



# Tracing and message services



*Bijoux Mwamba, 5 years. A bus with children on their way to the airport in Kinshasa. They are excited about their journey home again after being separated from their families due to war in Congo.(DRC)  
Photo: Olav A. Saltbones/Røde Kors*

*Frontpage: Children playing, Haiti 2010. Photo: Brita Liholm Johannessen/Røde Kors*

Every year thousands of people loose touch with their loved ones because of war, conflict or disaster.

A core task of the Red Cross is assisting people so that they can reconnect with their family. Red Cross and Red Crescent assist everyone, regardless of gender, age, political affiliation, nationality, ethnic or religious affiliation.

The service is divided in 2: Tracing of missed persons and forwarding Red Cross messages where normal postal service is out of order.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are present in 187 countries and this network makes it possible to search and find missing people.

In this brochure you will learn more about how to restore contact with relatives, and how to send letters via the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The Tracing and Messaging Services are free.

### **Contact information:**

Postal address:  
Oppsporingstjenesten  
Norges Røde Kors  
PB 1 Grønland  
0133 Oslo  
Telefon 05003  
tracing@redcross.no

Visit address:  
Hausmannsgt. 7  
0133 Oslo

Further information: [www.rodekors.no/oppsporingstjenesten](http://www.rodekors.no/oppsporingstjenesten)

## Norwegian Red Cross procedures for tracing requests

Tracing requests are used in situations where war, conflict or disasters have split up families and they have lost contact with each other. This service is free.

Such requests are distributed throughout the world via the Red Cross and Red Crescent network. Separate forms are used and the same type of form is used in all countries.

Requests are only accepted from close family and friends. The forms are filled in English (if possible). Writing should be distinct and the forms should contain as much information as possible. If insufficient information has been provided, the form in question will be returned from the recipient country.

It might take a long time before a reply is received – between three months and up to one or two years, depending on the situation in the country in question. The enquirer should draw attention to the fact that the person to be traced might not wish to reestablish contact with the enquirer.

### Forms may be obtained from:

#### Norwegian Red Cross

Telephone: 05003

[tracing@redcross.no](mailto:tracing@redcross.no)

or from your local Red Cross District Office in your county.

### Completed forms should be sent to:

#### Oppsporingstjenesten

#### (Tracing Agency)

#### Norges Røde Kors

#### (Norwegian Red Cross)

PB 1 Grønland

N - 0133 Oslo

## How to fill in the form:

USE BLOCK LETTERS – LATIN LETTERS  
– IN ENGLISH.

### 1. Information about the person to be traced:

#### Name:

It is important to use the full and correct name. In some countries first and last names are used, in other countries the person's own name, father's name and grandfather's names are used. Nicknames should also be provided. All names should be written as in the person's home country, also if names have been changed after arrival in Norway.

#### Example:

- Peter ANDERSSON (*first and last name*)
- Juan GONZALES HERRER (*first name, father's first last name and mother's first last name*)
- Ali HASSAD MOHAMMED (*first name, father's name and grandfather's name*)
- Abbas MOHAMED MAJED AL-NASRAWI (*first name, father's name, grandfather's name and family name*)

#### Birth date:

To avoid misunderstanding, the month should be written with letters:

March 5th 1985.

If exact date of birth of the person to be traced is unknown, approximate age should be provided.

#### Gender:

Tick off the appropriate box. A name does not always always imply whether the person missing is a male ore a female.

#### Place of birth:

This should be specified as precisely as possible and include street, village, city, province etc. Finally, write the name of the country.

#### Nationality:

The missed person's nationality as of today should be mentioned.

#### Nationality by birth:

If the person has changed nationality, it should be specified which nationality the person had when she ore he was born.

**Ethnic group:**

Of which ethnical group is the missed person? Which is his or hers mother tongue? If information about the missed person's ethnicity is unknown, tracing is unfortunately impossible in many countries.

If the missed person belongs to a minority or a special area, this could be important information.

**Clan/sub clan/tribe/family linkage:**

Provide the name of which clan/sub clan/tribe/family linkage the sought person belongs to. In some countries this is crucial information to succeed in tracing.

**Occupation:**

What was the missed person's occupation? If he or she was a priest, teacher, bus driver, worked at the market, a lot of people will know the person and can give information about him or her.

**Last known working place and address:**

Where did the sought person work? Write the name of the working place, a school, a market, a church? If he or she was a student, at which school/university/institute did he or she study.

**Marital status:**

Please tick the right box.

**Full name of husband, wife or partner:**

Names should be written in full.

**Father's and mother's full names:**

Write the names in both Latin and mother tongue. This is important information. If one or both parents are dead, please tick the right box.

**For military personnel:**

Military rank, unit, company, etc if the sought person is in the Armed Forces.

## **2. Tracing request details:**

### **Date and contents of most recent news:**

Please note any details relating to the most recent news received about the missing person. When was your last contact with him/her? Was it a meeting, by phone, e-mail, letter etc. When was it?

Where was it? Please tick the right box.

### **Last known address:**

The last known address of the sought person is important to know, it has to be detailed and full address. Country, area, province, town, urban district, quarter, street etc. If there is no exact address, please follow the example under:

“Third house to the left of the church, above the restaurant.” This is particularly important in war zones where many buildings may have been destroyed.

In some cases description of the road to the nearest village or city can be useful. Make a description of how Red Cross or Red Crescent can approach the address. PO box address is not a complete address.

