HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is an officially-recognized national society enjoying an independent moral entity and a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It exercises its activities in Palestine and within Palestinian communities in the Diaspora, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and the seven Red Cross and Red Crescent principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

PRCS was founded on 26 December 1968.

It started providing its medical services in a small clinic located in one of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, and was established as a society with an independent moral entity by virtue of a resolution issued by the sixth session of the Palestinian National Council, held in Cairo on 1 September 1969. As of that date, it became a major health and social institution affiliated to the Palestine Liberation Organization apparatus. It employs thousands of staff members and has tens of thousands of members and volunteers, comprising of Palestinians, Arabs and international.

Throughout its journey, PRCS has operated along three major axes: developing its human resources, diversifying its services, in addition to building and modernizing its health and social centers.

It provides its sciences through us branches and sub branches and tens hospitals, social and medical centers in the OPT and Diaspora.
MISSION

PRCS is a national humanitarian organization that provides humanitarian assistance, health and social services to the Palestinian people when and where needed. As such, PRCS prevents and alleviates human suffering wherever it may be found, protects life and health, ensures respect for human beings in times of peace, armed conflict and during emergencies, helps prevent diseases, promotes health and social development and encourages voluntary service.
PRCS programs target all Palestinians, including refugees, with a special focus on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, through the following programs:

- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Primary Health Care
- Secondary Health Care
- Disaster Management
- Rehabilitation and Ability Development
- Psycho – Social Support
- IHL and Dissemination
- Youth and Volunteers

In order to diversify and expand these services, PRCS has set up, within Palestine and the countries hosting Palestinian refugees -namely Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Iraq-, dozens of hospitals, EMS centers,
primary health care and psychosocial support centers, rehabilitation and ability development centers, disaster management units, general and specialized clinics, dispensaries and other facilities, with a view to serving local communities.

Given the particular situation experienced by Palestinians, many of whom are living under the yoke of occupation, and constantly being subjected to attacks, military incursions and blockades, while others reside in refugee camps-, PRCS has devised its strategy to ensure that its hospitals and various centers provide their services in times of calm and war, thus constantly fulfilling the health and social needs of Palestinians.
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)

**General Objective:** Providing high-quality Emergency Medical Services to Palestinians in the oPT under all circumstances.

EMS accompanied various phases where Palestinians were under direct attack, such as the war in Lebanon in 1982, and recurrent attacks during Al Aqsa Intifada and the latest war on Gaza in 2008/2009.

EMS is considered essential health services provided by PRCS to Palestinian citizens and all individuals in need, under normal and emergency conditions. Considering the importance of this humanitarian service, PRCS was mandated by the Palestinian National Authority in 1996, by virtue of a presidential decree, with full responsibility for these services in the West Bank and Gaza.
The EMS Program is split through. EMS Teams: It operates through 14 main stations and 26 sub stations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, in addition to the EMS center located at the PRCS branch in Syria. These centers are currently assisted by a fleet of 140 ambulances.

The EMS program deals with around 65,000 cases per year.

- **EM Institute:** It is one of the educational institutions affiliated to PRCS, was established in 1996 with the mission of preparing qualified individuals in the field of pre-hospitalization EMS services. It is unique in the occupied Palestinian territory, and is specialized in providing EMS training through its branches in Al Bireh and Gaza. The Institute is open to all social categories and local institutions, through training sessions and workshops aimed at spreading awareness and social guidance in the field of first aid and emergency medical care.

PRCS has acceded to the membership of International Trauma Life Support, USA, and has thus been accredited as a licensed and qualified ITLS center.
General Objective: providing marginalized and vulnerable Palestinians with quality community-based primary health care services under all conditions

PRCS develops its health services in line with WHO recommendations and based on key PHC principles. These services cover local needs in cooperation with other service providers, with a special focus on prevention, health promotion programs, encouraging community participation in the planning and implementation of various programs and providing curative health services through 53 centers in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Syria and Lebanon.

PHC services include:

- **Community-Based Development and Empowerment**: aims at reaching local communities through health education, awareness raising campaigns. The program is based on 75 Safe Motherhood Committees (SMC) in 75 areas in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

- **Reproductive health**: This program targets reproductive-age women (15-49) and aims at providing reproductive health services with a focus on care for pregnant women, post-natal follow-up and family planning.

- **Control and treatment of chronic disease (diabetes and high-blood pressure)**: with a special focus on prevention in order to limit the number of people suffering from these diseases.

- **Home visits**: targeting high risk pregnancies, newborns, the elderly, chronic disease patients suffering from cardiovascular
disease, as well as persons with special needs.

- **Emergency preparedness and response**: PHC supplies its centers with equipment, tools, medicine and disposable medical supplies to be used in times of need, as well as with publications and educational printed material, in order to be ready to face unforeseen emergencies or pandemics. The programme also operates mobile clinics, evening clinics and offers free medical days especially in areas lacking health services and/or isolated by the separation wall.

