



JAM'İYAT-E HELĀL-E AḤMAR-E IRĀN

JAM'İYAT-E HELĀL-E AḤMAR-E IRĀN (The Red Crescent Society of Iran), similar to its predecessor, Jam'iyat-e Šir o ḵoršid e sorḵ-e Irān (Iran's Red Lion and Sun Society), a non-governmental humanitarian organization affiliated with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The Federation, founded in 1919 to promote the health activities of the Red Cross societies, today coordinates activities of 188 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide. The International Federation Secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland. The Federation leads and organizes, in close cooperation with the National Societies, relief assistance missions responding to large-scale emergencies.

This entry is divided into two sections: 1. Jam'iyat-e Šir o ḵoršid-e sorḵ-e Irān; 2. Jam'iyat-e Ḥelāl-e aḥmar-e Irān.

1. JAM'İYAT-E ŠIR O ḴORŠID-E SORḴ-E IRĀN

Historical antecedents. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was founded in 1863 in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field was approved by the Geneva Conference on 22 August 1864 (see "Convention ... 1864"). Although Iran accepted the protocol of the Geneva Convention which served as the origin of the Red Cross organization in December 1874, no action



was taken for establishing a foundation or organization for relief working in the country (Amir A'lam, p. 2; Āḍari Šahrežā'i, p. 77). In 1906, 'Abd-al-Šamad Mirzā Momtāz-al-Salṭana, then Iran's ambassador in Paris (Bāmdād, II, p. 181) was assigned by the Iranian government to take part in the third International Congress of the Red Cross in Geneva. There, he gained the congress's approval concerning Iran's use of the Šir o ḳoršid (Lion and Sun) emblem instead of those of Red Cross or Red Crescent (Āḍari Šahrežā'i, pp. 78-79; *Moḍākarāt-e naḳostin Majles-e šurā-ye melli*, p. 320).

The first move for establishing Jam'iyat-e Šir o ḳoršid-e sorḳ-e Irān was made in the year 1909 by Amir A'lam (1839-1924, for his biography, see Yaḡmā'i), a physician trained in Europe. In a report published in May 1922 in Tehran, Amir A'lam (p. 2) stated that, in 1909, a group of the physicians of Tehran's *Dār al-fonun* College organized the institution as Jam'iyat-e Šir o ḳoršid-e sorḳ-e Irān and made a flag bearing the image of a lion and sun in red with a white background, which became the official emblem of Iran's Red Lion and Sun Society; this is the only informative statement concerning the beginning of the organization. Another attempt came from a group of members of the third term of the House of Representatives (1914-16). They established an organization known as the National Defense Committee (Komita-ye defā'-e melli, including Nežām-al-Salṭana Māfi, Moḡammad-Šādeḳ Ṭabāṭabā'i, Solaymān Mirzā Eskandari, and Sayyed Ḥasan Modarres), out of concern for the Russian army's probable invasion of Tehran during World War I; after January 1916, they also established an organization called Jam'iyat-e Šir o ḳoršid-e sorḳ-e Irān for the purpose of giving aid to those wounded in the war (E'zām Qodsi, p. 397-98; Mollā'i Tavāni, pp. 320-21; also see the report in *Kāva*, p. 7, where Sardār As'ad Baḳtiāri is mentioned as the founder). Amir A'lam (p. 2) wrote that he played a role in the emergence of this organization too. The name has been referred to as Šir o ḳoršid-e sorḳ by Aḡmad Kasravi (p. 647) and E'zām Qodsi (p. 397) and as Ḳoršid-e sorḳ by Āḍari Šahrežā'i (p. 82).

