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Islamic Jurisprudential Principles and IFRC Standards on Aid Workers' Safety: A Comparative Analysis of the Laws and Implementing Guidelines of the Iranian Red Crescent Society

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Aid workers' safety is a central concern in disaster response. Decisions to enter hazardous scenes raise questions that Islamic jurisprudence, international Red Cross and Red Crescent standards, and Iranian law address in different ways. This study compares relevant Imami jurisprudential principles with standards of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and with Iranian legal provisions, in order to identify points of convergence and gaps and to outline a basis for an integrated safety framework.

METHODS: This qualitative, descriptive study used library-based documentary analysis of Imami jurisprudential sources, IFRC and Movement documents, and Iranian statutes and regulations relating to the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and disaster management. Principles and provisions were extracted, classified by function, and compared through qualitative content analysis.

FINDINGS: Seven jurisprudential principles were identified: preservation of life, prevention of harm (lā ḍarar), removal of undue hardship, beneficence (iḥsān), resolution of conflicting duties (tazāḥum), prevention of probable harm, and protection of others from danger. These principles broadly align with IFRC guidance on risk assessment, safety, intervention prioritization, and volunteer well-being. However, the documents examined indicate possible gaps in operational risk thresholds, the distinction between professional and volunteer aid workers, psychological support, compensation, and binding safety procedures; their extent in practice requires further verification. Integrating jurisprudential principles, international standards, and Iranian law could strengthen aid workers' safety and risk management.

CONCLUSION: Shared principles of life protection should be translated into clear, enforceable, and assessable procedures for risk assessment, entry and withdrawal decisions, responsibility, insurance and compensation, psychological support, and oversight. Legislative reform should address disproportionate risks to life and incorporate appropriate technologies for risk assessment. The proposed conceptual framework requires expert validation before adoption. Integrating jurisprudential principles, international standards, and Iranian law can strengthen aid workers' safety, reinforce its religious and legal foundations, and may support broader alignment with international humanitarian principles, with potential relevance to other national contexts.

Keywords: Aid worker; Safety; Islamic Jurisprudential Principles; Preservation of Life; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC); Disaster management.

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Introduction

Relief operations during natural disasters, such as earthquakes and floods, and human-caused emergencies, such as armed conflicts and explosions, are an essential component of humanitarian action. However, these operations may expose aid workers to risks that threaten their lives, physical health, and psychological well-being. Accordingly, ensuring the safety, security, and well-being of aid workers, particularly volunteers, should be an integral part of operational planning and management (1,2). This issue becomes especially important when the urgent need to save lives coincides with the risk of injury

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or death to an aid worker. Determining the limits of acceptable risk and balancing the duty to save others against the need to protect aid workers themselves requires an examination of jurisprudential principles, domestic legal requirements, and organizational responsibilities.

From the perspective of Imami (Twelver Shiʿa) jurisprudence, a fundamental question concerns the extent of an aid worker's duty to rescue others when doing so may endanger the worker's own life or health. Relevant considerations include whether the duty to rescue applies in all circumstances or depends on factors such as the severity and likelihood of harm, the probability of a successful rescue, and the availability of safer alternatives. In this regard, Qurʾanic verses 2:195 and 4:29 may be examined alongside relevant jurisprudential principles concerning the preservation of life. However, deriving a specific legal ruling from these verses requires careful consideration of their context and interpretation; they should not, in isolation, be treated as establishing a uniform rule for every high-risk operational situation (3). The jurisprudential principle of lā ḍarar (the principle of no harm), interpreted in light of its doctrinal foundations and scope in Imami jurisprudence, may also inform the analysis of harm prevention and the limits of legal and religious obligations (4,5). In addition, discussions in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence concerning tazāḥum (the practical conflict between obligations), necessity, and the prioritization of duties are relevant when the preservation of an aid worker's life and the rescue of an injured person cannot both be achieved in practice (6,7). The principle of iḥsān (beneficence) may also be relevant, particularly in examining liability and the legal consequences of benevolent acts. Nevertheless, this principle alone cannot establish an unconditional obligation to undertake life-threatening risks or confer general immunity from legal liability (8). These principles must therefore be assessed in light of authoritative jurisprudential sources, their conditions of application, and their respective doctrinal limits before they can be used to determine the scope of aid workers' duties.

