



Power of humanity

Council of Delegates of the International
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

27–28 October 2024, Geneva

Call for respect and support for principled humanitarian action

DRAFT ZERO RESOLUTION

April 2024

EN

CD/24/DRX.X
Original: English
Draft

Document prepared by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DRAFT ZERO RESOLUTION

Call for respect and support for principled humanitarian action

The Council of Delegates,

expressing alarm at the magnitude of human suffering caused by the increasing number of armed conflicts and other situations of violence, the effects of climate change, disasters and other humanitarian crises worldwide, with the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection more than doubling in the last decade and reaching record levels, and *expressing deep concern* for the safety and well-being of all people affected and for their ability to access life-saving assistance,

expressing deep concern about the greater impediments to the ability of principled humanitarian actors to deliver assistance and protection to people who most need it, owing to increasing political and societal polarization, the instrumentalization and politicization of aid, public authorities questioning if neutrality and impartiality is “helping the enemy”, the lack of support for and understanding of the independence of their National Society by some governments, states imposing restrictions on the funding of principled humanitarian actors and on their access to affected people, restrictions resulting from sanctions and counterterrorism measures that impede the capacity of humanitarian actors to operate in accordance with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law (IHL), the spread – through social media and other channels – of misinformation and disinformation that affects the safety of humanitarian workers and the people in their care, and the persistence of threats and acts of violence directed at humanitarian and health-care workers,

expressing deep concern about the dehumanizing language and rhetoric, especially when used by governmental and community leaders and other persons in authority, that is prevalent in many armed conflicts, other situations of violence and other contexts, such as those where people face increasing inequalities and greater levels of vulnerability and poverty, as its use negates the principle of humanity and contributes to an environment that is conducive to endangering affected people and the impartial, neutral, and independent humanitarian actors serving them, and to violations of IHL, international human rights law and basic humanitarian principles,

recalling that the Fundamental Principles are at the heart of our International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement’s (Movement) distinctive identity and mission, based on over 160 years of operational experience and normative developments, including the formal proclamation of the Fundamental Principles by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference) in 1965 and their adoption in the Statutes of the Movement by the International Conference in 1986. All components of the Movement are bound by the Fundamental Principles, which are the foundation of their principled and ethical humanitarian action, and crucial to gaining and maintaining the acceptance and trust of and safe access to the people and communities they serve,

recalling the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a specifically neutral and independent organization and intermediary, as recognized by the Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the Movement and its primary responsibility to maintain and disseminate the Fundamental Principles, *recalling also* the role of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in collaboration with the ICRC, to disseminate the Fundamental Principles among National Red Cross and Red Crescent

Societies (National Societies), and *recalling further* the key role of National Societies in upholding and disseminating the Fundamental Principles within their own country as a critical means of fostering understanding of and promoting respect for principled humanitarian action,

recalling Article 4 of the Statutes of the Movement, Resolution 2 of the 30th International Conference 2007 on the “Specific nature of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in action and partnerships and the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field”, Resolution 4 of the 31st International Conference 2011 on “Furthering the auxiliary role” and the background report to the 32nd International Conference in 2015 on *The Fundamental Principles in action: A unique ethical, operational and institutional framework*, which highlight the importance of clearly defining the auxiliary relationship between a National Society and its public authorities in domestic legislation in order to maintain the National Society’s operational independence, strengthen its humanitarian diplomacy, and formalize the commitment of states to respect the duty and ability of National Societies to abide by the Fundamental Principles,

highlighting the trust and access that local National Societies enjoy in their communities and the key role of National Societies in promoting principled humanitarian action and *acknowledging* the complementary actions of the international components of the Movement to amplify and support local National Societies’ voices and roles as principled humanitarian actors,

recalling the IFRC’s primary responsibility to safeguard the integrity of National Societies in accordance with Article 6 of the Statutes of the Movement, and the responsibilities of each Movement component to address integrity concerns within their respective organization, and *recalling* the collective Movement commitments to strengthen integrity, accountability and trust, such as Resolutions 1 and 2 of the 2019 Council of Delegates, the “Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability” and the “Statement on Integrity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”, respectively,

recalling the commitment of states party to the Geneva Conventions to at all times respect the adherence by all components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles, and *reminding* them of their obligations under IHL to allow National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC to pursue their activities in accordance with these principles,

welcoming the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 2664 of December 2022, which aims to mitigate the impact of UN financial sanctions on humanitarian activities and activities to meet basic human needs through exemptions from sanctions (“humanitarian carve-outs”) for humanitarian organizations, including Movement components,

recalling the “Appeal for respect for neutral and impartial humanitarian action” (2022 Appeal) by the chair of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Standing Commission) and the presidents of the ICRC and the IFRC, which was welcomed by the 2022 Council of Delegates in Resolution 13, and *recognizing* the need to strengthen and expand on the 2022 Appeal in order to address current and future challenges to principled humanitarian action,

