

Conflict: Ukraine and impacted countries

Issues of concern | 15 March 2022

Emblem misuse

Background: In the past weeks, we received several reports of emblem misuse by individuals and organizations along the Ukraine border with Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Poland. Emblem misuse is also widespread in the online space, as fraudulent donation sites and social media profiles pretending to be National Society pages are emerging on a daily basis.

Q: There have been reports of the Red Cross Red Crescent emblem being used to help people cross the border more easily or to transport goods.

A: Red Cross Red Crescent emblems are protective emblems. The use of these emblems under international humanitarian law is specific and strictly regulated. In armed conflict, they may be used by medical staff and facilities, including army and authorized civilian medics and medical vehicles. They may also be used by Red Cross and Red Crescent workers, vehicles, facilities and the humanitarian relief they bring.

When the Red Cross Red Crescent transports aid into a community or place, the vehicles, supplies and personnel are clearly marked with the Red Cross or Red Crescent emblem. This means, 'don't shoot, we are not part of the fight'. Any misuse of the emblem can weaken the protection they provide and impact the safe delivery of essential aid and medical care.

Q. We are seeing examples of fake fundraising campaigns for the Red Cross surfacing on social media. How do we know if a fundraising campaign is legitimate?

A: Unfortunately, a crisis situation often brings out the worst in people. There are several legitimate fundraising campaigns being run by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world. If you are in doubt about the legitimacy of a campaign, your best course of action is to not click on any link but instead reach out directly to the pertinent National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society. Here are links to some key ones:

- [IFRC – Emergency Appeal](#)
- [Ukrainian Red Cross – Emergency Appeal](#)

IFRC actions for risk mitigation:

- Reactive lines have been shared with National Societies communication teams
- HD colleagues are supporting National Societies on messaging to their authorities. A FAQ document is being developed
- Communications and CEA personnel are deployed to neighbouring countries to support National Societies in their operational and risk communications
- More visibility is being given to National Societies and IFRC operational staff (in operations)
- ICRC has shared a communications pack on emblem issues
- Regular messages are being shared on IFRC, ICRC, Ukrainian Red Cross and neighbouring National Societies' social media platforms
- IFRC Regional Office is working on a video explaining why protection of the emblem is important
- Daily social media monitoring in collaboration with National Societies
- Movement Communication Guidelines have been developed and are revised regularly

Resources

- Visual assets, courtesy of British Red Cross (editable):
 - [Emblem misuse poster](#)
 - [Emblem explainer carousel](#)
 - [One-pager on the emblem](#)
 - [IHL explainer](#)
 - [Alternative symbols](#)

Third-country nationals

Background: Media has reported several incidents when people from third countries were mistreated by the border guard at the Ukraine border. IFRC has received questions from The Independent on Red Cross volunteers allegedly colluding with border guard at the Hungary-Ukraine border and accepting bribes for giving priority access to people from Africa.

Q: We have heard reports that third-country nationals are being discriminated against as they try to leave Ukraine.

A: We are concerned about these reports. We are aware that people are waiting hours, sometimes days at border crossing points, and the situation has sometimes been tense. At the Red Cross Red Crescent, we focus on helping everyone in need, without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, or political opinions. We call for everyone to provide non-discriminatory humanitarian assistance and support to those who are fleeing Ukraine. Access to the EU's territory should be provided to everyone in need, without discrimination.

Q: We see European governments and the EU responding with great solidarity to the needs of people fleeing Ukraine, which may be seen in contrast to responses after 2015.

A: The Red Cross supports everyone based on needs and vulnerabilities, without discrimination as to nationality, religious beliefs, legal status or political opinions. Civilian victims of war and people seeking refuge should have access to support and protection, double standards should not apply. In the case of Ukraine, we welcome the European Commission's efforts to simplify border checks as border procedures for Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians should be aligned. Relevant authorities should guarantee access to EU territory for anyone fleeing conflict and persecution anywhere in the world.

IFRC actions for risk mitigation

- Ukraine Red Cross Society (URCS) is looking into the issue raised in those recent media reports
- URCS has published a statement indicating that the allegations made in the original report from The Independent were unfounded and confirmed that the vehicles mentioned were not URCS vehicles
- URCS and IFRC are closely monitoring the situation on the ground
- CEA experts are being deployed to neighbouring countries to support National Societies in their operational and risk communications efforts

At the border between Ukraine and Hungary, Ukraine Red Cross volunteers:

- provide support to people in the queue (first aid, PSS, water, food)
- transport critically ill people from Chop to the border with Slovakia
- are not in charge of the management of the queues

Unsolicited goods and volunteers

Background: IFRC and National Societies are receiving hundreds of requests every day from individuals who want to volunteer in Ukraine or in neighbouring countries. Unsolicited goods that keep pouring in from the public have also become an issue for many National Societies.

Q: Why don't you accept donated items?

A: It's heart-warming to see the solidarity and support pouring in from around the world, however we need to make sure that people receive the kind of help they need. Goods such as clothes, food and household items can be difficult to sort, store, transport and distribute. We are asking everyone who want to send a donation to first check what the needs are with their local Red Cross or Red Crescent Society, and don't send any items that are not requested. The most effective form of support is a cash donation.

Q: Why should we donate cash instead of items?

Cash donation allows the Red Cross to scale up its response and procure items that people actually need or provide them with cash assistance, so that they can use it for what is most needed for themselves. Individuals, organizations and states can make contributions to the appeals of their National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society or donate to the IFRC Emergency Appeal.

Q: Why don't you take on international volunteers?

A: We ask people who wish to volunteer to contact their local Red Cross or Red Crescent Society as there is much you can do to support Ukraine and its neighbours remotely as well as people in need in your own communities. The Ukrainian Red Cross and neighbouring National Societies have already mobilized thousands of in-country volunteers who have local knowledge, language skills, local community understanding and connections, and, most importantly, the necessary Red Cross training to assist people in need in an efficient and coordinated manner. Due to the urgency of the situation, they have limited capacity to take on and train international volunteers.

IFRC actions for risk mitigation:

- Provided messaging for National Societies on unsolicited goods and volunteers
- Produced video and social media assets to promote cash donations

Resources:

- [Key messages on unsolicited goods and volunteers](#)
- [E-mail template for volunteering offers response](#)
- Video: Why are donations of cash best? [editable version](#)
- Social media cards:
 - Unsolicited goods: [downloadable version](#) (English), [editable version](#)
 - International volunteering offers: [downloadable version](#) (English), [editable version](#)

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