From a legal perspective, aid workers' safety cannot be examined solely in terms of individual responsibility. The statutory duties of humanitarian organizations, operational safety requirements, and the conditions under which relief missions are conducted must also be considered. The Statute of the Iranian Red Crescent Society establishes the Society's humanitarian objectives and specifies its responsibilities, including the provision of relief services during disasters, the delivery of first aid, preparedness activities, public education, and the training of relief personnel (9). The National Disaster Management Law further defines the responsibilities of relevant institutions, including the Iranian Red Crescent Society, in disaster preparedness and response (10). In the field of civil liability, Article 1 of the Civil Liability Act provides a general legal basis for compensation for damage caused by unlawful conduct or negligence, subject to the applicable legal requirements (11). Articles 152 and 295 of the Islamic Penal Code are also relevant to the analysis of emergency situations and liability arising from omissions under specified legal conditions. Their application, however, depends on the circumstances of each case and the establishment of the relevant statutory elements; neither provision should be interpreted as automatically exempting aid workers from liability or imposing liability on them solely because a rescue attempt fails (12). Articles 85, 91, and 95 of the Labour Law are also relevant to occupational safety and health, particularly in relation to protective equipment, safety training, and compliance with applicable occupational safety requirements. The application of these provisions to aid workers must, however, be assessed in light of their legal status and the scope of the Labour Law (13).

At the international level, the documents, principles, and guidance issued by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement provide a framework for examining humanitarian values and organizational responsibilities. The Movement's seven Fundamental Principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality) establish its ethical and operational foundations (14). However, these principles do not, by themselves, specify all the technical requirements for ensuring safety during relief operations (14,15). More detailed guidance is provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in its *Implementation Guide: Standards to Facilitate the Safety, Security and Well-being of Volunteers*. This guide addresses specific areas of volunteer protection, including risk management, safety procedures, incident reporting, protective equipment, training, insurance, and psychosocial support (15). The IFRC Volunteering Policy

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further clarifies the organization's collective commitment to safe, secure, and sustainable volunteer engagement (16). In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has published *Safer Access: A Guide for All National Societies*, which is particularly relevant to the security and humanitarian access of National Society personnel and volunteers working in sensitive or insecure environments, including armed conflict and internal disturbances (17). These documents should be examined according to their respective scope, purpose, and normative status and compared with applicable domestic laws and operational guidelines.

Accordingly, this study adopts a legal and jurisprudential comparative approach to examine the relationship between relevant Islamic jurisprudential principles, IFRC documents and standards concerning aid workers' safety, and the publicly available laws and implementing guidelines of the Iranian Red Crescent Society. Its primary objective is to identify areas of convergence, differences, and apparent gaps among these sources and to develop recommendations for strengthening the legal, religious, and operational foundations of aid workers' safety. The analysis focuses on matters such as pre-deployment risk assessment, criteria for initiating, suspending, or withdrawing from operations, the provision of protective equipment, safety training, the allocation of responsibilities, incident reporting, and organizational support. The intended outcome is a coherent framework for clarifying aid workers' duties, preventing unnecessary exposure to risk, and strengthening organizational responsibility for their protection. Such a framework should recognize that the imperative to save human lives must be considered alongside the responsibility to protect the lives and health of those who carry out humanitarian operations.

Methods

This applied, qualitative, descriptive study used documentary analysis and qualitative content analysis. Three groups of sources were examined: (a) Imami jurisprudential texts and relevant Qurʾanic verses (3–8); (b) published documents issued by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and other components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement concerning volunteer safety, security, well-being, and risk management (14–18); and (c) Iranian legislation and publicly available legal materials concerning the duty to assist, civil and criminal liability, the responsibilities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), occupational safety, and disaster management (9–13,19). Published studies on psychological distress among disaster responders (1,2) and on the liability of aid workers (20,21) were used as supporting literature.

Relevant principles and legal provisions were extracted and thematically classified according to five analytical domains: preservation of life, prevention of harm, prioritization of duties, liability, and institutional protection of aid workers. The sources were compared to identify areas of convergence and divergence and gaps in the documented legal and regulatory framework.

The study was limited to published or publicly available documents. Unpublished IRCS procedures and international humanitarian law instruments, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, were excluded.

Findings

The documentary analysis identified seven interrelated jurisprudential principles relevant to aid workers' safety: preservation of life and avoidance of disproportionate self-endangerment; lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār (the prohibition of harm); nafy al-ḥaraj (removal of undue hardship); iḥsān (beneficence); tazāḥum (conflict between obligations); prevention of probable harm; and the duty to prevent harm to others and provide assistance. The priority of preserving life over property and the principle of averting greater harm by accepting lesser harm (dafʿ al-afsad bi-l-fāsid) were examined as related considerations in the analysis of necessity and conflicting duties.

