

RCRC Movement Civil-Military Relations (CMR)

Aide-Memoire for use during COVID-19

CMR in Health Emergences

The scale and scope of the current COVID-19 outbreak in terms of the number of infections, casualties caused and potential for widespread trans-national vectoring means that civilian capacities to respond are being rapidly exceeded. National authorities will inevitably turn to their security forces including military and police to assist response effort and, in some cases, seek support from foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA). This will de facto increase interaction between military bodies (including police) and RCRC Movement responders.

The CMR approach will vary from context to context depending on the situation but it is important that approach is consistent across all Movement components operating within a context. However, all CMR activities must be in accordance with the RCRC Movement's Guiding Principles on CMR.

CMR's Guiding Principles

Derived from the guidance set out in the [Council of Delegates Resolution 7/2005](#) and as reflected in the [Principles and Rules For Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance](#), the guiding principles for occasions when National Societies and other components of the Movement are presented with the possibility of interacting with the military/police are as follows:

- Whilst maintaining a dialogue with armed forces, each component of the Movement **must preserve its independence of decision-making and action**. Therefore, whilst invitations from the armed actors to Movement components to work alongside them may arise (directly or indirectly) and must be carefully considered, Movement components are entitled to and must decline requests should it be determined that to comply would undermine their ability to act, and their perception as, neutral, impartial and independent.
- Each Movement component must ensure that it acts, and is seen to act, in accordance with the **Fundamental Principles, in particular humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence**. Therefore, **any action must be considered solely on the basis of the Movement's assessed humanitarian needs of all those most vulnerable and affected** irrespective of their location or background, in coordination with but not on behalf of or under the control of the military/police or other authorities.
- Applying the Fundamental Principles is the foundation of the Movement's specific and unique **approach to increasing its acceptance, security and access**, and this approach requires members of the Movement to engage with all parties to negotiate their safe access and to fulfil their mandates to best effect. All members of the Movement, who operate under the common emblem, must understand and utilize this unique approach and, as far as possible, explain it to others outside the Movement in order to garner their support for our presence and activities.
- Each Movement component must ensure that **its decisions are taken with due consideration for the potential consequences on their acceptance, security and access and that of other components of the Movement**. That is to say, where there is a possibility that by working alongside the military/police in one area or one country (such as distributing food or non-food aid alongside

military/police personnel during a health emergency) this might be perceived by the population in other areas or countries as counter to the Fundamental Principles and so threaten the acceptance and access of all Movement components globally to safely carry out their activities. In such circumstances the proposal to work together should be refused and a clear explanation given.

- Each Movement component must ensure that, as far as possible, it is **clearly distinguishable from military/police personnel**, by dress and conduct.

Dialogue

It is understood that Movement components, in particular the National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC respectively, must maintain a dialogue with members of the military/police to exchange information on areas of possible humanitarian interaction with a view to establishing mutual understanding, trust and respect. In doing so they have an opportunity to further discuss where and when it may or may not be possible to work together.

According to the Movement Statutes, States shall at all times respect the adherence by all the components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles which means they must not request any component of the Movement, including National Societies, to undertake an action that may, or may be viewed to compromise their application of these Principles.

Components of the Movement **may only share with the military/police information concerning humanitarian issues affecting the population, provided that this does not threaten the neutrality or independence of their humanitarian action or put the population at risk in any way.** Data protection and confidentiality principles still apply, and personal data of affected populations should not be shared, particularly as authorities may use the crisis to obtain information relating to individuals without their consent or without any other legal basis and may subsequently misuse that personal information and geolocation data for profiling, surveillance and stigmatization of populations.

Components of the Movement should, where and when feasible, take the necessary measure to respond to protection needs in their respective contexts, by implementing the principles described in the Minimum Protection Approach.

Use of military/police logistical assets by components of the Movement

In view of the possibility of health emergencies occurring within an environment containing numerous conflicts and situations of violence within a nation's borders, there might be occasions when an opportunity is presented to use military/police logistical assets in support of humanitarian action. Although this can be seen as very positive given the logistical challenges posed in many situations, the use of military/police assets can have a negative impact on the way the Movement is perceived and on the independence of its decision-making and action.

The use of military/police assets should be only on **the basis of last resort, which can only be justified by the serious and urgent need for life-saving humanitarian action, when there is no alternative means of taking that action.** Such a serious decision must be taken only by the senior leadership of the organization concerned, in consultation with the leadership of the other Movement components (National Societies, IFRC and the ICRC) operating in the country and reference to the section below: 'How to work alongside military/police personnel' carefully considered. A decision flow diagram is set out below to illustrate such a process.

Use of escorts and armed protection

Movement components may not use armed protection or escorts to carry out their humanitarian activities. This means, they must at all times avoid being accompanied by armed police or military or to be part of a convoy of aid that is accompanied by either armed police or military forces. Rather, safe access is negotiated by Movement components and agreed with the leaders of those groups or community leaders controlling or affecting the access to the environment.