Two people were particularly influential in the early development of Jam'iyat-e Šir-o ḳoršid-e Sorḳ-e Irān from the date of its establishment up to the Revolution of 1978-79. One was Amir A'lam, who founded the Society and always supported it, and the other was Ḥasan Ḳaṭibi Nuri (July 1916-Sept. 2001), who became its director in 1949. Amir A'lam wrote a few articles in Tehran newspapers in 1922 about establishing the Šir o ḳoršid sorḳ. In the same year, he translated into Persian the regulations that the Red Cross World Society had legislated concerning the establishment of a society related to it in



any country, and presented this to the king, *Aḥmad Shah Qājār* (r. 1909-26; Tašayyod, ed., p. 122). This text became the basis of the statute of Jam'iyat-e Šir-o *koršid-e sork*, which was signed in January 1923 by Moḥammad-Ḥasan Mirzā Qājār, the crown prince. Based on the Introduction of the statute, Moḥammad-Ḥasan Mirzā undertook the honorary directorship of the Society (Qāsemli, pp. 11-12). From 1925, more purposeful efforts were made for the official establishment of the Society. They included holding some sessions of the Society in cities other than Tehran. Also in 1925, the Society published the first issue of its first periodical, *Šir o koršid-e sork-e Irān*, a monthly which appeared irregularly (Šadr Hāšemi, III, pp. 95-99).

In 1927, Ḥasan Mostawfi-al-Mamālek, an eminent politician was elected as the chairman and Amir A'lam as the vice-chairman of the Society, and upon Mostawfi-al-Mamālek's death in 1931, Amir A'lam was elected as his successor. During these years, Amir A'lam, who was also the member of the House of Representatives in various terms, used his position to promote the Society (e.g., see *Moḏākarāt-e Majles*, the 8th term, 23rd session). In 1929, in a conference held by the World Red Cross Society in Geneva, the emblem of Jam'iyat-e Šir o *koršid-e sork* was officially recognized beside the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems as a symbol having immunity in certain situations such as battlefields (see "Convention for the Amelioration of the Wounded," Article 19). From mid-1930 until 1941, Rezā Shah (r. 1924-41) undertook the Society's directorship symbolically, but after his abdication and departure from Iran following the occupation of Iran by the Allies forces during World War II, vast changes were made in the Society's directorship.

The new king Moḥammad-Rezā Shah (r. 1941-79) undertook the Society's directorship in the years 1941-49. He ordered change of the Society's statute to authorize him to appoint his sister, Šams, in 1946 as the chairperson of the Society. By other changes to the statute, in addition to investigating the affairs of the injured and of wartime wounded and prisoners, the Society undertook duties such as giving aid to the destitute and poor people (*Iranšahr* II, p. 1445). In May 1949, Kaṭibi Nuri was elected as the Society's managing director, the second highest position after the chairman in the hierarchy of the Society's structure. Kaṭibi served without compensation in this position until the victory of the Revolution of 1978-79. He was also elected to the House of Representatives in 1962 and became the Deputy Spokesman of the House in 1965. This position was a good opportunity for Kaṭibi to promote the Society's activities as well as to provide contributions to its budget (Kaṭibi, pp. 129-32).



From the mid-1940s, the Society tried to organize its revenue stream. In 1947, the Parliament enacted a law, based on which the Society would receive a portion of the public payments made for paper bags and sending telegraphs (Moḏākarāt-e Majles, 15th term, 28th session). Also, in 1949, by virtue of another law, it was prescribed that one-thousandth (1/1000) of the total amount of every business transaction involving lands and houses be allocated to the Society (Moḏākarāt-e Majles, 16th term, 107th session). Other revenues of the Society, in addition to the budget allocated by the government, included the annual membership fees and one-fourth of the total amount of each of the state's foreign exchange contracts (*Irānšahr* II, p. 1446).

Ḳaṭībi's efforts, the growth of the revenue, and the support that the Society received from the royal court due to the role of its chairperson Princess Šams Pahlavi enabled the Society to expand the range of its activities. During the 1960s, the Society started projects in offshore areas, which included building hospitals in the Dubai and Fujayrah emirates (Qāsemlu, p. 14). Inside the country, the most important activities of the Society had a therapeutic approach. Based on a report submitted by Ḳaṭībi to the Parliament in 1971, in that year the Society had nearly 5,000 hospital beds. In the same year, a law was enacted by the government, which authorized the Ministry of Health to transfer the ownership of all its hospitals to Jam'iyat-e Šir o ḳoršid or to the state universities. Through this action, the Society practically became the supervisor of a vast part of the state therapeutic facilities; by 1978, the number of hospital beds that it supervised had reached 15,000 (Nurbālā, p. 64).