The comparison identified general areas of convergence between Islamic jurisprudential principles, the IFRC guidance, and Iranian legislation. These areas include the protection of life, prevention of avoidable harm, assessment of operational risks, and recognition of responsibilities in emergency situations. However, convergence at the level of general principles does not establish that all relevant duties have been translated into specific, enforceable operational procedures or consistently implemented. The findings for each principle are presented below.

Preservation of life and avoidance of disproportionate self-endangerment

The preservation of life is a central consideration in Islamic jurisprudence and is

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commonly discussed among the essential objectives of Islamic law. Relevant Qurʾanic verses include verse 32 of Surah al-Māʾidah, which emphasizes the significance of saving human life, and verse 29 of Surah al-Nisāʾ, which prohibits self-destruction. Verse 195 of Surah al-Baqarah is also relevant to discussions of exposing oneself to destruction (3). The interpretation and application of these verses to aid workers' duties require consideration of their context and authoritative jurisprudential interpretations. They should not, in isolation, be treated as establishing either an unconditional obligation to enter every hazardous scene or an absolute prohibition against accepting any operational risk.

Preservation of life concerns both the life of the person providing assistance and the life of the person in need of assistance. In relief operations, this principle supports consideration of the necessity of intervention, the probability and severity of harm, the aid worker's training and capabilities, the availability of protective measures, and the reasonable prospect of a successful intervention. Accordingly, the duty to assist must be considered alongside the responsibility to avoid disproportionate and unnecessary exposure to danger. In circumstances involving competing obligations of particular importance, accepting serious risks may require a separate jurisprudential assessment; permissibility or obligation cannot be established by the general principle of preservation of life alone.

The Fundamental Principle of Humanity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement provides an ethical foundation for preventing and alleviating human suffering and protecting life and health (14). The IFRC's *Implementation Guide: Standards to Facilitate the Safety, Security and Well-being of Volunteers* addresses organizational measures intended to protect volunteers, while the IFRC Volunteering Policy provides a broader framework for safe and sustainable volunteer engagement (15,16). These documents support risk assessment and preventive measures, although they do not, by themselves, establish a universal operational threshold for acceptable risk in every emergency.

Under Iranian law, Article 1 of the Law on Punishment for Refraining from Assistance to Injured Persons and Removal of Life-Threatening Hazards is directly relevant to the duty to assist. The provision addresses assistance in circumstances where the person can provide help without exposing themselves or others to danger, subject to the applicable legal conditions (19). It is therefore important to distinguish a duty to provide assistance from an unconditional requirement to enter or remain in a hazardous area.

The practical application of this principle may require appropriate protective equipment, including safety helmets, protective clothing, masks, and, where the identified hazards warrant them, bullet-resistant equipment or protected vehicles. The selection of equipment should be based on the actual threats and the requirements of the operation rather than on a uniform list of equipment for every incident **(15,17)**.

The Statute of the IRCS provides that service in the Society is voluntary, subject to the exceptions specified in Article 22 (9). However, the provision concerning voluntary service should not, by itself, be interpreted as establishing a universal entitlement to accident insurance or compensation for all volunteers. The scope of insurance coverage and compensation must be determined by examining the applicable laws, regulations, and implementing provisions.

The principle of lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār (prohibition of harm)

The jurisprudential principle lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār is a fundamental principle of Imami jurisprudence concerning harm. Its application to aid workers' safety requires consideration of its doctrinal foundations, scope, and conditions of application (4,5). The principle is relevant to preventing unjustified harm to oneself and others and to examining the limits of duties when performing an action may create substantial risks.

In relief operations, this principle supports the assessment of hazards before deployment and the implementation of reasonable measures to reduce avoidable harm. It is relevant when considering whether personnel have received adequate training, whether protective equipment is appropriate to the identified hazards, and whether the operational environment permits intervention under acceptable conditions. For example, deploying personnel in a contaminated environment without suitable respiratory protection would require careful examination of the applicable safety requirements and available protective measures.

The principle does not necessarily prohibit every action that involves danger. Rather, its application requires consideration of the nature of the danger, the purpose of the intervention, the available alternatives, and the relevant

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jurisprudential and legal conditions. It also requires attention to the risks that rescue activities may create for casualties, other responders, and bystanders.

