

## **MISUSE OF RED CROSS EMBLEM IS A CRIME UNDER PHILIPPINE LAW**

*In many parts of the Philippines, use of the Red Cross sign is widespread even to the point that it is displayed in many labels of commercial products. Unknown to many, the use of Red Cross emblem as labels in commercial products and establishments, such as those in alcohol bottles, band aids and medical gauges and even in pharmacy signage, is now declared a criminal act under Republic Act No. 10072 otherwise known as the Charter of the Philippine Red Cross.*

*Since the establishment in 1859 of the Swiss businessman and visionary Henry Dunant of the Red Cross during the Battle of Solferino in Northern Italy, the humanitarian organization has grown in almost all countries in the world. In the Philippines, it is present in all parts of the country especially in war-torn areas of Mindanao. Its present name of Philippine Red Cross is a new development with the recent passage of Republic Act No. 10072, after many years of being known as the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC).*

*I just attended a 3-day seminar of Red Cross Board of Directors and volunteers in Koronadal, South Cotabato when I saw this pamphlet on Red Cross emblem misuse. According to the pamphlet, there are only four (4) instances when the Red Cross emblem can be exclusively used under the new Charter of the Philippine Red Cross. They are the following: (1) when used by the medical service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP); (2) when used by the Philippine Red Cross; (3) when used by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and (4) when used by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.*

*The law recognizes that the use of the Red Cross symbol is a protection for Red Cross workers, AFP medical personnel/units, transport and hospitals in time of armed conflict. The Red Cross symbol is also identification for the members, objects and vehicles connected to the Red Cross.*

*What about various hospitals using the Red Cross emblem nationwide? It is a clear case of misuse, and a criminal offense under the new Philippine Red Cross Charter. In fact, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Health (DOH) and Philippine National Police (PNP) issued memorandum circulars reminding local government units, hospitals and security agencies to refrain from using the Red Cross symbol.*

*What are the consequences of misuse of the Red Cross symbol? In time of armed conflict, misuse of the Red Cross emblem as a protective symbol threatens the entire protective system thus endangering the lives of people. Misuse of the Red Cross emblem during the armed conflict is a grave violation of the International Humanitarian Law. At all times, misuse of the emblem as identification weakens its value in the eyes of the public and thus reduces its protective meaning during armed conflict and internal disturbances.*

*For misusing the Red Cross emblem, Section 10 of the Philippine Red Cross law imposes a fine of not less than P50,000 or imprisonment of not exceeding one (1) year, or both, at the discretion of the court for each and every violation.*