

# NEWS OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES

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## Lebanon

### RED CROSS VOLUNTARY WORKERS

*The man of today, divided between fear and optimism in the face of modern science and techniques, runs the risk of no longer being able to reason soundly and of not being capable of judging objectively daily events, those which the future holds and, finally, himself. He forgets that none of his actions, his feelings or even his thoughts have any real value except in the extent to which they are concerned in the interest of his fellow-men, and that the characteristic of man lies in the freedom which is given him to translate this interest in others into action.*

*This action is important not only for the person who accomplishes it, but for the person who benefits from it. It is inspired by what could be called an "idealistic realism", which is what the idealism of the Red Cross is, and this is extremely well explained by Mrs Saab, Secretary-General of the Lebanese Red Cross in a speech which she made in Beirut on the occasion of the meeting of participants in the different preparatory courses for voluntary aids.*

*She was therefore speaking to Red Cross voluntary workers and her speech, given in Arabic, has been translated into French by Mrs. Issa-el-Khoury, a member of the Central Committee of the National Society. In view of the importance of the problem and the interesting way in which Mrs Saab has dealt with it, we now publish her speech below :—*

In spite of the progress achieved in the sphere of science and techniques, and in spite of man's attempts to conquer space, humanity is passing through a period fraught with worry, fear, disappointments, physical and moral suffering. Never has the world had greater need for the principles and thought of the Red Cross to

face the difficulties of modern times, and to solve them in a constructive manner. It is therefore necessary to draw on the energy and enthusiasm of youth. The latter is ready to serve suffering humanity, but its enthusiasms must be channelled.

In his book "*A Memory of Solferino*", Henry Dunant stressed on countless occasions the necessity to enlist the aid of everybody: men, women, young people, those who hold power, those who modestly remain apart, the simple workman, the poor just as much as the rich, the intellectual just as much as the common man. Dunant wanted every single person to be called upon to co-operate in his humanitarian work.

Now, the Red Cross was born from the appeal of the great philanthropist which Dunant was. It is the living expression of love of one's neighbour, of the individual's devotion to all his fellow-men throughout the world. It demands the help of men of goodwill, of all social conditions. Everybody, in the sphere and with the knowledge which are his own, can take part in its multiple activities. Every man must help in building a new world, not only for himself and for his own, but for his neighbour whoever he may be. Furthermore, the habit of responsibility will give to those who assume it a stronger personality, thanks to the experience acquired in different spheres, and in the same way it will teach them the discipline necessary to all work. People who offer their help to those who suffer are continually reinforcing the voluntary services of the Red Cross. Public opinion, thanks to the teaching of these services, has a better knowledge of the Red Cross and its principles and gives it material and moral support, which it needs to develop its different activities.

It cannot be denied that the voluntary worker is a very useful link in the chain which unites the Red Cross to the National Society. It is easier for him in fact to learn of the desires and needs of the public, and therefore to obtain the material aid necessary for the accomplishment of our task.

Now, to reach a higher number of voluntary workers, to maintain intact their enthusiasm and their willingness to serve, and to facilitate their participation in our institution, it is necessary to organise the work and establish a programme of the services which they can render and which are expected of them, taking into account

the responsibilities which will be given them. Strict co-operation and sincere understanding must be fostered between them and the instructors.

The instructors are helped, in the accomplishment of their task, by voluntary workers, whose field of action they enlarge, and frequently one discovers in the latter the essential qualities of enlightened leaders.

Voluntary workers must be given a job that interests them and which develops their capacities, just as it is also necessary that the job to be done remains within the limits of their capabilities, and that they always maintain contact with the Red Cross. One can recognise the ideal voluntary worker by the following qualities : a true love of one's neighbour ; an open mind, ready to learn ; a profound belief in the work to be accomplished ; a sincere desire to co-operate with the Red Cross ; the courage to try new experiments and draw up fresh plans for the future, and even be ready to revise them if necessary ; the force to communicate enthusiasm and energy to others ; perseverance in the work so that the desired aim can be achieved.

As the Red Cross relies on the support of the voluntary workers to carry out the task on which it is set, it is necessary to form a special committee of voluntary workers. The head of the committee must draw up a programme, including an enumeration of urgent necessities and needs of a social nature ; form a group dealing especially with the voluntary workers, and whose job it is to draw up a work plan for them ; to recruit voluntary workers, choose them and guide them, supervise their work and recognise their merits.

The head of the committee must also look after the following questions : the nature and quantity of the work required ; the number of voluntary workers needed in the different services ; limits to what is asked of the voluntary workers concerning hours of work (morning, afternoon, evening, whole day, half day, two hours, etc.) ; the arrangement of the work (one day a week or more) ; the supervision of the work of voluntary workers, who owe it to themselves to accept this supervision.

The Red Cross offers to all those with the right spirit the opportunity to work under its banner, to safeguard human dignity.