The IFRC volunteer safety standards and Risk Management Policy support a structured approach to identifying, assessing, and managing risks (15,18). The ICRC's *Safer Access: A Guide for All National Societies* provides additional guidance for National Societies operating in sensitive or insecure environments, including armed conflict and internal disturbances (17). These documents offer relevant operational approaches to risk reduction, although their purpose and normative status differ from those of Islamic jurisprudential principles.

Iranian law contains provisions relevant to harm caused by acts or omissions in emergency situations. Article 295 of the Islamic Penal Code addresses circumstances in which a person fails to perform an act that they have undertaken or a specific duty imposed by law, provided that the statutory conditions are met (12). Article 152 addresses certain acts committed in response to grave actual or imminent danger, subject to specified conditions, including necessity and proportionality and the rule applicable to persons legally or officially required to address the danger (12). Neither article establishes a general exemption from liability for aid workers or an unconditional requirement to proceed with a hazardous intervention. The National Disaster Management Law also defines institutional responsibilities in disaster preparedness and response, which provides the statutory context for such measures (10).

The comparative analysis therefore supports examining whether existing laws and operational guidelines provide clear requirements for hazard assessment, appropriate protective equipment, reassessment when conditions change, and decisions to initiate, suspend, or terminate an intervention. The extent to which such procedures are implemented cannot be established solely from the published documents examined in this study.

The principle of nafy al-ḥaraj (removal of undue hardship)

The principle of nafy al-ḥaraj concerns the removal of undue hardship under the conditions recognized in Islamic jurisprudence. Qurʾanic references concerning ease and the rejection of undue hardship provide a relevant basis for examining the limits of religious and legal obligations in demanding circumstances (3). The specific consequences of this principle for aid workers must be assessed through authoritative jurisprudential sources and cannot be inferred from a general reference to ease alone.

In relief operations, the principle is relevant to excessive physical demands, prolonged exposure to dangerous conditions, exhaustion, and psychological strain. It may inform the assessment of workload, operational duration, rest periods, and the need to provide additional personnel or support. However, the existence of hardship does not automatically eliminate every duty to assist; its legal and jurisprudential significance depends on the circumstances and applicable conditions.

Psychological distress among aid workers and disaster responders has been examined in systematic reviews (1,2). The IFRC's guidance on volunteer safety and well-being also supports organizational attention to physical safety, security, and psychological well-being (15,16). These sources indicate the relevance of protective measures before, during, and after relief operations, particularly following incidents involving death, severe injury, or other traumatic exposure.

The Iranian legal framework includes provisions concerning occupational safety and health, including Articles 85, 91, and 95 of the Labour Law (13). The applicability of these provisions to a particular aid worker depends on the person's legal status and the scope of the relevant legislation. The documentary sources examined do not establish that all professional aid workers and volunteers receive equivalent insurance coverage, rest arrangements, or post-incident psychological support.

Accordingly, the principle of removal of undue hardship provides a basis for considering measures to prevent excessive exposure, fatigue, and psychological harm. Further assessment is needed to identify the applicable entitlements and responsibilities for different categories of aid workers and to determine whether existing organizational arrangements adequately address these needs.

The principle of iḥsān (beneficence) and the duty to assist

The principle of iḥsān is relevant to benevolent conduct intended to help others and to the legal consequences of assistance provided to protect life, property, or other legally recognized interests (8). In humanitarian operations, it

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provides an ethical and jurisprudential basis for examining the significance of benevolent intent. However, the principle should be distinguished from the separate question of whether an individual has a legally enforceable duty to provide assistance in a particular situation.

Benevolent intent does not, by itself, establish a universal legal obligation to undertake every rescue attempt. Nor does it confer automatic immunity from liability. The scope of any duty to assist depends on the applicable legal provisions, the person's role and authority, their ability to act, and the circumstances in which assistance is required.

Article 510 of the Islamic Penal Code is particularly relevant to the legal consequences of benevolent assistance. It addresses conduct performed with the intention of helping another person or protecting their life, property, honor, or chastity. Under the conditions specified in the article, including compliance with legal requirements and safety precautions, the person may not be liable for injury or damage resulting from the necessary act (12). This provision should not be interpreted as granting unconditional immunity to every person who acts with benevolent intent.

The Fundamental Principle of Voluntary Service and the IFRC Volunteering Policy provide an organizational and ethical context for humanitarian service (14,16). Voluntary service and the protection of volunteers are important dimensions of humanitarian action, but voluntary status, benevolent motivation, and legal responsibility remain distinct concepts. The legal duties of professional aid workers, volunteers, and organizations deploying personnel must therefore be examined separately.

