



Movement Civil-Military Relations (CMR)
during COVID-19 (C-19)
Guidelines and Key Messages



ICRC

During the COVID-19 crisis, civilian health and other responders (including RCRC National Societies) are coming under extreme pressure. In many countries police, military and other armed actors are being used by National Authorities to support the C-19 response. In some cases, they are primary responders, especially where a state of emergency exists.

Movement staff involved or working alongside the C-19 response are increasingly likely to engage with armed actors, and it is important that RCRC Fundamental Principles and CMR guidelines set out in the [CoD Res 7 - 2005](#) are respected. This short **note is intended to help frame the Movement CMR relationship** during the C-19 crisis, summarizing key guidance and highlighting further sources of more detailed advice, whilst underlining that CMR decisions are context based.

Military and Police Support to C-19 Response

Possible tasks of military/police in support of national C-19 responses include:

- **Enforcement of domestic containment** and control measures (including law enforcement operations and securing facilities)
- **Logistic support**; transport (including international eg for repatriation), and shelter/food/water
- **Health support**, reinforcement with medical teams and equipment eg field hospitals,
- **Forensic** eg Dead Body Management
- **Border control** (including supporting or running quarantine facilities)
- **Support to coordination** efforts by supplying staff and communications equipment.

Containment measures seen so far include curfews, quarantines, closure of land, air and sea crossings, and suspension of certain rights and freedoms. As the crisis evolves, people may contravene these imposed restrictions, either due to disagreement, misunderstanding, lack of access to information or lack of trust in the authorities. In responding to this lack of compliance, situations may arise where police and military supporting civilian authorities use excessive force. This risks creating or exacerbating tensions between the population and military/police actors, and highlights the need for RCRC Movement staff to follow the Movement's approach to CMR set out at the RCRC International Conference 2019.

RCRC Movement CMR: Key Guidance

The nature of the C-19 crisis is likely to focus humanitarian agencies towards cooperation with any military or police response. However, for Movement actors this should be assessed on a country basis, particularly in conflict or unstable context, to ensure a principled approach takes precedence notwithstanding the nature of the pandemic, and particularly where such cooperation may have longer term consequences. Aligned with CoD Res 7 from 2005:

- The Movement must **preserve its independence of decision-making and action** including being clearly distinguishable by dress and conduct, from the military and police,
- Each Movement component must ensure that **it acts, and is seen to act, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles; Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality and Independence.**
- Components of the Movement should only use military or police assets **as a last resort** and **may not use armed protection or escorts** to carry out humanitarian activities.
- Decisions on engagement with military and police actors **must consider the potential consequences for the Movement as whole**, both within the specific context and globally.

Additional CMR Resources

The key elements above provide overarching guidance for RCRC Movement managers and staff within the existing Movement policy framework. Additional and/or more detailed guidance can be found as follows:

- **Movement CMR Introductory Video** (3 min): <http://bit.ly/IFRCCMR> designed to raise general awareness
- **COVID-19 CMR Aide Memoire** (at annex) for managers and staff engaging military/police responders
- **CoD Resolution 2005/7**: <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/resolution/council-delegates-resolution-7-2005.htm#gs.s03uyu> providing the policy framework from which the above is drawn

The temporary establishment of a Movement CMR Adviser in Geneva during C-19 crisis is under consideration as a further source of guidance. In addition, there are a range of staff across Movement components at regional and country level in many context with significant experience dealing with military and police who may be able to offer advice.