

## Seventy-fifth anniversary of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society

*The Egyptian Red Crescent Society was founded on 24 October 1912. Although its 75 years of existence have been marked by wars and disasters, the efforts of its volunteers and the humanitarian spirit which constitutes the hallmark of its activities have enabled it to withstand every trial.*

*Through its numerous humanitarian endeavours on behalf of communities both at home and abroad in times of war and peace, the Egyptian Red Crescent has gained experience beneficial to many National Societies and has set an example far beyond its national borders.*

*The International Review of the Red Cross takes pleasure in publishing, on this occasion, an overview of the past and current activities of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society presented by its Secretary-General, Mr. Yahia Hassan Darwish. This issue covers the activities of the National Society in the health and relief fields. Its other activities will be described in the next issue of the Review.*

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The Egyptian Red Crescent Society was recognized by the ICRC on 1 February 1924 and became a member of the League on 30 May 1929. In accordance with its Statutes, its activities include health work, social welfare, relief for victims of armed conflicts and natural disasters, tracing and family reunification, youth, dissemination of humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law, and information.

### **I. Role of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society in health work**

The following activities are included in the health work:

#### *1. Health care and first-aid training*

One of the main activities of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society is the training of male and female health-care and first-aid volunteers. Since the

National Society depends on voluntary services to accomplish its aims, it concentrates on developing the human resources necessary to carry out the tasks entrusted to it, particularly emergency and disaster relief, and hospital medical activities.

## 2. *Blood donation*

The idea of setting up an Egyptian blood bank to help save war and disaster victims at home and abroad was born in 1953. The Egyptian Central Blood Bank, created in Cairo in 1973, is unique in the Middle East.

## 3. *National health campaigns*

The Egyptian Red Crescent Society organizes national health campaigns to vaccinate children against poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus and measles and protect them from dehydration. It likewise organizes campaigns to promote hygiene and blood donation in schools, universities and public service establishments.

## 4. *Creation of health-care establishments*

The Egyptian Red Crescent Society has made considerable efforts to create and run health-care establishments. These include two large hospitals, one in Qena and the other in Tanta, which have treated 87,343 cases; a first-aid post, 92 cases; 11 dispensaries, 54,744 cases; 14 out-patient clinics, 1,115,154 cases; two physiotherapy centres, 1,945 cases; five family-planning centres, 920 cases; two sea-rescue stations, 1,782 cases; a blood bank, 812 cases; a blood-disease treatment centre, 80 cases; and a maternity and child health-care centre, 150 cases.

## **II. Role of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society in national and international relief**

### **A. NATIONAL**

#### 1. *In wartime*

The Egyptian Red Crescent Society played a prominent role during the 1956, 1967 and 1973 wars. In particular, it:

- called on citizens to participate in voluntary activities on behalf of the nation in the fields of civil defence, health, relief or public services;
- became a rallying point for the training of male and female volunteers in relief and health-care activities;

- encouraged its volunteers and youth members to participate in the activities of all medical units in bringing relief to the wounded and ill and providing them with all the necessary assistance; including financial and other material assistance;
- organized medical teams and provided hospitals and medical units with the necessary supplies;
- hired medical and nursing units to cope with emergency situations;
- created a national information bureau responsible for the exchange, through the ICRC, of messages between citizens and their close relatives in the occupied territories. This bureau also handles requests concerning members of the armed forces, whatever their rank, and the reuniting of families of all nationalities;
- organized nationwide fund-raising campaigns on behalf of the war victims;
- paid regular visits and supplied all the necessary aid to the wounded in hospitals.

## 2. *In cases of disaster*

**Fires:** in 1913, fires broke out in several Egyptian villages, displacing many villagers and depriving them of food and shelter. The National Society sent the victims emergency relief including tents, 400 measures of maize and a medical team.

In 1925, the village of Al-Rahmania, in the province of Behera, was devastated by a serious fire. The victims received emergency relief from the Red Crescent.

In 1932, the National Society likewise sent relief to victims after a fire broke out in the village of Mit in the province of Daqahliya.