- **School Health**: The program is implemented in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. It focuses on health awareness-raising campaigns as well as community-based First Aid courses targeting students and teachers in areas where PHC centers operate.
SECONDARY HEALTH CARE

PRCS runs a total of 15 hospitals in Palestine and the Diaspora as follows: 4 in the West Bank in Jerusalem, Hebron, Al Bireh and Tulkarem, 2 in the Gaza Strip: Al Amal in Khan Younis and Al Quds in Gaza, 3 in Syria: Palestine in Al Yarmouk refugee camp, Yaffa in Damascus, Bissan in the north of Syria, 5 in Lebanon: Al Hamshari in Ein Hilweh refugee camp (Saida), Haifa in Burj Al Barajnah refugee camp (Beirut), Safad in Al Badawi refugee camp (Tripoli), Balsam in Al Rishidiyah refugee camp (Tyr), Nazareth in Al Bekka, and Palestine hospital in Egypt.

The PRCS hospitals receive more than one million persons per year.

These hospitals house departments for pediatrics, gynecology, obstetrics, general surgery, internal surgery, dermatology, nephrology, and cancer, in addition to Intensive Care Units.
DISASTER MANAGEMENT

**General Objective:** Strengthening risk reduction program and increasing the PRCS ability to respond to disasters.

PRCS’ role was underlined in major events where Palestinians were faced with disasters, such as the war in Lebanon in 1982, Al Aqsa Intifada, and the most recent war against Gaza. Numerous other interventions also took place during natural disasters. PRCS has, more than once, taken part in international aid missions such as in Kosovo, Yemen, Algeria, Morocco, India and Indonesia.

The activities of the Programme are:

- **Capacity building:** aimed at enhancing PRCS capacities in the field of disaster management by training its staff in various fields such as camp management, relief aid distribution, and medical aid in emergencies, communications, water and preparation of emergency equipment. PRCS has a network of more than 500 trained volunteers, capable of intervening in cases of emergency. It also endeavors to provide a constant level of stock materials needed for emergency relief and sheltering in the main and subsidiary stores located in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Moreover, PRCS possesses a field hospital with 50 surgical beds, and three advanced health units.

The program also helps in developing and enhancing the capacities of governmental and non-governmental local institutions to deal with disasters.

- **Risk reduction:** to increase local communities’ disaster response capacities, especially in marginalized areas.

- **School Based Risk reduction:** to enhance students and teachers’ resilience to disasters providing them with simple life-saving skills to equip them when faced with disasters (especially earthquakes).

- **Community-based awareness:** it aims at
DISASTER MANAGEMENT

raising the level of awareness among Palestinians in regard to potential disasters and the means to face and deal with them. The program focuses on targeting marginalized and disadvantaged communities by undertaking activities which focus on how to act during an earthquake, how to handle military ordinance and mines, raising awareness in regard to the effect of explosives, prevention against chemical weapons, and how to behave during bombings and shootings.
**General Objective:** Integrating disabled persons into local communities by developing their abilities and providing them with equal opportunities

PRCS’s efforts to rehabilitate and develop the abilities of disabled persons are built on a social and a rights-based perspective rather than on acts of charity or medical approach.

PRCS runs 29 rehabilitation centers and units in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip: 8 for the rehabilitation and ability development of children with mental retardation; 4 specialized education centers and schools for hearing impaired children; 2 sections for the rehabilitation of children suffering from cerebral palsy; 10 specialized centers and units for physical and occupational therapy; 5 centers for hearing and speech rehabilitation; mental retardation and 6 outreach rehabilitation teams.

PRCS also implements a community-based special education program (Home Enrichment Program) in 10 governorates in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, focusing on developing the capacities of mentally retarded children and on ensuring that they and their families are integrated into their communities.

PRCS also runs the only specialized Rehabilitation and Ability Development College (Khan Younis) in Palestine which delivers B.A. diplomas accredited by the Palestinian Ministry of Education. Moreover, many rehabilitation services are provided in rehabilitation units working under the umbrella of PRCS medical services in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. Also, there is a prosthetic limb factory in Syria.

**Rehabilitation services include:**
- Disability prevention and awareness-raising; promoting the rights of the disabled
- Early, diagnosis and intervention
- Home visits to disabled persons to cater to their needs
- Specialized programs (training, teaching,
special education, rehabilitation, therapy, psychosocial counseling, physical, occupational and speech therapy as well as creativity-promoting programs)

- Training and Follow-up programs for parents
- Support and creativity programs (sports for the disabled, arts, educational games libraries, etc)
- Assistive devices for children with disabilities, elderly and patient.

