

International red cross and red crescent movement essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is an international humanitarian movement with approximately 97 million volunteers, members and staff worldwide[2] which was founded to protect human life and health, to ensure respect for all human beings, and to prevent and alleviate human suffering, without any discrimination based on nationality, race, gender identity, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. 1] The movement consists of several distinct organizations that are legally independent from each other, but are united within the movement through common basic principles, objectives, symbols, statutes and governing organisations. The movement's parts are: * The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a private humanitarian institution founded in 1863 in Geneva, Switzerland, by Henry Dunant and Gustave Moynier.

Its 25-member committee has a unique authority under international humanitarian law to protect the life and dignity of the victims of international and internal armed conflicts. The ICRC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on three occasions (in 1917, 1944 and 1963). [3] * The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) was founded in 1919 and today it coordinates activities between the 188 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies within the Movement.

On an international level, the Federation leads and organizes, in close cooperation with the National Societies, relief assistance missions responding to large-scale emergencies. The International Federation Secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland. In 1963, the Federation (then known as the League of Red Cross Societies) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with the ICRC. [3] * National Red Cross and Red Crescent

<https://assignbuster.com/international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement-essay/>

Societies exist in nearly every country in the world. Currently 188 National Societies are recognized by the ICRC and admitted as full members of the Federation.

Each entity works in its home country according to the principles of international humanitarian law and the statutes of the international Movement. Depending on their specific circumstances and capacities, National Societies can take on additional humanitarian tasks that are not directly defined by international humanitarian law or the mandates of the international Movement. In many countries, they are tightly linked to the respective national health care system by providing emergency medical services.

The International Committee of the Red Cross Solferino, Jean-Henri Dunant and the foundation of the ICRC Until the middle of the 19th century, there were no organized and/or well-established army nursing systems for casualties and no safe and protected institutions to accommodate and treat those who were wounded on the battlefield. In June 1859, the Swiss businessman Jean-Henri Dunant traveled to Italy to meet French emperor Napoleon III with the intention of discussing difficulties in conducting business in Algeria, at that time occupied by France.

When he arrived in the small town of Solferino on the evening of June 24, he witnessed the Battle of Solferino, an engagement in the Austro-Sardinian War. In a single day, about 40, 000 soldiers on both sides died or were left wounded on the field. Jean-Henri Dunant was shocked by the terrible aftermath of the battle, the suffering of the wounded soldiers, and the near-

total lack of medical attendance and basic care. He completely abandoned the original intent of his trip and for several days he devoted himself to helping with the treatment and care for the wounded.

He succeeded in organizing an overwhelming level of relief assistance by motivating the local villagers to aid without discrimination. Back in his home in Geneva, he decided to write a book entitled *A Memory of Solferino* which he published with his own money in 1862. He sent copies of the book to leading political and military figures throughout Europe. In addition to penning a vivid description of his experiences in Solferino in 1859, he explicitly advocated the formation of national voluntary relief organizations to help nurse wounded soldiers in the case of war.

In addition, he called for the development of international treaties to guarantee the protection of neutral medics and field hospitals for soldiers wounded on the battlefield. In 1863, Gustave Moynier, a Geneva lawyer and president of the Geneva Society for Public Welfare, received a copy of Dunant's book and introduced it for discussion at a meeting of that society. As a result of this initial discussion the society established an investigatory commission to examine the feasibility of Dunant's suggestions and eventually to organize an international conference about their possible implementation.

The members of this committee, which has subsequently been referred to as the "Committee of the Five," aside from Dunant and Moynier were physician Louis Appia, who had significant experience working as a field surgeon; Appia's friend and colleague Theodore Maunoir, from the Geneva Hygiene

and Health Commission; and Guillaume-Henri Dufour, a Swiss Army general of great renown. Eight days later, the five men decided to rename the committee to the “ International Committee for Relief to the Wounded”.

