

Press Release

Humanitarian aid: a right for all

Luxembourg, August 17th 2020 - On World Humanitarian Day, August 19, several organisations are joining forces to highlight the importance of respecting international humanitarian law. It is this respect that guarantees the safety of teams on the ground, very often in unstable and dangerous areas.

In 2020, there were more than 100 attacks against humanitarian workers in 18 countries, with 203 victims. The toll is heavy: 74 people have been killed, compared to 57 at the same time last year. More than nine out of ten victims are local nationals.

CARE Luxembourg, Caritas Luxembourg, the Luxembourg Red Cross, Handicap International Luxembourg and Médecins Sans Frontières Luxembourg provide humanitarian aid throughout the world. These five organisations abide by the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence in their assistance to victims of humanitarian disasters.

World Humanitarian Day is held every year on August 19. It calls for support for people in crisis situations, and pays tribute to those who are committed to them and often risk their lives in the line of duty. Since its inception in 2008, World Humanitarian Day has promoted the safety of humanitarian workers and hence the survival, well-being and dignity of the people they help.

Over the past 12 years, more than 4,000 aid workers have been killed, injured, detained, kidnapped or otherwise prevented from doing their work. This represents more than 300 cases a year, or almost one case a day.

As humanitarian organizations, we want to continue to provide assistance in conflicts and in difficult contexts, but for that to happen, it needs to be safe for us to do our work. In order to guarantee this, or to at least limit the risks, all stakeholders must comply with international law and absolute respect for medical acts, healthcare infrastructure and teams deployed on the ground.

A humanitarian charter for Luxembourg providing a framework for interventions

The activities of Luxembourg's humanitarian organizations abroad are governed by the Humanitarian Charter of Luxembourg, signed in 2016 with the Ministry of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs. It sets out standards aimed at protecting those most in need.

Receiving and offering humanitarian assistance without any discrimination is indeed a fundamental principle that should benefit all citizens in need, regardless of the country. Humanitarian action is a non-partisan and non-political act. It is about providing support to those who need it the most, without regard to the religion, ethnicity, gender or ideas of those being helped.

The principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence

Among the main principles guiding the actions of humanitarian organisations, neutrality, impartiality and independence are the ethical foundations of the work they carry out.

Neutrality is necessary in order to maintain the trust of all stakeholders. It means refraining from taking part in hostilities and, at all times, in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Impartiality means making no distinction of nationality, ethnicity, religion, social condition and political affiliation. Humanitarian organizations shall strive solely to help individuals in proportion to their suffering and to give priority to alleviating the most urgent distress.

Independence means that, while humanitarian organizations are auxiliaries to the public authorities in their humanitarian activities and are subject to the national laws of the countries in which they are present, they must nonetheless remain autonomous, so as to be able to always act in accordance with their principles.

The Luxembourg Red Cross

The mission of the Luxembourg Red Cross is to “improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable elements in society.” Thousands of volunteers and over 2,500 professionals make it a major player in the areas of health, youth, social work, and humanitarian action.

Thus, the Luxembourg Red Cross is involved in a variety of activities, such as emergency international humanitarian help, home care, blood donation, rehabilitation, welcoming of elderly or dependent people to day care homes, social assistance, welcoming of migrants and refugees, individual help to people in difficulties, transition homes and youth homes, and socio-family therapy services.

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