



SRCS

Trying to locate people and put them back into contact with their relatives is a major challenge for the ICRC, the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) and the network of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and volunteers in the region and across the world.

SOMALIA: TRACE THE FACE WEBSITE HELPS FIND MISSING RELATIVES

Trace the Face – an online photo directory helping migrants who reached Europe to restore contact with their loved ones in their country of origin – is now available in Somali language, making it easier for both migrants and their families in Somalia to search for and reconnect with each other, often after years of separation.

To mark the International Day of the Disappeared – August 30 — the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) are promoting a new Somali-language website, a mirror of the multilingual Trace the Face platform.

Trace the Face is a tool that was initiated in September 2013 by the Family Links Network within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRC Movement). More and more people are uploading their pictures to find their missing relatives. Since 2013, over 3,000 people have posted their pictures on Trace the Face. They mainly come from the Middle-East, West Africa and the Horn of Africa. More than 200 of the uploaded photos are of people of Somali origin who migrated to Europe. The website is now available in seven different languages, Somali included, which brings it closer to the people who are most in need of the services.

In 2014, Salim Mohamed* was still a minor when he left Somalia for Europe, seeking for a better future. While trying to settle in Austria, he wanted to re-establish contact with his family who he had not heard from since his departure. In 2015, he approached the Austrian Red Cross and in January last

year, his photo was published on www.tracetheface.org.

Few months later, in July, Salim's neighbor in Somalia, who had also migrated to Europe and was living as a refugee in Malta, recognized Salim's face on the website. This set off a chain of communication from the neighbor to the Austrian Red Cross down to the village where Salim's mother was. In the end, mother and son were able to get in touch by a phone call in September.

"I confirmed my mother was healthy and I was happy to hear that," Salim recalls. "I learnt she was in a [displacement] camp. I cannot imagine what she is going through. I asked her a lot of questions especially about her health and general conditions of her life." His mother on her part was so relieved to hear that her young son was safe and well after nearly two years of uncertainty about his fate.

STILL MISSING!

Trace the Face is one among the various tools used by the ICRC and the Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies to help re-establish contact between family members separated by armed conflict, violence, natural disasters, migration or other humanitarian crises. Besides phone

calls and exchange of written messages (Red Cross Message), Restoring Family Links' services offered also include tracing, meaning in-the-field tracking to re-locate, sometimes after months, even years of patient work, the sought person(s).

Every year, with the support of the ICRC, the Somali Red Crescent Society receives and works on hundreds of tracing requests received from all over the world. Unfortunately, many of these requests remain unsolved, but teams in the field are regularly reaching positive results, as some very touching stories can illustrate.

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