**Other social services:** PRCS runs 14 kindergartens and 4 nurseries in Hebron, Jenin, Arraba, Qabatya, Tulkarm, Bani Na’im and Khan Younis. It also operates an Elderly Home in Nablus and an orphanage in Tulkarm PRCS is a key partner in the Community-Based Rehabilitation Program, together with other organizations and institutions working in the West Bank.
**General Objective:** Contributing to the improvement of the psychosocial well-being of vulnerable groups in the OPTs and the Diaspora, to enhance their capacity and their coping mechanism for dealing with the effect of the ongoing conflict and to provide the necessary services when needed.

PRCS Psycho-Social Support Programme provides its services to the three following groups:
- PRCS staff & volunteers
- Beneficiaries of PRCS services
- The Palestinian society in general

The programme operates psychosocial centers in Jerusalem, Hebron, Jaba’a, Qalqilia, Gaza city and Khan Younis.

**Psycho-Social services include:**
- **Psychosocial support to caregivers (Love Bridge):** providing caregivers with skills required to cope with their children and to protect them from violence, physical ill-treatment and sexual abuse.
- **School-Based Psychosocial Support:** targeting children in the 5th and 6th elementary grades with a view to improving their psychosocial wellbeing and enhancing their interaction with the local community through acquiring related coping skills.
- **Community-Based Activities,** such as open days, festivals, theatre shows, workshops and trips: enabling children and their caregivers to interact, as well as increasing caregivers’ awareness of their children’s psychosocial needs.
- **Individual and group psychological counseling:** helping individuals, developing their skills and providing them with essential tools to help them to achieve sense of adaptation with the self and the community.
- **Training courses:** enhancing the efficiency
and capacities of staff and professionals in the psychosocial field.

- **Supervision**: improving the quality of services through enhancing psychosocial workers’ self awareness so they can provide services based on sound scientific, theoretical and practical basis.

Moreover, PSP runs a center for expressive art therapy through music, painting, plays, photography, etc. Art therapy plays a vital role in psychosocial interventions to help individuals suffering from psychological difficulties.
General Objective: Reinforcing Humanitarian Values within the Palestinian Society, in line with the goals and principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and with IHL provisions.

In order to achieve this goal, PRCS:
- organizes workshops and training courses on a regular basis, targeting PRCS staff, volunteers and civil society organizations, whether governmental or not, to introduce PRCS’s mission and goals, the basic principles of the International Movement (Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Voluntary Service, Unity, Universality), IHL, Movement components (IFRC, ICRC and national societies) and their relations with PRCS.
- organizes ad hoc workshops targeting staff of governmental institutions, especially the officers and staff of security police and military apparatuses, introducing them to IHL. It holds seminars focusing on the emblem in order to avoid its misuse, and to secure the respect and protection of medical missions.
- documents violations of IHL by occupation authorities against PRCS teams and facilities.
- develops capacities by training PRCS staff and volunteers as well as program coordinators, especially young ones, in the dissemination and circulation of information on PRCS and International Movement principles and services, as well as IHL, by organizing specialized training sessions in the fields of communication, public relations and information, in order to improve their competences and upgrade their community-based performance.
This programme includes two basic programs:

I. Youth Program:

**General Objective:** Contributing to developing youth capacities, enhancing their mental and physical skills in accordance with youth needs and those of their society, as well as directing attention toward leadership and development, according to PRCS values and principles.

PRCS organizes youth programs endeavoring to enhance the role of youths, by focusing on six major axes:

- Reinforcing the spirit of citizenship and belonging among youths, and involving them in decision-making processes.
- Developing their capabilities and contributing to building their personality and leadership skills.
• Raising awareness concerning issues such as health, society and the environment.
• Disseminating PRCS’s vocation and the principles of the International Movement through youth programs and activities.
• Consolidating partnerships with local, Arab and international youth institutions and bodies.
• Allowing young individuals to practice their various hobbies, develop their skills and creativity.

Major youth programs:

• **Awareness-raising relating to mines and unexploded ordinance:** This program, launched in 2002, aims to raise the awareness of the Palestinian society, and especially children, as to the danger of such items and the consequences of tampering with them through a group of specialized volunteers.

• **Summer Camps:** Summer camps organized by PRCS, every year tens of, are designed for children and adolescents,
II. Volunteers Program:

General Objective: Spreading enthusiasm concerning volunteer work in support of PRCS programs and local communities, with a special focus on youths, in view of exploiting their capacities and harnessing them for social development, and circulating the principles of volunteer work among society at large.

Subsidiary goals, which the Programme aims to achieve, include:

- Enhancing the spirit of volunteer work throughout the Palestinian society, and especially among youths.
- Involving volunteers in the dissemination of information regarding PRCS’s mission and the principles of the International Movement.
- Developing volunteers’ skills and capacities, polishing their talents, and positively exploiting their hobbies and energy.
- Reinforcing cooperation between PRCS and local, Arab and international volunteer and youth institutions.
- Supporting and developing PRCS programs and services through volunteer contribution in normal times and in emergencies.