

Henry Dunant Medal
Tribute to
Muctarr Amadu Sheriff Jalloh

Trained as a specialist in paediatrics, Muctarr Jalloh joined the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in 1985 as medical officer in charge of the Child Alive Programme. While continuing to practise medicine, he gradually became more involved in the Society's governance and held the presidency from 1996 until he stepped down in 2009.

During the first half of his presidency, Dr Jalloh witnessed extreme violence and atrocities in his country. Many professionals chose to leave because the situation was too much for them. Dr Jalloh refused to join this exodus. He was determined to see to it that his Society continued to provide life-saving assistance for victims of the civil conflict and for others in need. Most international organizations, including the ICRC, were asked to leave the country. The Sierra Leone Red Cross was the only major humanitarian agency left to take care of the immense needs. Dr Jalloh tirelessly led his staff and volunteers through hardship and danger to provide much-needed services.

Fully aware that his own life was at risk, Dr Jalloh found strength and perseverance in his humanitarian conviction and defied numerous threats. In 1999, at the height of the conflict, he was attacked and nearly killed when rebels attempted to chop off his hands. The incident sent shock waves throughout Sierra Leone and the Movement. After his convalescence abroad, Dr Jalloh returned to Freetown, undeterred by this highly traumatic experience. He was driven by his devotion to the cause and ideals of the Movement and his determination to help those who are most vulnerable.

Besides serving his own people, Dr Jalloh also played a prominent role in the Movement. He pleaded in favour of building the capacities of African National Societies, and participated forcefully and constructively in Movement forums. He made important contributions as a member of a number of commissions within the Federation and the ICRC. He was vice-president of the Federation and a member of the Governing Board. The Standing Commission benefitted from his broad knowledge and experience in Movement matters through his membership in its working groups on the Seville Agreement and the Strategy for the Movement.

Because he was esteemed by his peers for his integrity, Dr Jalloh at times found himself mediating and resolving internal differences and challenges between components of the Movement. He was successful in these efforts thanks to his excellent communications skills and his willingness and ability to listen to and consider all viewpoints. These characteristics brought him broad respect within and outside the Movement. His positive outlook and deep humanitarian conviction made everyone pay attention as he spoke his mind to advance the Movement's cause and its principles.

For his personal commitment, his important contribution to the development of humanitarian activities, and for his work in promoting the Movement's Fundamental Principles and ideals, the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent has unanimously agreed to award Dr Muctarr Jalloh the Henry Dunant Medal, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's highest distinction.

Geneva, 23 November 2009

H.E. Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid
Chairman
Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent