

The Yemenite Red Crescent Society¹

The Yemenite Red Crescent Society, which was founded in early 1970, was officially recognized by Presidential decree No. 15 of 16 July 1970. The decree authorizes the Society to take up its duties immediately in conformity with its statutes and in its capacity as a voluntary and independent aid Society, auxiliary to the public authorities.

Recognized by the International Committee of the Red Cross on 22 April 1982 and admitted to the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies² on 8 October 1983, the Yemenite Red Crescent Society is an integral part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It possesses legal status and is of indefinite duration. Based in Sana'a, the capital, it is active throughout the Republic of Yemen.

I. Structure and objectives

At the national level, the supreme authority of the National Society is the General Assembly, which is composed of representatives of the active members of the various local branches. It meets each year to approve the accounts, the provisional budget and prospective programmes.

There are also General Assemblies in the various branches. Their members are elected by secret ballot every four years or whenever it is deemed necessary.

The Executive Board, which is elected by the General Assembly, runs the Society. The Board has six subsidiary commissions:

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² Now known as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

1. Culture and Information Commission

Its tasks are:

- a) to promote the aims and objectives of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;
- b) to disseminate knowledge of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols among the public in general and the army in particular;
- c) to spread medical knowledge in order to improve the standard of living and health of the entire population;
- d) to help develop a spirit of cooperation and solidarity among the people, encouraging them to participate in volunteer work and to donate blood;
- e) to publish a bulletin, booklets, car stickers, etc., and to produce radio and TV programmes, slides, films, medals and badges to promote knowledge of the Society's work.

2. Relief and Social Services Commission

Its tasks are:

- a) to help provide building materials for temporary housing, relief supplies and blood transfusion equipment, and be prepared to undertake relief operations in the event of a disaster. This includes providing emergency social and medical assistance for accident and disaster victims, transporting them to a safe place, giving them care, shelter and food and reuniting them with their families;
- b) to help first-aid workers, social workers and relief teams;
- c) to make periodical visits to social welfare institutions, reformatories and prisons, help provide the necessary medical and social services for detainees and serve as their intermediary to exchange correspondence both within Yemen and with the outside world;
- d) to help prevent and control epidemics and communicable diseases.

3. Commission on Women's Activities

Together with the other commissions, it carries out the Society's tasks: collecting funds, organizing charity sales, organizing Red Crescent groups, improving health standards, increasing women's awareness of and preparing them for work in the home, first aid, sewing, embroidery and knitting. This Commission also visits hospitals, social welfare institutions and women's penitentiaries. It thus helps ease women's burdens, raises their level of education and improves their living conditions.

4. Youth Affairs Commission

- a) It is in charge of organizing Red Crescent groups in schools, universities, institutes and sports clubs.
- b) It develops programmes which are specially designed for young people in various areas, e.g. training them in first aid, in providing care during sports events and assistance in the event of disasters. The Commission also ensures that these programmes are implemented by the different local branches.
- c) It coordinates youth activities in the various branches of the National Society and reinforces its ties with the Youth Department of the International Federation and with Youth Sections in other National Societies.
- d) It helps to disseminate knowledge of humanitarian principles among the youth and to reinforce essential values such as selflessness, solidarity and generosity, respect for health and life, and community service.
- e) It encourages the exchange of correspondence, stamps, gifts and albums and promotes the "International Friendship" programme by exchanging visits, organizing camps, participating in courses and seminars held in the region, in the Arab world or elsewhere and, lastly, organizing cultural events and artistic exhibitions which deal with the objectives of the Movement.

5. Finance Commission

Its tasks are to itemize, stock and distribute all relief supplies. It is also responsible for managing resources and for book-keeping.

6. Public Relations Commission

It receives and distributes mail of detainees, refugees and persons who are competent to cooperate with the ICRC. It is also in charge of welcoming the Society's guests, arranging the programme for their visit and ensuring their well-being. It also helps organize charity exhibitions and sales.

II. Activities

Several departments and services at *headquarters* help these various commissions. In the field of relief and social welfare, the Society has seven relief centres, seven clinics in prisons and seven sewing workshops in

womens' reformatories. The Society, in collaboration with the International Federation and the German Red Cross, also plans classes designed for instructors in disaster relief.

The Society is active in the field of primary health care, using varied methods such as the monthly bulletin *Al-Ithar*. It relies on volunteer members making their vehicles available for widespread vaccination campaigns. It also has a pilot hospital and runs medical and social centres in camps of Yemenites who have returned to the country after the Gulf crisis. The Commission, with the help of the International Federation and donor Societies, has drawn up a programme for the social reintegration of some 33,000 to 36,000 of these returnees. It also runs several small camps in the provinces of Al-Adain and Hazm-al-Adain, where 1,500 victims of the last earthquake have been housed.

At the local level, the various branches organize classes on first aid and sports, promote and disseminate knowledge of international humanitarian law (IHL) and teach sewing, embroidery, knitting and household management. Thus, they meet the needs of local communities and seek to improve the health and living conditions of people with small incomes. They help impoverished families by distributing food supplies provided by the European Community (EC) via the International Federation. These are the regular social activities of the Yemenite Red Crescent, without mentioning its activities in times of crisis.

In spite of the Society's limited resources and the many difficulties it faces, the five-year development programme it completed on 31 December 1991 was 95% successful. The Society has set up a new development programme for 1992-1996.

In conclusion, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to all who have joined us in undertaking to alleviate the suffering of victims through their efforts, financial help and advice, especially the International Federation, the ICRC and all the sister National Societies who have given real meaning to the words "international and humanitarian solidarity". These institutions have contributed to the development and growing success of our humanitarian movement in its efforts to eradicate human suffering and promote a sense of solidarity based on the *Fundamental Principles and international humanitarian law*, carried out in the spirit of love and peace.

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