

+ C ◊ EMBLEMS OF HUMANITY

THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies


ICRC

EMBLEMS OF HUMANITY

In 1859 Henry Dunant, a Swiss businessman travelling in Italy, witnessed the grim aftermath of the battle of Solferino.

On his return to Geneva, he wrote an account of what he had seen, *A Memory of Solferino*, in which he put forward two proposals aimed at improving assistance for war victims:

- to set up in peacetime, in every country, groups of volunteers ready to take care of casualties in wartime
- to get countries to agree to the idea of protecting aid workers and the wounded on the battlefield

The first proposal led to the establishment of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, of which there are over 185 recognized by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement). The second proposal set the stage for the drafting of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which are today accepted by all States.

The adoption of a single distinctive sign that would confer legal protection on army medical services, volunteer aid workers and victims of armed conflict was one of the main objectives of the five-member committee that met on 17 February 1863 to study Dunant's proposals. This committee was later to become the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The sign – or emblem as it was eventually called – had to be simple, identifiable from a distance, known to everyone and identical for friend and foe alike.

A diplomatic conference that met in Geneva in August 1864 adopted a red cross on a white background, the colours of the Swiss flag in reverse. However, during the 1876-1878 war between Russia and Turkey, the Ottoman empire declared that it would use a red crescent instead of a red cross as its emblem, although it agreed to respect the red cross used by the other side. Persia also opted for a different sign: the red lion and sun. Both emblems were recognized by a diplomatic conference held in 1929. In 1980, the Islamic Republic of Iran decided to use the red crescent instead of the red lion and sun.

The red cross and red crescent emblems are entitled to full respect under international law. However, they are sometimes perceived as having cultural, religious or political connotations, and this jeopardizes the protection they confer on victims of armed conflicts, medical services of the armed forces and humanitarian personnel.

Moreover, until recently, National Societies that did not wish to use either the red cross or the red crescent could not be recognized as full members of the Movement. This made it impossible for the Movement to achieve universality – one of its Fundamental Principles – and raised the prospect that different emblems would continue to proliferate.

To overcome these problems, the idea of introducing an additional emblem that would be acceptable to all National Societies and States was put forward. This idea, which was strongly supported by the Movement, became a reality in December 2005 when a diplomatic conference recognized the red crystal as a distinctive emblem alongside the red cross and red crescent.



AN ADDITIONAL EMBLEM

On 8 December 2005, the States party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions adopted Additional Protocol III establishing an additional emblem.

ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL III

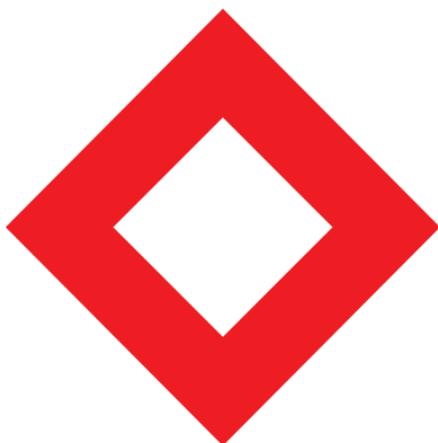
Recognizes an additional emblem that :

- is free from any religious, cultural or political connotations
- enjoys the same legal status as the red cross and red crescent and may be used in the same way or under the same conditions
- may be used (like the red cross and crescent) on a temporary basis by medical services attached to armed forces in place of their own emblems when needed and to enhance their protection
- may be used in exceptional circumstances to facilitate the work of the ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) and National Societies

The Protocol gives States and National Societies greater flexibility in using the emblems and allows National Societies that are unable to use the red cross or red crescent to become full members of the Movement, provided they meet the other conditions of recognition.

THE RED CRYSTAL

- does not replace the red cross or red crescent
- broadens the choice of emblems
- contributes to the universality of the Movement
- strengthens the protective value of the emblems
- provides more flexibility in the use of the emblems
- puts an end to the proliferation of emblems



USE OF THE EMBLEMS

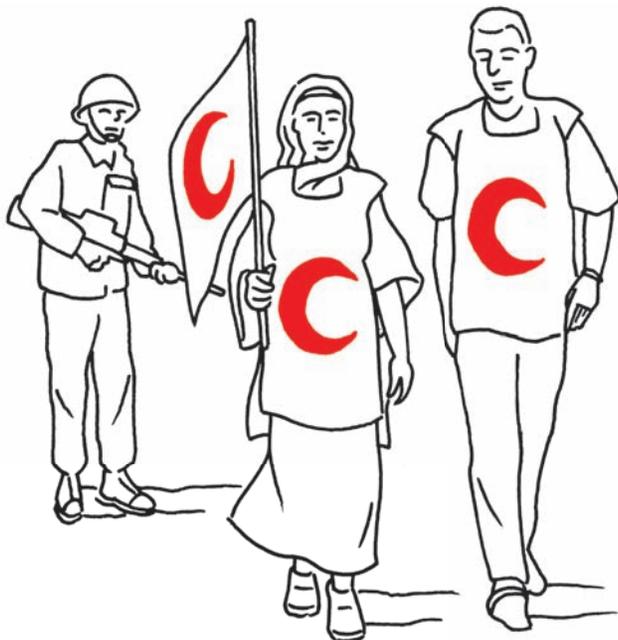
The emblems serve two purposes. They may be used as:

PROTECTIVE DEVICES

In armed conflicts, they are the visible sign of the protection conferred by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols on relief workers and on medical personnel, facilities and means of transport. In such cases, the emblems should be as large as possible and should be displayed with no other information.

