



CODE OF CONDUCT (COC) SYRIA CIVIL DEFENCE (SCD)

Preamble:

The SCD Administration,
Based on the SCD Statement of the Principles signed by 69 leaders and publicised on 2014/10/25, within the framework of International Humanitarian Law, based on international conventions that protect and safeguard human rights and vulnerable individuals, decides to adopt and ratify the following Code Of Conduct (COC):

Purpose:

*The COC seeks to guard the standards of behaviour of the SCD volunteers. It is not about the details of operations, including how to provide search and rescue response or how to conduct life-saving operations. Rather, it seeks to maintain high standards of independence, effectiveness and impact to which international and professional organizations that respond to disasters, wars, and conflicts aspire to, following the example of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. This includes the bombardment and fighting that harm civilians in Syria. The COC is interpreted and applied according to the SCD Statement of Principles and International Humanitarian Law.

Rules of Conduct:

The main rules of conduct for the SCD are to fulfil duties to provide disaster and war response in Syria, to carry out search and rescue operations and to save the maximum number of lives.

1. The Human Imperative of saving lives and rescue comes first:

The right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle, which should be enjoyed by civilian Syrians. In our capacity as individual members and volunteers in the SCD, we strongly recognize our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance to our people. Hence the need for unimpeded access to affected populations is of fundamental importance in exercising that responsibility. Our motive is saving the maximum number of civilian lives.

2. Search and rescue response is given to civilians regardless of the race of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of human need alone.

Civilian and human life is as precious in one part of a country as another. Thus, in implementing this approach, we recognise the crucial role played by women in war and disaster-prone communities in the world, and will ensure that this role is supported, not diminished, by our search and rescue operations that we carry out in response to the fighting in Syria.

3. Search and rescue missions will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint

We will not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed because our work comes from our values and principles.

4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of any political party or agendas, which are not compatible with the missions of search and rescue of civilians from our people.

We will never knowingly – or through negligence – allow ourselves, or our volunteers, to be used to gather information of a political, military or economically sensitive nature for bodies or entities that may serve purposes other than those which are strictly humanitarian, and for the purposes of saving civilian lives.

We, in the SCD, are ready to receive assistance and expertise, in order to carry out search and rescue operations, for purposes of professionalism and institutional exchange of knowledge and expertise.

We value and promote the voluntary giving of labour and finances by institutions, organizations and concerned individuals to support our work and recognise the independence of action promoted by such voluntary motivation. In order to protect our independence, we will seek to avoid dependence upon a single funding source.

5. Individual Civil Defenders will be held strictly accountable to the values of neutrality, impartiality, and humanity, and to the letter and spirit of this Code of Conduct and all SCD policies.

As the legitimacy of SCD derives from its volunteers, it is crucial that all SCD volunteers be held to the highest standard of personal accountability. While the difficulties of operating in a conflict zone are understood, SCD members are strictly prohibited, on penalty of expulsion, from:

- Engaging in embezzlement, corruption, dishonesty, or other breaches of integrity that could detract from the performance of SCD's duties or harm its reputation and good standing with its volunteers, the communities it serves, and its donors
- Any other activity that could be injurious to SCD's reputation as a neutral, impartial, independent humanitarian organisation, or that contravenes the spirit of its values and this code of conduct

6. We shall respect culture and custom

We will endeavour to respect the culture, structures and customs of our resistant Syrian people, and we shall ensure that we respect all and will refrain from doing any action that is considered harmful to any component of the Syrian people.

7. We shall attempt to build local capacities

Our people in general and members of the SCD in particular possess great capacities. Where there are vulnerabilities, we will strengthen these capacities and receive technical and professional support from international partners. We shall use these partnerships appropriately in search and rescue response to save the maximum number of lives.

8. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of search and rescue

Disaster response assistance should never be imposed upon our volunteers or us. Effective relief and lasting rehabilitation can best be achieved where they are involved in establishing needs, receiving professional and technical training programs and capacitation.

9. Our responsibility towards donors:

Based on our main mission that is search and rescue response and saving the largest number of civilian lives possible by our individual members and volunteers, all our dealings with donors and beneficiaries shall reflect an attitude of openness and transparency. We recognise the need to report on our activities, both from a financial perspective and the perspective of effectiveness in an open manner. We will continue the provision of search and rescue response based on high standards of professionalism and interactive expertise in order to minimise the wasting of valuable resources.

10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise civilian Syrians affected by the bombardment and the fighting in Syria as dignified humans, not hopeless objects

Respect for Syrian civilian victims affected by the bombardment and the fighting, as humans who need rescue, should never be lost. In our public information to audiences around the world, we shall portray an objective image of the situation of our people's civilian victims. We are committed to cooperate and coordinate with international, regional and local media outlets in covering and documenting the missions and operations that our members, personnel and volunteers carry out to rescue Syrian civilian victims on the ground.

11. Maintaining and abiding by international conventions and charters

Maintaining and abiding by international conventions and charters that safeguard and protect civilians and applying them on the ground, and the readiness to integrate into the future executive authority of Syria based on a consensual national agreement or any consensual roadmap by the entire fabric of the Syrian people.

The SCD administration, having adopted the Code laid out above for the SCD members and volunteers, wishes that international community organizations, governments, and international non-governmental organizations recognize the SCD search and rescue response activities and operations to save the lives of civilian Syrians as well as recognise and respect the independence of the SCD and its professional humanitarian and impartial actions.

The SCD publicises these rules and directives to its members, personnel and volunteers working across the Syrian provinces to save the maximum number of civilian Syrian lives.

