



Security Council

Open debate

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

New York, 22 May 2025

Statement by Switzerland on behalf of
the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of 27 members of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.¹

I would like to thank the briefers for their remarks.

Armed conflicts have continued unabated, with a sharp rise in both the number of active conflicts across the globe and the number of civilians affected. Civilians increasingly bear the brunt of armed conflicts. Women, children and persons with disabilities are the most disproportionately impacted. Journalists, and humanitarian personnel, in particular national and locally recruited personnel are also affected. This has to change.

Several key trends affect the protection of civilians. These include the use of indiscriminate means and methods of warfare, misuses of new technologies, and the widespread dissemination of disinformation, hate speech, the use of conflict-related sexual violence, increases in deliberate attacks on civilians, including specific population groups or humanitarian personnel, and civilian infrastructure. Persistent obstruction, instrumentalization and denial of humanitarian access, are depriving populations of much needed assistance and protection and may lead to catastrophic levels of food insecurity, including famine. Civilian vulnerability is further exacerbated by the push-back against international human rights law, in particular women's and girls' rights. Climate change and natural disasters also further aggravate the plight of civilians in armed conflict. Alarming, international humanitarian law is being increasingly undermined and violated.

The targeting of civilians and civilian objects, and the resulting surge in human suffering cannot become the new normal. Concrete action is needed to reaffirm that such acts are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. To this end, the Group of Friends would like to underline three points:

- **First**, persistent IHL violations do not render these rules irrelevant. Rather, they show the lack of political will to respect them. We must urgently elevate respect for IHL as a political priority, and collectively work towards its strict compliance. The Security Council has repeatedly reaffirmed IHL obligations through numerous resolutions under the PoC agenda, while the ICJ has contributed to its interpretation. In order to translate binding commitments into action, the monitoring and accountability mechanisms, must be implemented. Other tools play a critical role in the protection of civilians such as the Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians

¹ Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Ukraine, Uruguay and Switzerland.



from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, as well as the Safe Schools Declaration. We encourage Member States to consider endorsing these instruments. We also welcome ongoing efforts such as the Global Initiative to galvanize political commitment to IHL, and the development of a Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, led by a cross-regional Ministerial Group and informed by humanitarian partners.

- **Second**, perpetrators must be held to account. Violations must not be met with silence or inaction. Independent investigations and prosecutions do not only respond to a legal obligation but are also critical for breaking cycles of impunity and restoring faith in the rule of law. In this regard, appropriate national and international accountability mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, play a vital role. Adequate support should be provided to survivors, affected families and communities in accordance with their rights and needs.
- **Third**, humanitarian action must always include efforts aimed at upholding individual's rights, reducing violence and mitigating its impact, including through support for political solutions. Protection is an integral part of humanitarian action. In light of the pressing reforms in all sectors, including the humanitarian system, resources and capacities for prevention, protection and mitigation must be strengthened.

The members of the Group of Friends will continue their steadfast advocacy for the full protection of civilians. We call on the Security Council and UN Member States to act with determination and unity to uphold international humanitarian law, at all times and in all circumstance.

Monsieur le Président,

Permettez-moi d'ajouter quelques mots en capacité nationale :

Soyons clairs : que ce soit au Soudan, à Gaza, en Ukraine, au Myanmar, en RDC ou partout ailleurs, la protection des civils dans les conflits armés ne peut pas être réduite à une question de bonne volonté. C'est une obligation qui incombe à toutes les parties aux conflits, en toutes circonstances, et même si l'adversaire ne la respecte pas. Nous ne devons pas attendre ce rendez-vous annuel pour faire le constat des manquements en la matière et appeler toutes les parties à respecter le droit international humanitaire. En tant qu'États, nous devons agir ensemble en faveur d'une meilleure protection des civils, en partenariat avec les organisations internationales et non-gouvernementales, et autres membres de la société civile. L'engagement d'un nombre croissant de partenaires dans le cadre de la 8^{ème} semaine de la protection des civils, que ma délégation a l'honneur de coordonner aux côtés de OCHA, de CIVIC et du IRC, démontre la volonté et l'urgence de cette action conjointe.

Au cours de notre récent mandat au Conseil de sécurité, nous nous sommes engagés en faveur du respect du droit international humanitaire, notamment pour la protection des enfants dans les conflits armés, pour mettre un terme à la faim induite par les conflits et à l'utilisation de la famine comme arme de guerre, et pour la protection des infrastructures essentielles hydrauliques. En outre, nous avons œuvré pour la reconnaissance du changement climatique comme facteur aggravant l'instabilité et les souffrances des civils. En réponse à l'augmentation alarmante des attaques contre le personnel humanitaire et onusien, y compris le personnel national ou recruté localement, la Suisse a porté la résolution 2730. Co-porte-plume de la résolution 2761, nous avons œuvré pour la pérennisation des exemptions humanitaires au régime des sanctions financières à l'encontre de Daech et Al-Qaida. Nous appelons à la mise en œuvre intégrale de ces résolutions et l'ensemble des instruments normatifs protégeant la population civile durant les conflits armés.

La Suisse reste pleinement attachée à la protection des civils et continuera son engagement à cette fin.

Je vous remercie.