INDICATIVE DEVICES

They show the link that a person or an object has with the Movement. In such cases, the emblems should bear additional information (e.g. the name or the initials of the National Society). The emblems must be of small dimensions and may not be placed on armlets or on the roofs of buildings, in order to avoid any confusion with the emblems used as protective devices.



PROTECTIVE USE

WHO CAN USE THE EMBLEMS ?

In times of armed conflict

- medical services and religious personnel of the armed forces
- medical personnel and medical units and transports of National Societies when placed at the disposal of the medical services of the armed forces and subject to military laws and regulations
- with the express authorization of the government and under its control: civilian hospitals, all civilian medical units and other voluntary relief societies and medical facilities, their staff and civilian medical means of transport assigned to the treatment and transport of the wounded, sick and shipwrecked

In times of peace

- medical services and religious personnel of the armed forces
- National Society medical facilities and means of transport that are to function as such in the event of armed conflict, with the authorities' consent

The ICRC and the International Federation may use the emblems at all times (in peacetime as well as in times of armed conflict) and without restriction.

All three emblems may be used as protective devices



Protocol III stipulates that, for enhanced protection, the medical services and religious personnel of a State's armed forces may, without prejudice to their current emblems, make temporary use of any recognized emblem.

The ICRC, the International Federation and their duly authorized personnel will retain their current names and emblems. However, in exceptional circumstances and to facilitate their work, they may use the red crystal.



INDICATIVE USE

WHO CAN USE THE EMBLEMS ?

In times of armed conflict

- the National Societies
- the International Federation
- the ICRC

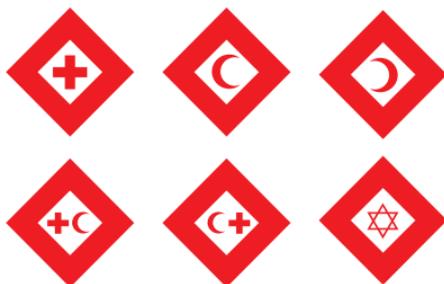
In times of peace

- the bodies, persons and objects connected with one of the components of the Movement: the National Societies, the ICRC, the International Federation
- ambulances and first-aid stations exclusively assigned to providing free treatment to the wounded and sick, as an exceptional measure, in conformity with national legislation and with the express authorization of the National Society

In compliance with domestic legislation, National Societies may use one of these emblems, both on national and foreign territory. A National Society that uses the red cross or red crescent emblem as its sign of identification, may, for indicative purposes, temporarily use the red crystal in exceptional circumstances and to facilitate its work, both on national and foreign territory.



National Societies that choose to adopt the red crystal as their sign of identification may incorporate within it any one of the recognized emblems or a combination thereof. They may also incorporate within it another distinctive sign, which has been in effective use and was communicated to the other States party to the Geneva Conventions and the ICRC prior to the adoption of Protocol III.



MISUSE OF THE EMBLEMS

Any misuse of the emblems may diminish their protective value and undermine the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.

IMITATION

The use of a sign which, owing to its shape and/or colour, may be confused with one of the emblems.



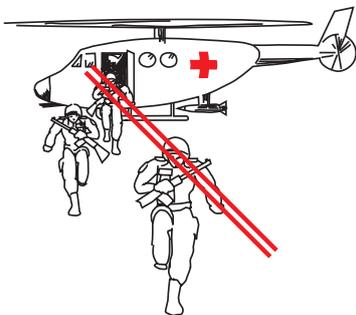
IMPROPER USE

Any use of a distinctive emblem inconsistent with the relevant rules of international humanitarian law. The use of an emblem by unauthorized people or bodies (commercial enterprises, pharmacists, private doctors, NGOs, ordinary individuals, etc.) or for purposes that are inconsistent with the Movement's Fundamental Principles.



PERFIDY

The use of the distinctive emblem during an armed conflict in order to protect combatants and military equipment and with intent to mislead the adversary. Perfidious use of the emblem, when causing death or serious personal injury, is considered a war crime.



In order to ensure universal respect for and protection of the emblems, each State party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions has the obligation to enact national legislation with the aim of regulating the use of the emblems and preventing and punishing their unauthorized use both in times of armed conflict and in peacetime. The prevention and repression of misuse of the emblems cannot be accomplished solely by the adoption of regulatory or penal measures. National authorities must also undertake to inform the public, businesses and the medical community of the proper use of the emblems.

National Societies also cooperate with public authorities to ensure proper use of the emblems.

The ICRC has published a series of documents describing in more detail the meaning of the emblems and the conditions for their use. In addition, the ICRC's Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law has prepared a comprehensive model law concerning the use and protection of the emblems. States are invited to adopt this model law as a basis or guide in drafting their own domestic legislation.

www.icrc.org

The International Federation also supports National Societies in their work to protect and ensure respect for the emblems.

www.ifrc.org

MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Movement.



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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the world's largest humanitarian organization. It comprises 185 National Societies and is supported by 100 million volunteers and members worldwide. The International Federation and its member National Societies work to reduce the impact of disasters and disease through relief and development activities. The organization's work is guided by seven fundamental principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. Over the next five years, the International Federation's collective focus will be on its Global Agenda working towards the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals.



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