In October (26–29) 1863, the international conference organized by the committee was held in Geneva to develop possible measures to improve medical services on the battlefield. The conference was attended by 36 individuals: eighteen official delegates from national governments, six delegates from other non-governmental organizations, seven non-official foreign delegates, and the five members of the International Committee. The states and kingdoms represented by official delegates were:

* Austria * Baden * Bavaria * France * Hanover * Electorate of Hesse * Italy * The Netherlands * Prussia * Russian Empire Saxony * Spain * Sweden-Norway * United Kingdom Among the proposals written in the final resolutions of the conference, adopted on October 29, 1863, were: * The foundation of national relief societies for wounded soldiers; * Neutrality and protection for wounded soldiers; * The utilization of volunteer forces for relief assistance on the battlefield; * The organization of additional conferences to enact these concepts in legally binding international treaties; * The introduction of a common distinctive protection symbol for medical personnel in the field, namely a white armlet bearing a red cross.

Only one year later, the Swiss government invited the governments of all European countries, as well as the United States, Brazil, and Mexico, to attend an official diplomatic conference. Sixteen countries sent a total of twenty-six delegates to Geneva. On August 22, 1864, the conference

adopted the first Geneva Convention “ for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field”. Representatives of 12 states and kingdoms signed the convention: Baden, Belgium, Denmark, France, Hesse, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Prussia, Switzerland, Spain, and Wurttemberg.

The convention contained ten articles, establishing for the first time legally binding rules guaranteeing neutrality and protection for wounded soldiers, field medical personnel, and specific humanitarian institutions in an armed conflict. Furthermore, the convention defined two specific requirements for recognition of a national relief society by the International Committee: * The national society must be recognized by its own national government as a relief society according to the convention, * The national government of the respective country must be a state party to the Geneva Convention.

Directly following the establishment of the Geneva Convention, the first national societies were founded in Belgium, Denmark, France, Oldenburg, Prussia, Spain, and Wurttemberg. Also in 1864, Louis Appia and Charles van de Velde, a captain of the Dutch Army, became the first independent and neutral delegates to work under the symbol of the Red Cross in an armed conflict. Three years later in 1867, the first International Conference of National Aid Societies for the Nursing of the War Wounded was convened.

Also in 1867, Jean-Henri Dunant was forced to declare bankruptcy due to business failures in Algeria, partly because he had neglected his business interests during his tireless activities for the International Committee.

Controversy surrounding Dunant’s business dealings and the resulting

negative public opinion, combined with an ongoing conflict with Gustave Moynier, led to Dunant's expulsion from his position as a member and secretary. He was charged with fraudulent bankruptcy and a warrant for his arrest was issued. Thus, he was forced to leave Geneva and never returned to his home city.

In the following years, national societies were founded in nearly every country in Europe. In 1876, the committee adopted the name "International Committee of the Red Cross" (ICRC), which is still its official designation today. Five years later, the American Red Cross was founded through the efforts of Clara Barton. More and more countries signed the Geneva Convention and began to respect it in practice during armed conflicts. In a rather short period of time, the Red Cross gained huge momentum as an internationally respected movement, and the national societies became increasingly popular as a venue for volunteer work.

When the first Nobel Peace Prize was awarded in 1901, the Norwegian Nobel Committee opted to give it jointly to Jean-Henri Dunant and Frederic Passy, a leading international pacifist. More significant than the honor of the prize itself, the official congratulation from the International Committee of the Red Cross marked the overdue rehabilitation of Jean-Henri Dunant and represented a tribute to his key role in the formation of the Red Cross. Dunant died nine years later in the small Swiss health resort of Heiden.

Only two months earlier his long-standing adversary Gustave Moynier had also died, leaving a mark in the history of the Committee as its longest-serving president ever. In 1906, the 1864 Geneva Convention was revised

for the first time. One year later, the Hague Convention X, adopted at the Second International Peace Conference in The Hague, extended the scope of the Geneva Convention to naval warfare. Shortly before the beginning of the First World War in 1914, 50 years after the foundation of the ICRC and the adoption of the first Geneva Convention, there were already 45 national relief societies throughout the world.