In 1934, a fire spread through the village of Mahallat Ziyad in the province of Gharbiya, destroying 68 homes and creating many victims. The Red Crescent rapidly sent emergency relief and a well-equipped medical team.

In 1953, the Society sent relief to the victims of the fire that broke out in the village of Qarni in the urban province of al-Ayat.

In 1955, it sent emergency aid to the victims of the fire which struck the village of Al-Mahdia in the urban centre of Tanta.

In 1959, it sent relief supplies to the victims of the fire in the village of Azba, As-sit Fadial in the Tamia centre in the province of Faiyûm.

In 1960, the Red Crescent sent relief to the victims of the fire which devastated the Sagha district and claimed many lives.

**Flash floods:** in 1919, 1923, and 1979, the Sa'eed region was swept by flash floods causing enormous damage. The Red Crescent convoy was the

first to bring the victims relief supplies and financial assistance as well as a medical team.

## B. INTERNATIONAL

### 1. *In wartime*

In 1912, the Egyptian Red Crescent Society launched its activities by giving aid to the victims in Libya of the Italo-Turkish war. It thus dispatched a large number of voluntary doctors and nurses to carry out humanitarian tasks on behalf of their Arab brothers. It also organized a collection of contributions in cash and kind on behalf of the war victims and supervised the evacuation of the sick, the wounded and people displaced from their homes.

In 1935, the National Society dispensed emergency aid to the sick and wounded during the Italo-Abyssinian war.

In 1936, it gave financial aid to the victims of the Spanish civil war.

In 1945, it dispatched a medical team to care for the victims of the serious disturbances in Syria; it also sent financial aid.

In 1957, it sent relief to the victims of the Algerian war. It helped to set up a provisional body known as the Algeria week High Committee (“Haut Comité pour la Semaine d’Algérie”) in charge of collecting contributions on behalf of war victims from organizations and private sources. The Committee had its headquarters with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.

The same year, the Red Crescent sent aid and relief to the wounded of “El-Amamah”, in Amman, after hundreds of homes were destroyed causing hundreds of victims, many of whom died, among the children, women and old people.

In 1969, the Red Crescent sent emergency aid to the war victims in Syria and Jordan as well as Nigeria.

In 1972, it sent emergency aid to Lebanon, consisting mainly of large quantities of blood to save the victims of the conflict.

Since 1979, it has been sending aid to the victims of the war in Afghanistan.

### 2. *In cases of disaster*

**Earthquakes:** the Egyptian Red Crescent Society has played a prominent role in helping earthquake victims throughout the world: Albania (1921), Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey (1928), New Zealand (1931), Cuba (1932), India (1934), Greece (1955), Iran (1957), Morocco (1960),

Yugoslavia (1962), Turkey (1967), Peru (1970), Nepal (1971). Its role has consisted mainly in providing the victims with medical, financial and material assistance.

**Floods:** some countries have been the victim of floods which have destroyed homes and submerged entire villages and cities. The Red Crescent has sent financial, medical and material assistance to those countries: Belgium (1926), France (1930), Syria (1941), Lebanon (1955), Java and Indonesia (1958), Somalia (1961), Pakistan and Algeria (1962), India, the Philippines, Morocco and Ghana (1963), Malaysia (1967), India (1968), Tunisia (1974) and Sudan (1975).

**Cyclones:** the Egyptian Red Crescent provided necessary medical and material assistance to cyclone victims in: Bahrain (1959), Cyprus (1970), Yemen (1972), Mauritius (1980).

**Flash floods:** in 1959, the Libyan town of Derna was the victim of flash floods causing human and material losses of disastrous proportions. The Egyptian Red Crescent sent the necessary aid to the victims.

**Drought:** some regions of the African continent have recently been afflicted by severe drought. This has resulted in decreased agricultural production and an acute shortage of food. Ensuing famines have claimed millions of human lives. The Egyptian Red Crescent has sent the victims emergency supplies, particularly food and medicines.

The National Society's total expenditure for relief activities between the beginning of 1985 to 30 June 1987 amounted to 2,128,300 Egyptian pounds.

*(to be continued)*