



Relief &
Reconciliation
for Syria

R&R Syria AISBL GENERAL RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

As adopted by the Board Meeting of 8 February 2013

Our Values and Principles

- 1) Respect for human dignity
- 2) Respect for freedom and human rights
- 3) Respect for spirituality
- 4) Respect for diversity
- 5) Individuality and community
- 6) Justice and truth
- 7) Forgiveness and mercy

- 8) Building peace
- 9) Local co-ownership
- 10) Independence
- 11) Accountability
- 12) Impartiality
- 13) Neutrality
- 14) Care for the youth

Our Values and Principles

Conscious of our responsibility towards our neighbours, we adopt the following values and principles as basis for our work.

1) **Respect for human dignity**

We believe that the dignity of every human being is unimpeachable. Every single person should be acknowledged as an inherently valuable member of the human community and as a unique expression of life. The integrity of life and the right for a respectful and ethical treatment are inviolable. No human being can ever lose this dignity; all shall be treated humanely in all circumstances, by saving lives and alleviating suffering

2) **Respect for freedom and human rights**

We believe that all human beings should enjoy freedom in the exercise of their inviolable and inalienable fundamental rights. Both men and women of all ages and all nations are born free and equal in rights. The respect of their fundamental rights is a cornerstone for the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. We base our work on these rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the European Convention on Human Rights.

3) **Respect for spirituality**

We emphasize the freedom of any individual or community to manifest religion or belief in practice, teaching, observance and worship. No one should ever be forced to act in a manner contrary to their religious beliefs or ethical convictions. Everybody has the right to refuse participation in any act or procedure that contradicts their conscience. Although we do not represent or favour any religion or belief, we will do our utmost to accommodate all persons who wish to practice their religion, as long as they do not harm or harass the freedom of others.

4) Respect for diversity

We understand the concept of diversity as encompassing acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual and each society. Diversity is the expression of freedom each human person enjoys. We are searching for the common moral ground of a society where diversity is more than simple coexistence.

5) Individuality and community

We wish to strike the right balance between individuality and community. Respect for individuality implies that one should be free from coercion in deciding to act, as long as these acts do not harm the freedom or welfare of others. We feel obliged to protect confidentiality, intimacy and privacy. At the same time, we believe that we are social beings. Community is more than the sum of individuals; it is an inherent expression of human life. We respect communities and their right to express themselves and we believe the relationship between individual and community should be governed by the principle of subsidiarity: any question of common interest should be dealt with at the *lowest possible* level and the *highest necessary*, starting with the family and the local community and going up to the government and the international community.

6) Justice and truth

We believe that there is no peace without justice and truth. All human beings have the right to express their grievance and demand for just and fair treatment. The moral corruption of dictatorship and war must be addressed to achieve sustainable peace. It is not our role to judge and to impose justice, but we will extend special care to all victims of torture and injustice; we will try to establish facts and make their voices heard. We believe that blind revenge is no form of justice; justice can only be established if the cycle of revenge is broken.

7) Forgiveness and mercy

We believe that peace and welfare can only come along with forgiveness and mercy. It is not up to us to define the criteria for pardon and amnesty in every individual case, but we will try to foster the values of repentance, sacrifice and mutual forgiveness. The cycle of revenge can only be broken through a generous act of humanity towards those who have failed and have burden themselves with guilt. No individuals shall be indicted for the deeds of their community as long as they have not actively participated in the commitment of crimes.

8) Building peace

We understand peacebuilding as a moral process for achieving justice and reconciliation. For this purpose, we are relying on moral premises that no government or military power can impose. This process includes religious and non-religious dimensions. Especially in a conflict that evolves along sectarian lines, the involvement of community leaders is central for building peace. We wish to include those who enjoy moral authority in their respective community. We want to bring them together for avoiding retaliation and sectarian strife. We want to unite them around a common cause: the future of the youth, building bridges of dialogue and cooperation between communities, addressing their grievances, fostering forgiveness and opening new horizons.

9) Local co-ownership

We want to work at local level with the active involvement of local communities. All our activities will be based on the needs of potential beneficiaries and carried out under the co-deciding authority of a steering committee, composed by local moral authorities of different communities. Amongst them, religious leaders will play a prominent role. Our programmes will be defined in consensus with them, as long as our basic values and principles are not compromised.

10) Independence

As international non-profit association, we will cherish and maintain our independence. We will obey to the laws and to the customs of our countries of establishment, as long as these do not violate universal human rights or international humanitarian law, but we will not accept any support or funding that might compromise the objectives, values and rules that we have given ourselves.

11) Accountability

We stress our full accountability to the law and to the objectives, values and rules that we have given ourselves. All donors can demand an account from us for the use of their money. All potential beneficiaries and local partners can demand account from us for the respect of our values and rules. We will fully disclose all our resources and their use.

12) Political neutrality

As a peacebuilding initiative, we are neutral in political terms, not affiliated to any government or party, but we are not neutral in our values. We are trying to contribute to a free and inclusive peace, based on democracy and human rights. For ourselves, we adopt the principles of non-violent action, but we do not judge those who are fighting in defence of their freedom or their beloved. Neutrality does not imply ignorance or indifference. We will stay neutral in the attempt to facilitate dialogue between parties, but we will not shy away from denouncing crimes against humanity or other violations of fundamental human rights.

13) Impartiality

We underline our impartiality in the delivery of services to those in need. Our aid is impartial and not based on nationality, race, religion, or political point of view; it is based on need alone. The only condition for accessing our centres is the respect for the dignity and the rights of others and the acceptance of our internal house rules.

14) Care for the youth

Our special concern is the future of the youth. We want to take care of the most vulnerable and extend special protection to children and young women. We want to apply best standards in terms of psycho-social assistance and education, but we will respect the diversity of religious beliefs and convictions in the transmission of values.