1. *endorses* the Appeal to States to respect impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action contained in the annex to this resolution, and *requests* that the chair of the Standing Commission and the presidents of the ICRC and the IFRC, on behalf of the Movement, communicate the Appeal to States at the 34th International Conference;
2. *reaffirms* the obligation of all components of the Movement to act at all times in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, particularly impartiality, neutrality and independence, as an imperative to safely access, assist and protect people in need;

3. *commits* National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC, individually and collectively, to enhance understanding of and respect for principled humanitarian action within their respective organizations, and in particular to ensure that the behaviours expected with regard to impartiality, neutrality and independence are well known, understood and applied at all levels of their respective organizations, including through the application of codes of conduct and organizational policies (e.g. social media policies), training and peer-to-peer exchanges, bearing in mind the crucial reputational and operational importance of principled humanitarian action in enabling safe access to people in need;
4. *commits* the leaders of the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies to lead by example in abiding by impartiality, neutrality and independence in all of their words and actions;
5. *commits* the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies to strengthen their work together on engagement and humanitarian diplomacy activities with states, local authorities, communities and other stakeholders, as well as with the general public, to promote greater understanding of and respect for impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action, which is essential to increase trust, counter the misinformation and disinformation that endangers humanitarian action or actors and ensure safe and effective access to all people in need;
6. *calls on* each National Society, with the support where needed of the IFRC and the ICRC, to further its dialogue with its public authorities with a view to strengthening its independent action and decision-making, including by strengthening its legal base in domestic law, in particular in relation to its auxiliary role in the humanitarian field, and in accordance with the Movement's agreed standards as defined in the Statutes of the Movement and in line with Resolution 2 of the 30th International Conference 2007 and Resolution 4 of the 31st International Conference 2011;
7. *also calls on* each National Society to regularly review, and if necessary revise, its statutes or constitution to ensure that they conform with the Movement's agreed standards as set out in the *Guidance for National Society Statutes 2018*, including the commitment to abide at all times by the Fundamental Principles and the requirements of principled humanitarian action;
8. *reaffirms* the commitment of each component of the Movement to build and maintain trust with the people we serve, communities, governments and local authorities, donors, external partners and the wider public by demonstrating integrity, transparency and accountability in all our actions and through continuous dialogue and engagement, as reflected in relevant Movement commitments;
9. *reaffirms*, in accordance with Article 14 of the Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement (Seville Agreement 2.0), that each component of the Movement must address any integrity concerns through its respective internal mechanisms, that National Societies are supported, as required, by the IFRC and in accordance with the IFRC's *Policy on Protection of Integrity of National Societies and Organs of the International Federation*, and that the IFRC and the ICRC consult each other, as required, when there are concerns related to respect for the Fundamental Principles, in dialogue with the National Society concerned;
10. *calls on* National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC to step up their collective efforts to share their experiences and learning on strengthening integrity and trust, *notes* the progress report on the follow-up to the "Statement on Integrity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement", *welcomes* the development of a community of practice on strengthening integrity for continued learning and improvement, and *encourages* all components of the Movement to join and contribute to it;

