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**Dr. Massimo Barra**  
Henry Dunant Medal 2024 Awardee



“Be the Light in the Darkness”: Urgent Call Against Violations of International Humanitarian Law

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In a ceremony held in Geneva, Dr. Massimo Barra, a physician and founder of Villa Maraini in Rome and the Rome Consensus 2.0, received the 2024 Henry Dunant Medal, the highest

honor awarded by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Established in 1965 at the International Red Cross Conference in Vienna, this medal recognizes outstanding humanitarian service and actions of significant international relevance.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Barra spoke powerfully:

"Dear RC/RC colleagues, unfortunately, we are living in dark times. We watch, dismayed, the complete contempt for International Humanitarian Law. Some governments who should be teaching respect for it are the first to violate it, to the harm of civilian populations, of our ambulances and even of our volunteers."

This statement underscores growing concerns about increasing violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and their detrimental impact on humanitarian operations. Dr. Barra stressed the necessity for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC) to uphold its integrity and core principles, warning that:

"The Movement cannot accept this degradation. It is true that, as a great President of the ICRC said, the Red Cross is important for what it does, not for what it says; but, if we remain in silence, we risk becoming accomplices, and one day we will have to beg pardon to all Humanity, as has already happened in the past."

Dr. Barra urged using the International Conference as a platform to affirm that **neutrality does not mean powerlessness** and that impartiality embodies proportionality, a principle that cannot be disregarded or violated with impunity. Acknowledging practical limitations, he concluded:

"Anyhow we must be realistic. We cannot change the world, but we can and we must together be a light in the darkness and a hope that, for many, can represent the difference between life and death."

This compelling address serves as a stark and urgent reminder of the mission not only of the Red Cross and Red Crescent but of the entire humanitarian movement and human rights defenders worldwide. Dr. Barra's call to action resonates with the media and the general public, emphasizing the critical need to safeguard the principles of IHL, particularly when neutrality and impartiality face threats in the field.

- [Download Speech Dr. Massimo Barra](#)
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#### [Honoring Humanity: Dr. Massimo Barra Awarded the Henry Dunant Medal](#)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QykHU8XnLfg&t>