The movement had extended itself beyond Europe and North America to Central and South America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, El Salvador, Uruguay, Venezuela), Asia (the Republic of China, Japan, Korea, Siam), and Africa (Union of South Africa). The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) History In 1919, representatives from the national Red Cross societies of Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the US came together in Paris to found the “ League of Red Cross Societies”. The original idea was Henry Davison’s, then president of the American Red Cross.

This move, led by the American Red Cross, expanded the international activities of the Red Cross movement beyond the strict mission of the ICRC to include relief assistance in response to emergency situations which were not caused by war (such as man-made or natural disasters). The ARC already had great disaster relief mission experience extending back to its foundation. The formation of the League, as an additional international Red Cross organization alongside the ICRC, was not without controversy for a number of reasons. The ICRC had, to some extent, valid concerns about a possible rivalry between both organizations. The foundation of the League was seen as an attempt to undermine the leadership position of the ICRC within the

movement and to gradually transfer most of its tasks and competencies to a multilateral institution.

In addition to that, all founding members of the League were national societies from countries of the Entente or from associated partners of the Entente. The original statutes of the League from May 1919 contained further regulations which gave the five founding societies a privileged status and, due to the efforts of Henry P. Davison, the right to permanently exclude the national Red Cross societies from the countries of the Central Powers, namely Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, and in addition to that the national Red Cross society of Russia. These rules were contrary to the Red Cross principles of universality and equality among all national societies, a situation which furthered the concerns of the ICRC. The first relief assistance mission organized by the League was an aid mission for the victims of a famine and subsequent typhus epidemic in Poland.

Only five years after its foundation, the League had already issued 47 donation appeals for missions in 34 countries, an impressive indication of the need for this type of Red Cross work. The total sum raised by these appeals reached 685 million Swiss Francs, which were used to bring emergency supplies to the victims of famines in Russia, Germany, and Albania; earthquakes in Chile, Persia, Japan, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Turkey; and refugee flows in Greece and Turkey.

The first large-scale disaster mission of the League came after the 1923 earthquake in Japan which killed about 200, 000 people and left countless more wounded and without shelter. Due to the League's coordination, the

Red Cross society of Japan received goods from its sister societies reaching a total worth of about \$100 million. Another important new field initiated by the League was the creation of youth Red Cross organizations within the national societies.

A joint mission of the ICRC and the League in the Russian Civil War from 1917 to 1922 marked the first time the movement was involved in an internal conflict, although still without an explicit mandate from the Geneva Conventions. The League, with support from more than 25 national societies, organized assistance missions and the distribution of food and other aid goods for civil populations affected by hunger and disease. The ICRC worked with the Russian Red Cross society and after the society of the Soviet Union, constantly emphasizing the ICRC's neutrality. In 1928, the "International Council" was founded to coordinate cooperation between the ICRC and the League, a task which was later taken over by the "Standing Commission". In the same year, a common statute for the movement was adopted for the first time, defining the respective roles of the ICRC and the League within the movement. During the Abyssinian war between Ethiopia and Italy from 1935 to 1936, the League contributed aid supplies worth about 1.7 million Swiss Francs.

Because the Italian fascist regime under Benito Mussolini refused any cooperation with the Red Cross, these goods were delivered solely to Ethiopia. During the war, an estimated 29 people lost their lives while being under explicit protection of the Red Cross symbol, most of them due to attacks by the Italian Army. During the Civil War in Spain from 1936 to 1939 the League once again joined forces with the ICRC with the support of 41

<https://assignbuster.com/international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement-essay/>

national societies. In 1939 on the brink of the Second World War, the League relocated its headquarters from Paris to Geneva to take advantage of Swiss neutrality.