### **Circumstances leading to loss of contact:**

What kind of situation caused the loss of contact? What happened? Details about the situation that led to loss of contact is important to succeed in tracing. Describe where you were exactly that day, which plans did the sought person have? Could it be that he or she has returned back home? Where do you think he or she is? Do the sought person know that you are in Norway? Did you ever discuss Norway as your final destination?

## **3. Family members assumed to be together with the sought person:**

If you assume that the sought person is together with other family members, write their names, age and family relationship to the sought person in the form.

If you assume that the family has split up, 1 form per person should be filled out.

#### **4. Additional information:**

Please give all information that may assist our investigation, such as any previous or present business addresses, present employer, present school or university. Information about which church the sought person used to go to, name of religious leader, name of teacher, sports club etc.

Are there any well known places, buildings or attractions near by the sought persons home? Every little detail might be of importance in tracing the sought person. Please, use an additional sheet if required, to draw maps etc.

#### **5. Other contacts:**

Whom do you assume have information about the sought person? Neighbours, family members? Friends? Please write down their full names and addresses/telephone/mobile/fax/e-mail of persons able to supply information about the sought person.

#### **6. Information about the enquirer:**

All parts of this page should be completed with same accuracy as the rest of the form. It is important to provide the correct name and address.

Telephone number, private, cell phone, working address and e-mail address. Relationship to the sought person is also important information. If you are moving from the address given in this form, please make sure that we are informed. That is why we ask you to provide us with a contact person in Norway. If we succeed in tracing the sought person or have information about him or her, it will be forwarded

to the contact person. If we loose contact with the enquirer, we have to close the case.

#### **Consent:**

We ask your permission to keep and pass on information you have provided to the Red Cross system, to the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC) and to Red Cross or Red Crescent National Societies.

In accordance with Norwegian Personal Information Law, the documents are kept and registered in a protected database. We also ask for your approval if you allow Red Cross/Red Crescent to contact authorities in countries where the sought person is assumed missing.

In some countries it is possible to broadcast names of missing persons(s) on radio and in newspapers. We therefore ask enquirer's permission for the above stated.

#### **Signature of the enquirer and date and place of enquiry:**

To initiate tracing of a sought person is a personal matter and the enquirer must therefore sign the form himself/herself. If the enquirer is under aged (under 18 years), the child's guardian signs on behalf of the child.

**Important information to the enquirer:**  
*All information received by the Red Cross or Red Crescent will be kept strictly confidential. We work in accordance with Norwegian Personal Information Law and do not forward any information about any person except upon request from the person himself or herself.*



*3 seblings, Mulamba (11), Tsahia (7) and Majejan (6) lost their parents. They are reunited with their grandmother. The pictures are the only physical memories left of their parents.  
Photo: Olav A. Saltbones/Røde Kors*

## **Procedures for filling in Red Cross Messages**

Red Cross Messages are used in situations where wars, conflicts or disasters prevent the functioning of normal postal services, but where the address of a recipient is known. The message service is free. The International Committee of Red Cross or Red Crescent (ICRC) can also arrange contact between prisoners of war and civilian internees and their families.

Red Cross Messages are distributed throughout the world via the Red Cross and Red Crescent network. Specific forms are used for this work and the same type of form is used in all countries.

ICRC need the actual authorities approval for this service. To be able to keep its credibility and also to protect the recipient of the message, it is crucial that the message only contains information of personal matter.

The message can not have any content of political, religious or military character. ICRC control and censor the content of the messages.

As the Red Cross Messages are open letters, the authorities inclusive the prisons management, do have the right to read every single letter.

Photos and documents of various art, attestations and id-cards, can be enclosed the message. Money, medicines or objects can, however, not be sent.

The forms are completed in English (if possible), in Latin letters and with as much information as possible. A telephone number, e-mail address or PO Box, is not precise enough address and if other important information is missing, the message will be returned back to sender.

It might take some time to receive an answer in return. This is depending on the situation in the countries where the addressee is living. It might also be the case that the addressee do not want to send a message in return.

If it is impossible to deliver the message to the recipient, the message will be returned to the sender.

*Reuniting with their family again after being separated during the war in Congo (DRC).  
Photo: Olav A. Saltbones/Røde Kors*



## Completing Red Cross Messages:

### Important:

Important: The form has to be filled in with English block letters.

### Sender:

Fill in senders full name, father's and mother's full name, and full and precise address and telephone number. All names of persons and places should be written in English and in the senders mother tongue.

Please also be aware that if we receive an answer to your message, it is of great importance for us to know if there are other names on your mailbox in addition to yours. We often receive mail in return, because the sender's name is invisible for the postman. If you have a contact person in Norway, please also let us know, so we can get in touch with you through him or her.

### Addressee:

Fill in receiver's full name, birth date, birth place, father's and mother's name and full and precise address and telephone number.

Post box or e-mail is unfortunately not sufficient and in such cases we will have to return the message to sender.

### The message:

The message can only be of private content. It can be written in the sender's mother tongue. The message will be controlled and censored as mentioned above.

### Signature and consent:

The form has to be signed with your personal signature and the date. We ask your permission to keep and pass on information you have provided to the Red Cross system, to the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC) and to Red Cross or Red Crescent National Societies. In accordance with Norwegian Personal Information Law, the documents are kept and registered in a protected database.

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Norges Røde Kors (Norwegian Red Cross)  
PB 1 Grønland  
N - 0133 Oslo





**You can find out more about the Red Cross  
and the Tracing Service here:**

[www.familylinks.icrc.org](http://www.familylinks.icrc.org)

[www.rodekors.no/oppspringstjenesten](http://www.rodekors.no/oppspringstjenesten)

[tracing@redcross.no](mailto:tracing@redcross.no)