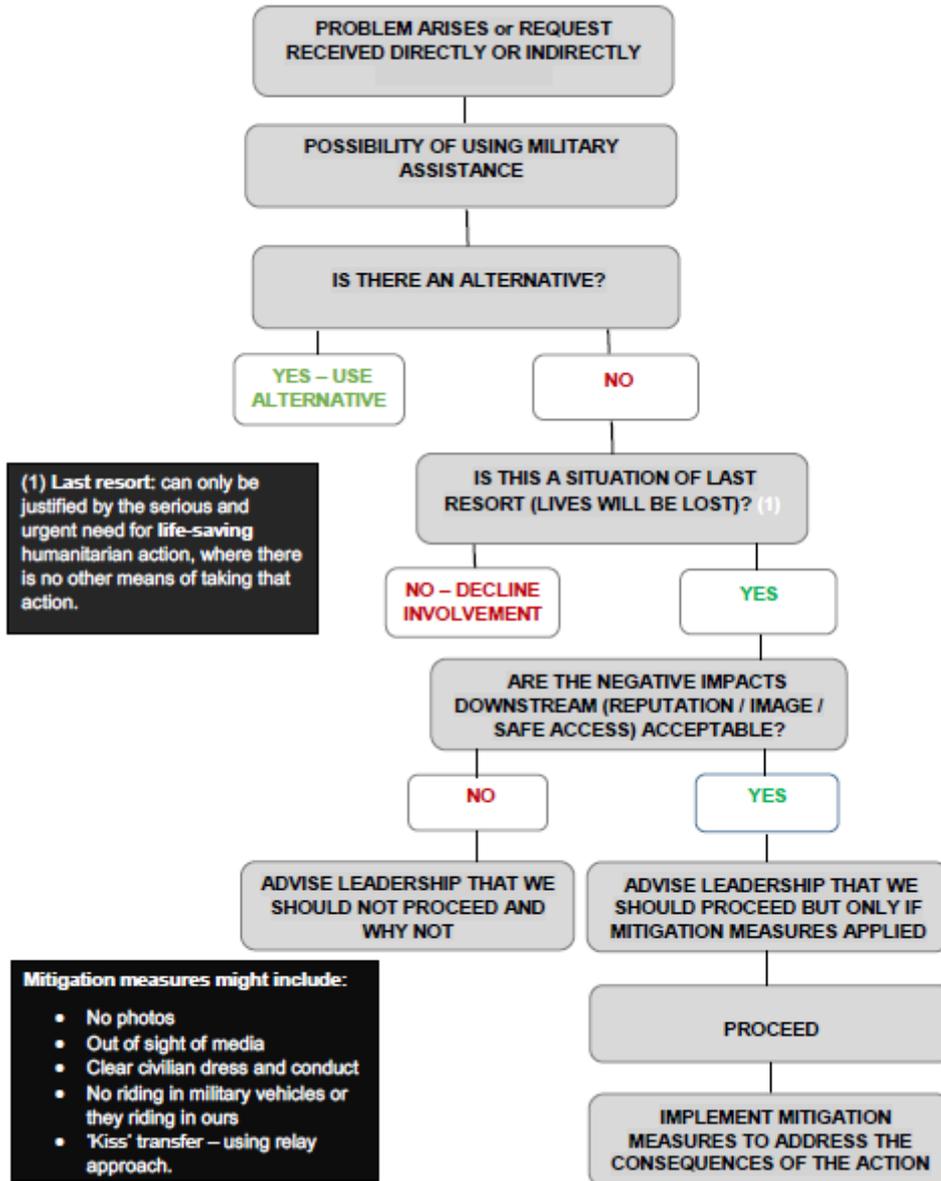
How to work alongside military/police personnel

On those occasions where authority has been given by the Movement leadership, as a last resort, for Movement personnel to work alongside military/police personnel, for example in delivering life-saving food or non-food aid in a health emergency, or when it has been decided to make use of military transport to move such assistance, the following points must be closely observed:

- Consultation between the Movement component and military/police forces should, as far as possible, be conducted out of sight of the local population and – if present – the media.
- Photos should not be taken of Movement personnel alongside military/police personnel and under no circumstances should such images be placed on social media.
- In situations where armed military or police escorts are provided for humanitarian agencies, or where components of the Movement are invited to accompany personnel who themselves are receiving a military or police escort, they must dissociate themselves from such escorts and if they feel compelled to also travel to the intended destination, they must put sufficient distance between them and the convoy to make clear that they are not linked.
- Care must be taken that Movement personnel are clearly distinguishable from military/police personnel in dress and conduct and cannot be mistaken for being part of a military/police operation – even if humanitarian in nature. For example they should not jointly ride in military/police vehicles or helicopters or take part in a line passing assistance or supplies from hand to hand.

This guidance is also depicted in a “dos and don’ts” at the end of this aide memoire.

USE OF MILITARY ASSETS BY MOVEMENT COMPONENTS DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS FLOW DIAGRAM



**DOS AND DON'TS
FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY
WHEN
PRESENTED WITH A SITUATION WHERE THEY MIGHT INTERACT WITH THE MILITARY/POLICE**

There may be occasions when, in carrying out your role as a staff or volunteer of the Movement, you are presented with a situation when you might interact with the military/police.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, to safeguard the Fundamental Principles (in particular **humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence**) and in order to protect your security and that of your colleagues, when presented with such a situation you must adhere closely to the following guidance:

Do...

- Refer all requests to work with the military/police to the President of the National Society who in turn, will consult other Movement components.
- Explain the Movement's policy to others, including to members of the State/District and Township administration and the military/police

Do Not...

- Accept any offers of military/police assistance without authorization from the President of the National Society
- Accept a military/police escort nor armed protection of any sort from anyone
- Join a convoy that is being escorted by military or other armed personnel.

On those occasions when authority has been given to work alongside the military/police for a specific length of time or event, personnel must adhere to the following:

Do...

- Conduct any dialogue with military/police personnel discretely, preferably out of sight of the local population and certainly out of sight of the media
- Take care to ensure that Movement personnel are clearly distinguishable from military/police personnel in dress and conduct and cannot be mistaken for being part of a military operation – even if humanitarian in nature. For example, do not jointly ride in military/police vehicles or helicopters or take part in joint distributions.

Do Not...

- Take, or allow photos to be taken of Movement personnel alongside members of the military/police, and certainly do not allow such photos to be posted on social media.