Research concerning assistance provided without a prior duty or contractual obligation, as well as research examining liability issues affecting IRCS aid workers, provides additional context for this analysis (20,21). These studies should be used to support the relevant legal arguments only to the extent that their findings address the specific issue under consideration.

Tazāḥum, averting greater harm, and the priority of life over property

In Imami jurisprudence, tazāḥum refers to circumstances in which two or more obligations cannot be fulfilled simultaneously in practice. Where the relevant conditions are satisfied, the more important obligation may take priority (6,7). This concept is relevant to emergency situations in which aid workers must make decisions under time pressure, resource constraints, or competing demands for assistance.

The related principle of daf` al-afsad bi-l-fāsid (averting greater harm by accepting lesser harm) may inform the assessment of competing risks. Its application requires identifying the possible harms, assessing their relative significance, and determining whether accepting a lesser harm is justified to prevent a greater one. These assessments cannot be based solely on a general assertion that one outcome is preferable; they require consideration of the circumstances, relevant jurisprudential conditions, and applicable legal rules.

In operational practice, these principles may inform decisions about casualty prioritization, the allocation of personnel and equipment, requests for additional support, and the suspension or withdrawal of an intervention as risks increase. Risk management procedures, incident command arrangements, and realistic training scenarios can help personnel make decisions when simultaneous compliance with competing demands is not possible (15,18).

Article 152 of the Islamic Penal Code may be relevant to certain emergency actions undertaken in response to grave actual or imminent danger. Its application depends on the statutory conditions, including necessity and proportionality, and on the rules applicable to persons required by law or duty to address the danger (12). It should not be presented as a general exemption for every emergency decision.

The priority of preserving life over property should be considered within this framework. In some circumstances, damage to property may be necessary to save life, but the intended humanitarian purpose alone does not automatically make the action lawful or exclude liability. The necessity, proportionality, legal basis, and circumstances of the action must be examined. The Civil Liability Act may also be relevant to a claim for compensation, depending on the conduct and the applicable legal requirements (11).

The comparison suggests that operational guidelines should clarify the conditions under which emergency actions affecting property may be justified, who is authorized to make such decisions, how the decisions should be documented, and how resulting damage should be reviewed. Training should address situations in

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which the urgency of a rescue conflicts with property protection, operational safety, or the availability of limited resources.

The obligation to prevent probable harm

The obligation to prevent probable harm is relevant to identifying foreseeable hazards and taking reasonable preventive measures before and during relief operations. Its application to aid workers' safety requires consideration of the likelihood and severity of the potential harm, the available preventive measures, and the relevant jurisprudential conditions (4,5).

In operational settings, preventive risk assessment may include inspecting the scene, identifying structural or environmental hazards, considering the presence of hazardous materials or security threats, evaluating the available protective equipment, and reassessing conditions when the situation changes. The required precautions should be proportionate to the identified hazards and the purpose of the intervention.

The IFRC Risk Management Policy provides a structured approach to risk management and its integration into organizational decision-making (18). The standards for volunteer safety and the ICRC's *Safer Access* guidance also provide relevant frameworks for assessing and managing risks affecting personnel and volunteers (15,17). Depending on the situation, preventive measures may include appropriate protective equipment, safety training, communication procedures, medical support, and arrangements for requesting additional assistance. Where applicable, the occupational safety provisions of the Labour Law may also be relevant to such measures (13).

The National Disaster Management Law establishes responsibilities for relevant institutions in disaster preparedness and response (10). However, general statutory responsibilities do not, by themselves, demonstrate that detailed procedures exist for all operational decisions affecting aid workers' safety. The documentary analysis therefore indicates the need to examine whether current laws, regulations, and operational guidelines establish sufficiently clear criteria for pre-deployment assessment, risk reassessment, and decisions to suspend or withdraw from an intervention.

The study does not establish whether these requirements are implemented consistently in practice. This question requires further examination of published operational procedures, applicable organizational rules, and implementation evidence.

The duty to prevent harm to others and provide assistance

This duty draws on Qurʾanic injunctions concerning the protection of life (3) and on the doctrinal discussions of harm prevention (4,5). The duty to prevent harm to others and provide assistance is relevant to both Islamic jurisprudential analysis and the legal framework governing emergency response. In practice, it may require providing assistance when the person is able to do so under the applicable conditions, warning others of hazards, requesting support, or notifying the competent authorities when direct intervention is unsafe or outside the person's capabilities.