11. *proposes* that the ICRC, IFRC and National Societies take action, in line with their respective mandates, to follow up on the commitments made in this resolution to increase understanding of and adherence to the Fundamental Principles, including:
 - 11.1 strengthening engagement with states, local authorities, communities and other stakeholders, as well as with the general public, for example through a promotion campaign, to improve understanding of and respect for impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action and to increase trust and counter misinformation and disinformation, with the aim of ensuring safe, sustained and meaningful access to all people in need;
 - 11.2 engaging with states on strengthening their National Society's legal base, including a clear definition of the auxiliary role of National Societies in the humanitarian field, to facilitate the principled humanitarian action of National Societies in their own country;
 - 11.3 strengthening knowledge and learning programmes for governance, management, staff and volunteers within the Movement in order to cultivate behavioural competencies in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, including the sharing of good practice and providing operational examples of how the Fundamental Principles are used and respected in the planning and implementation of humanitarian programmes, highlighting the challenges and dilemmas that arise and the consequences for affected people when principled humanitarian action is not respected or facilitated;
 - 11.4 actively engaging with the community of practice on strengthening integrity to share their experiences and identify challenges and risks affecting integrity and trust;
12. *invites* Movement components to report to the next Council of Delegates on the measures taken and the achievements and challenges faced in implementing the above actions.

Annex: Appeal to States

We are deeply alarmed by the magnitude of human suffering across the world, caused by the increasing number of armed conflicts and other situations of violence, the effects of climate change, disasters and other humanitarian crises. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection has more than doubled over the last decade and is reaching record levels.

At the same time, to our profound concern, principled humanitarian actors are facing greater impediments to their ability to deliver assistance and protection to the people who most need it, as a result of, in particular:

1. increasing political and societal polarization
2. the instrumentalization and politicization of aid
3. public authorities questioning if impartiality and neutrality is “helping the enemy”;
4. the lack of understanding by some states of the need for National Societies to be independent
5. the dehumanizing language and rhetoric prevalent in many armed conflicts, other situations of violence and other contexts, especially when used by persons in authority, which negates the principle of humanity and contributes to an environment conducive to endangering affected people and the impartial and neutral humanitarian actors serving them, and to violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and basic humanitarian principles
6. restrictions resulting from sanctions and counterterrorism measures that impede the capacity of humanitarian actors to operate in accordance with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law
7. the spread – through social media and other channels – of misinformation and disinformation that affects the safety of humanitarian workers and people in their care
8. the persistence of threats and acts of violence directed at health-care workers.

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are the foundation of our principled and ethical humanitarian action. In all circumstances, they are crucial to gaining and maintaining the acceptance and trust of and safe access to the people and communities we serve. Disturbingly, we live in times when respect for these Fundamental Principles is at its most critical, but also when it is the most challenged.

Before this International Conference, we firmly recommit all components of the Movement to strictly respect our Fundamental Principles in all our words and actions, and to fulfil our respective mandates to the best of our capacities. Likewise, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthen integrity, accountability and transparency, and to build trust with the people you have mandated us to serve.

On behalf of the Movement, we now join together to appeal to states, as High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions and as members of this International Conference, to safeguard the Movement’s principled humanitarian action. It is critical that states, as they have committed to do in Article 2.4 of the Statutes of the Movement, recommit to and fulfil their obligations to respect at all times the adherence by all components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles, in particular those of impartiality, neutrality and independence, and to support and facilitate the humanitarian mission and activities of the components of the Movement.

In particular:

- We appeal to states to take all appropriate measures to prevent, stop and remedy any abuse, pressure, misinformation, disinformation and dehumanizing rhetoric, through

social media or otherwise, that harms the physical, psychological or reputational well-being of people in need and the staff and volunteers of the Movement components serving them;

- We appeal to each state to renew its commitment to respect the ability of its National Society, including in its role as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, to operate in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, in particular impartiality, neutrality and independence, as a vital means to ensure unhindered and safe access to people in need. This includes strengthening the legal base of the National Society in domestic law and refraining from requesting the National Society to perform activities that are not in accordance with the Fundamental Principles;
- We appeal to states to work with their National Society, with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to ensure that all levels of government and public authorities understand, respect and facilitate the mission, mandate and principled humanitarian action of their National Society, including in their role as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, and of the IFRC and the ICRC;
- We appeal to states to ensure that sanctions and counterterrorism measures do not impede the ability of impartial and neutral humanitarian organizations, such as Movement components, to have access to people in need and deliver humanitarian assistance and protection activities. We call on states to swiftly and faithfully implement the humanitarian exemptions required by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2664 and include similar humanitarian exemptions in autonomous sanctions and counterterrorism criminal laws.

We are ready and willing to constructively engage with states towards the common objective of upholding impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action, essential to enabling the Movement to fulfil its life-saving humanitarian mission.