearly defined: while assisting in the implementation of State humanitarian policy and adhering to national law, National Societies must maintain their autonomy.



THE AUXILIARY ROLE OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES

The term “auxiliary role” is used to describe the special partnership between the National Society and public authorities in the implementation of humanitarian activities.



Historically, such partnerships have emerged in times of armed conflict, as reflected in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

However, today, **National Societies are addressing a wider range of tasks related to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable groups.**

National Societies are neither governmental agencies nor non-governmental organizations. Their unique status, established by the Statutes of the International Movement and reinforced by resolutions of International Conferences, specifically Resolution 2 of the 30th International Conference and Resolution 4 of the 31st International Conference, defines the “auxiliary role” as a form of cooperation aimed at complementing, supporting or supplementing government services in the humanitarian field.

What does the auxiliary role of the National society mean in practice?

National societies, acting as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian sector, are obliged to:

- **Consider requests from public authorities** to carry out humanitarian activities within its mandate;
- **Refuse to fulfil requests that contradict the Fundamental Principles** of the International Movement or its mission;
- **Maintain independence** in its activities.



The URCS' auxiliary role is enshrined in Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine «On the Ukrainian Red Cross Society,» which states: *«The Society assists the state in providing medical and humanitarian aid during armed conflicts and in peacetime, participates in delivering international aid in cases of disasters and emergencies, and provides medical and social support to the most socially vulnerable groups.»*

IX. INTERACTION BETWEEN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND THE UKRAINIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

State authorities and local self-governing bodies play a critical role in enabling the URCS to function effectively and collaborate seamlessly with other institutions and organizations working in the humanitarian sector. This cooperation is multifaceted and covers the following areas:

Legislative framework and political support:



- Improving and aligning legislation to facilitate the implementation of the URCS mandate;



- Ensuring legal guarantees for the independence and sustainability of the URCS;



- Facilitating the participation of the URCS in international events and programmes, lobbying for the interests of the URCS at the international level.

Implementation of joint projects and programmes:



- **Humanitarian response:** active involvement of the URCS in the development and implementation of national and local emergency response programmes, especially given the Society's extensive experience and network;



- **Healthcare and rehabilitation:** strengthening collaboration in psychosocial support and rehabilitation programs, bolstering blood donation initiatives, conducting widespread first aid training, and leading public awareness campaigns on disease prevention;



- **Social Protection:** collaborative development and implementation of projects dedicated to supporting veterans, internally displaced persons, the elderly, people with disabilities and other socially vulnerable groups.

Promoting IHL Adherence & Development:



- Ratification and implementation of international IHL treaties;



- Participating in improving legislation and responding to violations of the law regarding the use of emblems, particularly the Law of Ukraine «On the Symbols of the Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Red Crystal in Ukraine.»



- Combining efforts to raise public awareness of international humanitarian law and humanitarian values, conducting information campaigns to protect the emblems of the International Movement.



Mykola Polishchuk, President of the the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, at the briefing dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the creation of the URCS Emergency Response Teams. December 2023, Kyiv.



Connect with us!

To explore the impact of the International Movement and learn how you can support the vital mission of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, visit our website at

www.redcross.org.ua
or scan our QR code:





HUMANITY



NEUTRALITY



IMPARTIALITY



INDEPENDENCE



VOLUNTARY SERVICE



UNITY



UNIVERSALITY



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