



Cabinet Office

# The Humanitarian Medal





Government of the United Kingdom

# The Humanitarian Medal

Presented to Parliament by the Paymaster General and Minister for  
the Cabinet Office by Command of His Majesty.

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# The Humanitarian Medal

The Humanitarian Medal will be awarded to those in public service and members of organisations that contribute on behalf of HM Government, such as charities, which respond in support of human welfare during or in the aftermath of a crisis - for example, in combating a life-threatening crisis; providing disaster relief or aid provision; whether in hazardous circumstances such as conflict zones or otherwise; both in the UK and internationally.

The type of service given must focus on humanitarian crises rather than more broadly humanitarian welfare (response rather than the recovery) and must be in line with humanitarian principles in a domestic and international context. With that in mind, the following types of qualifying service could be applied:

- Extraordinary, in response to a crisis or emergency stimulus.
- Exceptional, in the sense of infrequently-occurring.
- Planned as a response to that crisis.
- A deliberate commitment of resources.
- Focused to a defined geographic area and/or population.
- Time-limited.

## Hard criteria

- A defined start date for the service.
- A defined end date for the service. Where responses last longer than 12 months and have not yet entered the recovery phase, Humanitarian Medal eligibility may be considered before a defined end date is known, subject to review every 3 months.
- A defined geographical area.
- A defined length of service.

## Levels of emergency

The Humanitarian Medal will only be awarded to serious (level 2) or catastrophic (level 3) emergencies:

### For UK Emergencies:

- Serious Emergency (Level 2) - One which has, or threatens, a wide and/or prolonged impact requiring sustained central government coordination and support from a number of departments and agencies, usually including the regional tier in England and where appropriate, the devolved administrations. The central government response to such an emergency would be coordinated from the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR), under the leadership of the lead government department.
- Catastrophic Emergency (Level 3) - One which has an exceptionally high and potentially widespread impact and requires immediate central government direction and support. Characteristics might include a

top-down response in circumstances where the local response had been overwhelmed, or the use of emergency powers were required.

### For International Emergencies:

For international responses the IASC Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Protocols are considered.

- Level 2 emergencies - A level 2 international emergency is a situation, both caused by long term issues and those with little or no warning, that threatens the lives and well-being of large numbers of the population. It requires extraordinary action to ensure their survival, care and protection.
- Level 3 emergencies - Level 3 response is activated when a humanitarian situation suddenly and significantly changes and, following an analysis of five criteria - scale, complexity, urgency, capacity, and reputational risk - it is clear that the capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance and protection on the ground does not match the scale, complexity and urgency of the crisis.

### **Individual eligibility**

All qualifying service must be either:

- **Frontline service** - eligible recipients must have had direct contact with those whom they seek to assist, that is, the affected group or population;
- **People-facing** - service must focus on human welfare, a primary emphasis on people will always be essential. Service to preserve institutions etc can be considered via other forms of recognition; and/or
- **In direct support of the affected population** - those operating with rigour to deliver operational effect which directly influences or impacts on the operational area without being subject to direct personal risk.

Qualifying service should include at least one of the following:

- **Hazardous service** - Conditions which are unsafe (war zones, areas affected by natural disasters); insecure (threats to life, whether natural, biological or human); rapidly changing; or at heightened risk (from ongoing natural disasters, increased exposure to potential harm);
- **Sustained service** - People who gave a long-term frontline service in response to the emergency of which conditions were on-going rather than immediate; and/or
- **Significant service** - Persons who contributed in direct response to the emergency, assisted with the protection of lives and property and



performed extraordinarily. This may be shorter in duration but characterised by a particularly serious immediate threat to life.

## **Organisational eligibility**

### *UK Emergencies:*

Organisations eligible for the medal will have been deployed on behalf of, formally and directly funded<sup>1</sup> by or formally endorsed<sup>2</sup> by HM Government. Organisations such as charities that attend an incident uninvited by HM Government will not be eligible.

### *International Emergencies:*

Organisations directly funded<sup>3</sup> by HMG (excluding multilateral agencies such as UNICEF, WHO etc) would be eligible. Individuals working for those organisations would not have to be British to qualify.