The Law on Punishment for Refraining from Assistance to Injured Persons and Removal of Life-Threatening Hazards is particularly relevant to this issue. Article 1 addresses the duty to assist under specified conditions and recognizes the relevance of danger to the person providing assistance or to others (19). The duty to provide assistance should therefore be distinguished from an unconditional requirement to enter a dangerous scene when direct intervention would expose people to danger.

Article 295 of the Islamic Penal Code may also be relevant when a person fails to perform an act that they have undertaken or a specific duty imposed by law and injury or death results under the conditions specified in the provision (12). Application of this article requires assessment of the person's duty and ability to act, the circumstances of the omission, and the other relevant statutory elements. The absence of a successful rescue outcome does not, by itself, establish legal liability.

The IFRC's volunteer safety guidance, Risk Management Policy, and the ICRC's *Safer Access* framework provide relevant approaches to identifying and managing operational hazards (15,17,18). In this context, incident reporting, notification of hazards, requests for assistance, and the recording of near misses can support organizational learning and the prevention of future harm. However, the specific reporting obligations, including any confidentiality requirements, should be verified against the relevant provisions of the applicable standard or policy.

The comparative analysis therefore supports distinguishing between the duty to provide

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available and appropriate assistance, the responsibility to avoid unjustified harm to others, and the duty to report or communicate hazards through appropriate channels. Operational procedures should clarify the circumstances in which direct assistance is appropriate and when alternative measures, including requests for specialist support or notification of competent authorities, are necessary.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of Islamic jurisprudential principles, IFRC guidance, and Iran's legal framework concerning aid workers' safety

Islamic jurisprudential principle	Relevant IFRC guidance	Relevant Iranian legal framework	Convergence and issues requiring further assessment
Preservation of life and avoidance of disproportionate self-endangerment (3)	Fundamental Principles; volunteer safety and well-being standards (14–16)	Law on Punishment for Refraining from Assistance to Injured Persons and Removal of Life-Threatening Hazards, Article 1 (19); Statute of the IRCS (9)	All three domains provide grounds for examining the protection of life and the duty to assist. Further assessment is needed to establish clear and proportionate criteria for entry, suspension, and withdrawal.
Lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār (prohibition of harm) (4,5)	Volunteer safety standards, Safer Access, and risk management guidance (15,17,18)	National Disaster Management Law (10); Islamic Penal Code, Articles 152 and 295 (12)	The sources support preventive risk management and the reduction of avoidable harm. The specific legal and operational requirements for pre-deployment assessment and protection require further examination.
Nafy al-ḥaraj (removal of undue hardship) and protection of well-being (3)	Volunteer safety and well-being standards and Volunteering Policy (15,16); research on psychological distress among disaster responders (1,2)	Labour Law, where applicable (13)	The principle is relevant to excessive physical and psychological strain. The scope of insurance, rest arrangements, and post-incident psychological support requires verification for each relevant category of aid workers.
Iḥsān (beneficence) and the duty to assist (8)	Fundamental Principles and Volunteering Policy (14,16)	Islamic Penal Code, Article 510 (12); related legal studies (20,21)	Benevolent intent and voluntary service support humanitarian action but do not establish blanket immunity from liability or a universal legal duty to undertake every rescue attempt. Duties and liability must be assessed under the applicable legal conditions.
Tazāḥum (conflict between obligations), necessity, averting greater harm, and the priority of life over property (6,7)	Risk management guidance and volunteer safety standards (15,18)	Islamic Penal Code, Article 152 (12); Civil Liability Act (11)	Jurisprudential prioritization may inform decisions involving competing duties and risks. Procedures should clarify necessity, proportionality, decision-making authority, documentation, and the handling of property damage and related claims.
Prevention of probable harm (4,5)	Risk Management Policy, volunteer safety standards, and Safer Access guidance (15,17,18)	National Disaster Management Law (10); Labour Law, where applicable (13)	The sources provide a basis for preventive risk management. Further assessment is needed to determine whether existing procedures establish clear assessment criteria and require reassessment when conditions change.
Duty to prevent harm to others and provide assistance (3–5)	Volunteer safety standards, Risk Management Policy, and Safer Access guidance (15,17,18)	Law on Punishment for Refraining from Assistance to Injured Persons and Removal of Life-Threatening Hazards, Article 1 (19); Islamic Penal Code, Article 295 (12)	The duty to assist must be distinguished from an unconditional requirement to enter a hazardous scene. Procedures should clarify safe assistance options, requests for support, hazard notification, and the circumstances in which relevant legal duties apply.

