



# ICRC

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### **Haiti: health-care heroes honoured after earthquake**

Port-au-Prince (ICRC) – Exactly six months after the catastrophic earthquake that struck Haiti, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is honouring three extraordinary health-care workers for their unwavering commitment to helping the sick and wounded. Michaëlle Collin, Germaine Pierre-Louis, and Jude Célorge will be presented with the Florence Nightingale Medal, the highest distinction a nurse or voluntary nursing aide working in armed conflict or natural disaster can receive, at a ceremony in Port-au-Prince in August.

"Haiti was devastated by the massive earthquake, which killed or injured hundreds of thousands of men, women and children and virtually destroyed Port-au-Prince six months ago," said Christiane Augsburg, a member of the ICRC Assembly and the head of the Florence Nightingale Medal selection commission. "During the crisis, Haitians went to great lengths to help one another cope with adversity. The Florence Nightingale Medal is being awarded to three outstanding people in recognition of the exceptional courage and devotion they showed in caring for earthquake victims. We are happy to honour them, as they personify the spirit of the leading nursing reformer, Florence Nightingale, and the work of the Red Cross and Red Crescent."

Nurses perform innumerable selfless deeds as they tend to the wounded and sick in armed conflicts and natural disasters, and those in Haiti are no exception. The medal, normally awarded in odd-numbered years, is being given exceptionally in 2010 to mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Florence Nightingale, who achieved legendary status during her own lifetime thanks to her work advancing the nursing profession and health care in general.

Nominated by the Haitian National Red Cross Society, the following health-care workers will receive medals:

#### **Michaëlle Collin**

Michaëlle Collin, who has been a nurse since 1980, is currently the chief nurse at the Port-au-Prince Sanatorium, which treats patients suffering from tuberculosis. Her devotion to the patients in her care and the leadership she has demonstrated among fellow health-care workers are without equal. Following the earthquake of 12 January, which destroyed her home, she worked tirelessly to ensure that the sanatorium's patients would continue to receive treatment and that first aid would be available in her local community.

## **Germaine Pierre-Louis**

Germaine Pierre-Louis is the president of the south-east regional branch of the Haitian National Red Cross Society. She is in charge of epidemiological and statistical services for the Ministry of Public Health and Population, and teaches health education. She has been a volunteer with the Haitian Red Cross for 37 years, serving her community by contributing to the training of volunteers, organizing services and promoting personal hygiene. Despite losing her home in the earthquake, she organized the search for survivors trapped in the rubble and arranged for them to be taken to hospital. She saw to it that her local hospital had properly functioning medical equipment and ample supplies of medicines, and organized emergency first-aid services in her community.

## **Jude Célorge**

Jude Célorge joined the Haitian National Red Cross Society in the Martissant region as a volunteer coordinating emergency first-aid services and the evacuation of injured and sick people. He and his team work in extremely difficult conditions. Although he himself was a victim of the tragedy on 12 January, that did not stop him from providing support for other earthquake survivors. With admirable resourcefulness, he took action to rescue people trapped in the rubble in his neighbourhood and arranged for help to be sent to other hard-hit communities.

## **Editor's note:**

The Florence Nightingale Medal is the highest international distinction a nurse working in armed conflict or natural disaster can receive. It honours exceptional courage and devotion in caring for the victims of these crisis situations. Named after the leading reformer and pioneer of nursing, Florence Nightingale, the medal also recognizes exemplary services or a creative and pioneering spirit in the areas of public health or nursing education.

Nominations for the award are submitted by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to a commission, comprised of representatives from the ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Council of Nurses, which selects the recipients.

A total of 1,309 exceptional nurses from around the world have received the Florence Nightingale Medal since it was first awarded in 1920.

For interviews with the recipients please contact Olga Milcheva in Haiti at the telephone numbers below.

For high resolution photos of Michaëlle Collin or Jude Célorge contact Fania Khan at [fkhan@icrc.org](mailto:fkhan@icrc.org).

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