The expanded range of the Society's activities and its management of a major part of the state therapeutic facilities caused the Society to be always mentioned as one of the mainstays of the state's health and therapeutic structure (beside the Health Ministry, Imperial Organization of the Social services, and a few other institutions). This was explicitly mentioned in the budget discussions for 1978 (the final year of the five-year prosperity project), on the eve of the Revolution, as a result of which, the Society was permitted to increase the number of its hospital beds (*Ḳolāša-ye barnāma-ye panjom-e 'omrāni-e kešvar*, note 2-2). Of the 24,000 hospital beds that were added across the country during the five-year program, 2,700 beds were owned by the Society (*ibid.*, note 3-3).

The activities of Jam'iyat-e Šir o ḳoršid-e Irān may be categorized in terms of two different periods, namely, from the establishment until 1948 and then from 1948 up to 1979. In the first period, despite Amir A'lam's efforts, the



Society's active development was limited. One of its noteworthy significant achievements was providing aid to the people of the earthquake-stricken Šīrvān region in Khorasan in 1929. In the second period, involvement of the Society in meeting the needs of the earthquake victims of Boin Zahrā (near Qazvin) in September 1963 was the most notable relief operation. During this period, giving aid to the people sustaining damage from various disasters and engagement in therapeutic activities for the poor were the two pillars of the Society's activities. The structure of the Society's relief section during this period has not been published; the only written material concerning this is a report prepared by the army about the Society's relief units. According to it, any of the relief units of the Society consisted of three automobiles and 10 large and 50 small tents provided for giving aid to 400 persons.

Ḍabiḥ-Allāh Šafā (1911-1999) was the chief editor of The Society's periodical, Šīr o ḳoršid-e sorḳ-e Irān, from 1948 to 1962, publishing a total of 53 issues (Ḥaydari, p. 639).

Starting in January 1961, the Society's Youth Organization (Sāzmān-e javānān-e šīr o ḳoršid) published a monthly periodical, titled *Pahlavi-nāma-ye niki wa nikukārān*, with Qodsi Mas'udi and then Maḥmud Puršālči as its directors. Its publication continued up to the Revolution of 1978-79 (Ḥaydari, p. 206).

JAM'İYAT-E HELĀL-E AḤMAR (THE IRI RED CRESCENT SOCIETY)

With the victory of the Revolution in 1979 drastic changes were imposed on the structure, management, and responsibilities of Jam'iyat-e Šīr o ḳoršid sorḳ-e Irān. The series of actions taken by new rulers reflect the fact that, until the beginning of [Iran-Iraq War](#) (22 September 1980), they viewed the Society as a totally untrustworthy institution—a suspicion mainly based on the Society's background of having been directed by Princess Šams Pahlavi. Thus, Ḳaṭibi was imprisoned and sentenced to six years of jail (Torābi, p. 318). Among the first actions of the interim government of the revolutionary period was its edict of 15 April 1979 that all the therapeutic, health, medical, and nursing education institutions belonging to the Society be transferred to the Ministry of Health (“Mošawwaba-ye hay'at-e wazirān,” n. 1), which caused the Society to stop all its medical services.

With the start of the Iran-Iraq War and the pressing need for volunteer forces, especially for the purpose of assisting in the medical treatment of the wounded, there appeared some moderation in the attitude of the ruling



factions toward the Society. Eventually on 10 January 1984, the parliament enacted the law on the Society's duties and responsibilities and also officially changed its name to Helāl-e Aḥmar (Qānun e waḏāyef wa mas'uliyathā-ye Helāl-e Aḥmar, n. 2). Four years before, on 3 September 1980, the government had sent a letter to the Red Crescent and Red Cross World Federation, stating that, in order to prevent the multiplicity of emblems and to help in their unity, it relinquished its right to use the Red Lion and Sun emblem and would use the Red Crescent emblem for its own Society from then on. The Iranian government declared this again in a new letter on 23 July 2000 but added that, in the event of an increase in the number of new emblems, it would reserve the right to use the symbol of Red Lion and Sun (letter No. 620/4329 of the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran).

The Red Lion and Sun Symbol is still held valid by the Red Cross and Red Crescent International Society and is affirmed in the signed protocols. In the protocol annexed on 12 August 1949 to the Geneva Conventions, additionally, the "third protocol emblem," called the Red Crystal, was adopted to serve the same purpose as the three then in use. The new emblem was designed and approved for the purpose of gradual unification of the emblems of all member countries of the World Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (Article 2, note 3 and article 3, note 1).

