

British Red Cross

International tracing and message service (ITMS)

Reuniting families

When Almaz Yebasa fled her home country of Ethiopia in fear for her life, leaving behind her husband and four young daughters, she gave up all hope of ever seeing them again.

Arriving in the UK, Almaz claimed asylum. It was while she was receiving support at a British Red Cross orientation drop in centre in Portsmouth, that she heard about the ITMS (international tracing and message service).

She explained: “We had to leave our home for political reasons. There was a lot of trouble and a lot of fighting.

“At first I was worried telling them all the information about my family, but the Red Cross people were very good and very helpful.

“I had several interviews with the Red Cross before, after 10 months, they found the first two of my four daughters, Maza (14) and Mihret (15).

“It had been a year we were apart and I felt so happy to hear from them, but I couldn’t think that I’d be able to meet with them again.

It was a hard time for me.

“We applied to the Home Office for visas on the grounds



Almaz with her youngest daughter Maza

of family reunion and – more than two years after I had ran from my country - my children were eventually able to come here and be with me.

“I couldn’t believe it, we were all crying and screaming. It was a very happy moment for us all – one I didn’t think would ever happen.”

Almaz was later reunited with her other two daughters Atsegenet (17) and Frehiwot (18) and the family now live together in Portsmouth. They continue the search for Almaz’s husband, the girls’ father.

Conflicts and natural disasters often lead to huge numbers of people being forced suddenly to flee their homes without warning. The Red Cross helps people to restore family links across the world. The service also highlights how long-lasting the effects of conflict and disaster can be as more than half a century after the end of WW2, the Red Cross continues to receive and handle tracing cases relating to this war.

[redcross.org.uk](https://www.redcross.org.uk)