NGOs both registered with the UK Charity Commission and whose activities HMG endorse<sup>4</sup> in that specific response for a specific time period, would also be eligible, regardless of whether they were directly funded by HMG. Individuals working for those organisations would not have to be British to qualify.

## **Posthumous eligibility**

The Humanitarian Medal can be awarded posthumously if an individual would otherwise meet the eligibility criteria for a specific clasp, and they die, in the crisis region or elsewhere, before completing the minimum length of time served requirement.

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<sup>1</sup> Directly funded is defined as HMG funds that are passed to an agency for implementation on the ground without other intermediaries.

<sup>2</sup> Endorsement is understood to mean activities which HMG judge to contribute towards an effective humanitarian response, governed by the Humanitarian Principles (humanity, independence, neutrality, impartiality)

<sup>3</sup> Directly funded is defined as HMG funds that are passed to an agency for implementation on the ground without other intermediaries. Eligible individuals working for foreign organisations whose activities HMG might be supportive, but which HMG does not directly fund, would continue to remain ineligible.

<sup>4</sup> Endorsement is understood to mean activities which HMG judge to contribute towards an effective humanitarian response, governed by the Humanitarian Principles (humanity, independence, neutrality, impartiality). (The relevant Geographic or Humanitarian Directorate would formally advise that/how the UK explicitly endorsed their activity.)

# Operating principles

Operating principles are the principles on how the Humanitarian Medal can be used, and explain when it is appropriate to use the medal.

## Principles for qualification

- Within the qualifying period for an emergency response, eligible individuals must have given the agreed minimum amount of aggregated service in the geographical area or in direct support of the affected population that is applied to that incident. Due to the nature of humanitarian aid, this may differ between incidents.
- Recipients of the Humanitarian Medal must be in good standing with their employing/sponsoring organisation.
  - In this context, good standing means that the individual must have no open disciplinary issues or complaints against them or any upheld disciplinary issues/complaints within the preceding five years.
  - Personnel subject at the time of their consideration for the Humanitarian Medal to formal disciplinary procedures which may result in dismissal or requirement to resign will have their eligibility determined once the outcome of the proceedings is known. In the event of dismissal or requirement to resign, and if no appeal against that outcome is upheld, the individual will not receive the medal.
  - In all other outcomes, the individual's eligibility will be determined in accordance with the normal criteria.
- There will be no nationality qualification for the medal.
- Only one medal may be earned, accepted and worn by an individual. There will be no limit to the number of clasps which can be earned if the individual is eligible.
- There will be no post nominal letters for individuals who receive this medal.
- The award of the Humanitarian Medal will not be retrospective. The 5-year rule, which allows the case for the introduction of a new medal up to five years after the operation has ceased, will not apply to the initial start date for the Humanitarian Medal. A suitable start date will be selected, which is likely to be the date on which the Royal Warrant is signed by The Sovereign. This is the point from which operations which are live at that time may be considered for eligibility. For clarity, this does mean that personnel who served on an operation which is still live, but which commenced before the introduction of the Humanitarian

Medal, may be eligible for the Humanitarian Medal with the clasp for that operation.

### **Principles for a clasp**

If an individual is eligible for the clasp but missed out on consideration for the award originally, they may apply to the relevant department responsible for their workforce for up to five years following the end date of the qualifying period. The relevant department must ensure it is in a position to assist such late requests. It will be for the individual to provide evidence that they qualify for the medal (such as proof of employment with an organisation) and for the relevant department to undertake to check the necessary records to confirm eligibility (such as records of deployment on a particular incident).

The medal may be annulled by The Sovereign on the advice of the Honours Forfeiture Committee, should the recipient be found to have behaved in a way which brings themselves and their medal into disrepute. Should a potential case for forfeiture occur, departments are asked to contact the Secretariat for advice on next steps.

# Design



The medal design presents laurel wreaths symbolising victory in overcoming a crisis, interwoven with a banner proclaiming "For humanitarian service". The obverse of the medal will bear the effigy of the Sovereign.

The ribbon design reflects the different paths for humanitarian service and the variety of services involved in such responses. The ribbon has a central stripe of white to represent civilians and peace, with four narrow stripes on either side of red, light blue, dark blue and purple. Red represents humanitarian organisations and light blue the NHS. Dark blue and purple represent the other services.

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