The Red Crescent Society functioned quite actively during the Iran-Iraq War by dispatching volunteers to the warfronts and providing assistance to the wounded and others in need (Gudarzi, pp. 12-50). During the war years, no serious attempts were made to design a new structure for the Society, which was basically changed after the Revolution. A few months before both countries accepted the UN Security Council Resolution 598 (18 July 1988), which led to cease-fire on 20 September 1988, on 28 April 1988, Iran's parliament legislated the statute of Jam'iyat-e Helāl-e Aḥmar (Red Crescent Society; "Qānun e asās-nāma-ye Jam'iyat-e Helāl e Ahmar ..."). By virtue of this law (article 7), the Society's administration is run by the chairperson (*ra'is*) designated by the minister of health and therapeutics and authorized by the president. Another officer called secretary general (*dabir-e koll*) is the vice-chairman responsible for the administrative and executive affairs of the Society (article 13). Moreover, a number of new financial resources are considered for the Society. These financial resources, in addition to governmental aid, include one percent of each air travel and cruise ticket, one Rial of the cost of every registered mail letter, and two and a half Rials for each



telegram sent (article 17). However, a number of amendments (at least six until 2009) and a new interpretation enacted by the parliament, all concerning the statute of the Society, as well as occasional changes in the structure of the Society, have been the most important problems faced by the Society. Based on the latest structure, the Society is now made up of four departments (*sāzmān*)—relief and rescue (*emdād wa najāt*), medical provisions (*tadārokāt-e pezeški*), volunteers (*dāvṭalabān*), and youth (*javānān*; Qāsemlu, pp. 37-38).

The duty of relief and rescue is to help victims and the injured in natural disasters and accidents and also to educate people in coping with such events. The medical provision organization, having established a few drug manufacturing plants in the country, is responsible for producing different types of drug. The volunteers organization is authorized to employ various individuals and train them in aid work. The function of the Youth organization is to attract young people toward the Society and employ them in relief services and charity work (for information about the different duties of these organizations, see Qosian, pp. 57-59; Ekrāmi-nasab, pp. 27-31).

Due to the fact that Iran is a seismically active land, one of the permanent duties of the Society is to provide aid to victims of earthquakes. In the years after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, at least two severe earthquakes occurred in Iran, one in [Manjil](#) and [Rudbār](#) (31 June 1990) and the other in [Bam](#) (26 December 2003). In both cases the Society undertook the major burden of providing aids for the victims. At the time of Manjil earthquake, the Society was able to employ workers who had considerable experience of similar situations during the Iran-Iraq War; this asset the Society had lost by the time of the Bam earthquake; it had dismissed a good number of its experienced workers. As a result, its relief activities for victims of the Bam earthquake faced criticisms (Bāqi, p. 18).

The Society extended its work beyond the geographical limits of Iran by establishing a few relief work centers abroad—in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Nakhchivan (Naḵjavān, Republic of Azarbaijan); in Africa, in Mali, Niger, and Ghana; and in Europe, in Tusla (Ukraine) and Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina). The activities of these centers are supervised by the deputy department of therapeutics and rehabilitation (*Sāzmān-e behdāšt wa darmān*) of the Society. During 1990 and thereafter, the Society made great efforts to extend its international relations. For instance, in September 2003, the international conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Youths was held in Shiraz (Bourgeois, pp. 30-31). Also, in summer



2004, the Red Cross and Red Crescent International Committee's bulletin, which is published in Cairo, published one special edition in Persian along with its usual Arabic one.

During these years (1999-2005), under the directorship of Aḥmad-'Ali Nurbālā, efforts were made to regain the former hospital beds of the Society and to renew its therapeutic duty. Nurbālā also criticized the hasty change of the emblem of Red Lion and Sun to Red Crescent (Nurbālā, pp. 83-84). The procedure defined by the World Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent for selection of a society's chairman—election by vote of its members—is in contrast with the procedure followed by the Society in Iran, whose chairman is appointed. This has provided grounds for criticism (Nurbālā, p. 66).

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