Cross-cutting findings: institutional protection and operational implementation

Across the seven principles, the analysis identified several areas in which jurisprudential principles, international guidance, and Iranian law may inform the development of more specific measures for aid workers' safety.

First, pre-deployment and ongoing risk assessment should be connected to clear operational criteria for entry, reassessment, suspension, and withdrawal. These criteria should consider the nature and severity of the hazard, the probability of harm, the capabilities of the personnel, the availability of protective measures, and the urgency and likely effectiveness of the intervention (15,17,18).

Second, safety training should address both practical risk management and the legal and jurisprudential duties relevant to emergency decisions. Training scenarios should include situations involving competing obligations, escalating hazards, resource limitations, and requests for additional support. Existing training systems may provide a means of delivering such education, subject to verification of their coverage and content.

Third, responsibilities should be clearly allocated among individual aid workers, team leaders, incident commanders, and the organizations that deploy personnel. Liability should be assessed according to the applicable law, the person's assigned duties and authority, the circumstances of the operation, the precautions taken, and the statutory conditions relevant to the alleged act or omission (11,12,20,21).

Fourth, the adequacy of insurance and compensation arrangements should be examined separately for professional personnel, volunteers, and other categories of aid workers. The relevant provisions should be identified in the applicable legislation and implementing regulations rather

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than inferred solely from the voluntary status of personnel (9,13,21).

Fifth, organizational protection should include appropriate support for psychological well-being, particularly after demanding or traumatic operations. Incident reporting, the recording of near misses, and systematic review of relevant events can help identify preventable hazards and improve future practices (1,2,15,16).

Finally, oversight arrangements and regulatory review may help identify gaps between general legal duties and operational requirements. Digital tools and artificial intelligence systems may also be considered for risk assessment where their accuracy, reliability, limitations, and the allocation of responsibility for their use have been adequately assessed. Their adoption should not replace professional judgment or established safety requirements.

Table 1 summarizes the comparison across the seven principles.

Overall, the findings indicate that Islamic jurisprudential principles, IFRC guidance, and Iranian legislation provide related but distinct foundations for analyzing aid workers' safety. Their convergence is clearest at the general level of preserving life, preventing avoidable harm, recognizing duties to assist, and managing operational risks. However, further examination is required to establish the adequacy and implementation of specific procedures concerning risk assessment, protective equipment, entry and withdrawal decisions, liability, insurance, psychological support, incident reporting, training, and institutional oversight.

Discussion and Conclusion

Convergence of Islamic jurisprudential principles, international standards, and Iran's legal framework

The three domains share a concern for preserving life, preventing harm, and managing risk, although they address these objectives from different perspectives. Islamic jurisprudence provides religious and ethical principles; the IFRC offers guidance on volunteer safety, security, and well-being; and Iranian law establishes the legal framework for duties and liability. This convergence is clear at the level of general principles. However, it does not, by itself, demonstrate that legal requirements and operational practices are fully aligned or effectively implemented. The main challenge is to translate these principles into clear, practical, and assessable procedures.

Self-protection and the duty to rescue

The duty to save lives does not require aid workers to accept every risk without assessment. Decisions about entering or continuing an operation should consider the necessity of intervention, the probability and severity of harm, the aid worker's training and capabilities, the protective measures available, and the reasonable prospect of achieving the rescue objective. Giving the aid worker's safety absolute priority in every situation would be as inappropriate as requiring unconditional exposure to danger. The appropriate response is to establish proportionate, context-sensitive criteria for entry, suspension, and withdrawal. Such criteria should protect aid workers without disregarding their humanitarian responsibilities.

Conflicting duties

When competing duties cannot be fulfilled simultaneously, tazāḥum (conflict between duties at the stage of practical performance) provides a relevant jurisprudential framework, where its conditions are met. Its application should be informed by operational risk assessment, casualty prioritization, available resources, and incident command arrangements. Training should include realistic scenarios involving resource shortages, escalating hazards, and competing needs. Operational guidelines should also specify when teams must request additional support, suspend an intervention, or withdraw.

Liability

Liability should be assessed in relation to the duty assigned, the scope of the person's authority, relevant training and capabilities, the conditions at the scene, the precautions taken, and the causal relationship between the conduct and the resulting harm. Professional aid workers and volunteers may have different employment relationships and legal responsibilities, which should be examined under the applicable laws and regulations. Volunteer status alone should not be treated as a general exemption from liability.

