



MESSAGE ON WORLD RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT DAY

8 May 2026

Care for a stranger in need is among the oldest of human instincts, recognized by every moral and religious tradition. The belief that another's pain matters – whatever their side, their people or their faith – runs across all cultures and throughout history.

Our Movement took its present form out of that same instinct. In 1859, when the guns at Solferino fell silent, the women of the nearby town of Castiglione decided to join with a foreign businessman there by chance to care for the soldiers left dead or dying across the battlefield. The side a soldier had fought on did not matter: *“Tutti fratelli”* – all are brothers – they said.

From those modest yet defiant acts of care, our global Movement was born. Today, it brings together 191 National Societies, some 17 million volunteers and staff, and close to 289,000 local branches.

Our volunteers and staff – who often come from the communities we serve – are at the heart of our work. In the past year alone, they have worked across front lines and pulled survivors from the wreckage of earthquakes and storms. They have run clinics in displacement camps, visited prisoners, restored contact between separated families, delivered babies, run blood drives, and taught children to swim.

Whether in the darkest hours of a crisis or through everyday services that communities rely on, we serve the people who need us the most – strangers and friends alike.

We write at a time when the demands on our Movement have rarely been greater. Armed conflicts are multiplying. Natural disasters are escalating both in frequency and severity. More people are being forced from their homes. Respect for international humanitarian law – the law that preserves humanity in war – is eroding.

Military necessity or political expedience is increasingly invoked to override the most basic obligations of humanity. The ordinary infrastructure of civilian life is ever more readily treated as a legitimate target.

Volunteers and staff of the Red Cross and Red Crescent have felt the consequences directly. In the past year, far too many have fallen in the line of duty. They were drivers, paramedics, first responders, community workers. They wore the emblem. They went to help. We honour them, and we mourn them alongside their families, loved ones and colleagues.

These losses are not isolated. They are part of a broader pattern of disregard for the basic norms of humanity. The dehumanization of others is becoming routine. It is increasingly claimed, more openly than before, that what matters is raw power, that principles are naïve, and that respect for the law is optional.

When we deny the humanity of another – through language, through indifference, through the careful architecture of policy – it becomes easier to destroy and degrade. It becomes easier to exercise power unrestrained by conscience. And in doing so, the world becomes more brutal for everyone in it.

Our Movement stands in direct opposition to that callous logic. We are driven not by what is convenient, nor by what is politically expedient, but by what is right. Our work begins each day with the same act the women of Castiglione performed almost 170 years ago: having the determination, and the courage, to recognize the humanity in others, despite all else.

To all volunteers and staff across the Movement: we see you, we thank you, we stand with you. Amid division, violence and disregard for human suffering, every day that you continue this work, you reaffirm that humanity matters.

Today, on this World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, as on all days, we remain **united in humanity**.



Kate Forbes
IFRC President



Mercedes Babé
Standing Commission Chair



Mirjana Spoljaric
ICRC President