Article 295 of Iran's Islamic Penal Code addresses circumstances in which a person fails to perform an act that the person has undertaken or a specific duty imposed by law, and a legally relevant harm results, provided that the person was able to perform the act. Its application to an alleged failure to rescue must therefore be assessed against

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these legal conditions; it should not be extended automatically to every instance in which assistance was not provided (12).

The responsibilities of individual aid workers and those of the organizations that deploy them should also be assessed separately. Clear allocation of responsibility, appropriate insurance, compensation arrangements, and fair incident-investigation procedures are needed to protect injured parties while avoiding disproportionate liability for aid workers who acted within their duties and capabilities.

Balancing operational speed and safety

Rapid intervention can be essential to saving lives, but urgency should not automatically displace risk assessment or necessary protective measures. Decisions should take account of the urgency of the rescue, the hazards involved, the resources available, and the likelihood of success. Where access to a casualty may require damage to property, the necessity, proportionality, and legal basis of the proposed action should also be considered.

Operational guidelines should clarify the conditions for emergency action, the documentation of critical decisions, and the procedures for reporting and reviewing incidents. Simulation exercises should include situations in which the need for speed conflicts with aid worker safety or property protection. The aim is to support timely decisions while maintaining appropriate safeguards and accountability.

A proposed integrated framework for rescuer safety

The comparative analysis supports a proposed framework that connects jurisprudential principles, IFRC guidance, and Iran's legal framework through six areas of action:

-*Prevention and risk assessment*. Establish procedures for assessing hazards at the scene, define criteria for entering or suspending operations, and provide protective equipment appropriate to the identified risks.

-*Training and operational decision-making*. Incorporate relevant jurisprudential and legal principles into training. Use practical scenarios to develop decision-making skills when duties conflict or risks increase.

-*Allocation of responsibilities*. Define the respective duties of aid workers, incident commanders, and deploying organizations. Clarify how responsibility should be assessed in light of each party's authority, duties, and actions.

-*Insurance and psychological support*. Review the adequacy of insurance coverage and compensation arrangements. Provide access to psychological support and appropriate post-operation follow-up, particularly after demanding or distressing missions.

-*Oversight and reporting.* Assign responsibility for monitoring compliance with safety procedures. Establish mechanisms to record incidents and near misses, investigate relevant events, and use the findings to improve operational practice.

-*Regulatory review and technology*. Review existing laws, regulations, and operational guidelines to identify gaps and inconsistencies. Consider digital and artificial intelligence tools for risk assessment only where their accuracy, reliability, limitations, and allocation of responsibility have been adequately established.

Implementation requires coordination among the responsible institutions, systematic review of existing arrangements, and procedures that are enforceable and appropriate to the operational conditions of relief work in Iran. The framework should be treated as a proposal for further assessment, not as a validated operational model.

This study is based on documentary analysis. It did not examine unpublished operational procedures of the IRCS, and the proposed framework has not been validated through empirical testing or expert review. Moreover, jurisprudential interpretations may differ among jurists, and the applicable legal provisions should be checked against their current authoritative texts before specific legal conclusions are drawn. Application of the framework in other Islamic societies would also require consideration of their respective legal systems, institutional arrangements, and operational conditions.

Islamic jurisprudential principles concerning the preservation of life and the prevention of harm provide a relevant foundation for analyzing aid worker safety. These principles are broadly compatible with the direction of IFRC guidance on volunteer safety, security, and well-being, while Iranian law provides the legal basis for determining relevant duties and liability. However, convergence at the level of principle is not sufficient to ensure effective protection.

Practical protection requires defined criteria for operational entry and withdrawal, clear allocation of responsibility, appropriate liability

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rules, adequate insurance and compensation arrangements, psychological support, and effective oversight. Legislative reform should address disproportionate risks to life, and appropriate technologies for risk assessment may be considered, subject to adequate validation. Translating general principles into practical and assessable procedures may help reduce preventable harm and strengthen aid worker safety. Further work should involve expert review, examination of existing operational procedures, and testing of the proposed framework in practice before its formal adoption.

Compliance with Ethical Guidelines

There were no ethical considerations in this research.

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Authors' Contributions

In this article, the first author, Mohammad Nateghi, was responsible for conducting the research, data collection, and data analysis. The second author, Hadi Azimi Garekani, contributed to the study design and supervision. Jamshid Masoumi was responsible for the methodology. Hadi Azimi Garekani and Mohammad Nateghi were responsible for correspondence and editing the final manuscript submitted to the journal.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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