



<b>Forum:</b>	First Committee
<b>Question of:</b>	Finding agreements to ensure the safety of aid organizations in crisis areas
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<b>Position:</b>	Main Chair

## **I. Description of the Issue**

The topic of ensuring safety to aid organizations in crisis areas is a pressing global issue that demands our immediate attention. Humanitarian workers are the frontline responders who provide life-saving aid and support to communities affected by crises, conflicts, and natural disasters. Their immediate actions, such as delivering emergency relief supplies, setting up temporary shelters, and providing medical care, are crucial in protecting human life and upholding human dignity during the most challenging circumstances. Beyond the initial emergency response, humanitarian workers facilitate access to essential services like healthcare, education, and sanitation, while also supporting long-term.

In times of conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Ukraine-Russia war or the humanitarian crises in Sudan, aid organizations grow in importance every day. The aid workers are typically the first to arrive and ensure safety to the citizens, however the aid workers who are supposed to ensure safety are the ones who are the least protected. Over the last few years the number of wounded, killed or kidnapped aid workers has risen significantly. In 2022, 62 aid workers were killed, 84 were wounded, and 34 were kidnapped. In 2023, the number was approximately the same until October.

Since October 2023, 196 aid workers have been killed, 161 of those deaths being in the first three months of 2024. This increase in the number of aid workers who have died is due to the Israeli -Palestinian conflict, in which aid workers are particularly at risk.

This specific conflict shows major problems with keeping aid organizations safe. This is one of the highest death tolls for aid workers ever recorded.

Even though the aid organizations communicated their location to prevent attacks, the marked vehicles and facilities were nonetheless repeatedly targeted.



This violates the rules of war that are supposed to protect the aid workers.

The international humanitarian law (IHL), also known as the laws of armed conflict originally from the Geneva conventions and their additional protocols in 1949, is a set of rules that seek to limit the effects of armed conflicts for humanitarian reasons. The international humanitarian law applies during times of conflict between nations but also within nations (international and non-international), it binds all parties involved in the conflict, regardless of who initiated the conflict.

The international humanitarian law, not to be confused with the international human rights law (IHRL), consists of 4 conventions and 3 protocols and is supposed to ensure human dignity during times of conflict.

Even though the IHL is binding for all nations and parties involved in conflicts, as already mentioned, the number of wounded, killed or kidnapped aid workers are still high and have risen over the years. This is the outcome of several issues with international humanitarian law.

If a nation violates the IHL, a possible way to penalize the violation is to embrace sanctions. The application and implementation of sanctions prove to be difficult or impossible in many cases because of a few different reasons.

The implementation of IHL sanctions often overlooks the complexities of domestic legal systems and national divisions of competencies. This can hinder how IHL violations are addressed. The separation of powers within states further complicates the investigation, prosecution, and sanctioning of IHL breaches, creating obstacles to coordinated responses. Moreover, defining competencies between national authorities and international bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC) can result in gaps or overlaps in accountability. Additionally, the emergence of non-penal or administrative sanctions by non-judicial entities adds complexity to IHL enforcement.

In summary, the effectiveness of international humanitarian law is frequently undermined by the interplay between international and domestic legal systems, jurisdictional boundaries, and the variety of sanctioning mechanisms. These factors create challenges in ensuring consistent accountability for IHL violations.



## **II. Definition of Key Terms**

### **Crisis Areas**

Crisis areas are regions or locations experiencing critical situations or events that pose significant risks, instability, and potential for harm or disruption. These areas are typically marked by armed conflicts, natural disasters, disease outbreaks, political or social unrest, leading to breakdowns in governance, essential services, population displacement, and threats to human life and dignity.

### **Aid Workers**

An aid worker is someone who is employed by a humanitarian or charitable organization to provide assistance and support to people in areas affected by crises, conflicts, natural disasters or other emergency situations. Aid workers deliver essential services like food, water, shelter, and medical aid to vulnerable populations in unstable or disaster-struck regions, often working in dangerous or conflict zones.

### **International Humanitarian Law :**

International humanitarian law (IHL) is a set of rules that seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons not participating in hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare. IHL, also known as the laws of armed conflict or the law of war, is a branch of international law codified through treaties like the Geneva Conventions and arises from customary laws and practices of states during armed conflicts. Its core principles include distinguishing between civilians and combatants, prohibiting unnecessary suffering, and ensuring humane treatment of detainees and non-combatants.

**Sanctions:** Sanctions are coercive measures applied against nation-states, private entities, or individuals that threaten global peace or affect the interests of the sanctioning nation-states. Sanctions are used by governments as an alternative to military force to modify the behavior of the sanctioned group, weaken their position, and reduce their capabilities. Sanctions can include diplomatic, commercial, and financial measures like asset freezes, trade restrictions, and cutting off access to the global financial system.



Geneva Convention: The Geneva Conventions are a set of four treaties that establish international legal standards for humanitarian treatment during armed conflicts. The Second Convention protects wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel at sea. The Fourth Convention affords protection to civilians during times of war. Collectively, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are the core instruments of international humanitarian law, establishing legal protections for non-combatants and rules governing the conduct of warfare during armed conflicts.

Hague Conventions: The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 were a series of international treaties negotiated at two peace conferences in The Hague, Netherlands. Along with the Geneva Conventions, they were among the first formal statements codifying the laws of war and war crimes into secular international law. The Hague Conventions primarily addressed the conduct of warfare, including the rights and duties of neutral parties, restrictions on weapons and military tactics, protections for prisoners of war, and rules around military occupation of territories.

### **III. Background information**

There are a few certain conflict zones around the world that have proven to be particularly deadly for aid workers trying to provide humanitarian assistance. The Occupied Palestinian Territories, especially the Gaza Strip, have seen an unprecedented number of aid worker casualties in recent times. At least 196 aid workers have been killed in Gaza since October 2023 alone. In Africa, nations plagued by prolonged conflicts like South Sudan and Sudan have ranked among the most dangerous for aid operations. South Sudan has topped insecurity rankings for aid workers for years, with 40 attacks and 22 fatalities reported as of August 2023. Sudan saw 17 attacks and 19 aid worker deaths by August 2023, surpassing levels not seen since the Darfur crisis. Beyond these nations, other conflict hotspots like the Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia and Ukraine have also witnessed attacks resulting in aid worker casualties in recent years. The combination of active hostilities, proliferation of armed groups, lack of security and access constraints make these environments extremely hazardous for humanitarian staff.

While aid workers put themselves at risk globally, certain conflict-affected regions in Africa and the Middle East have emerged as among the deadliest postings due to the intensity of





violence, direct targeting by combatants and inadequate protection mechanisms.

### **Historical background:**

International Humanitarian Law (IHL), also known as the laws of armed conflict or law of war, had a relatively recent origin compared to the conventional narratives that trace it back to ancient codes of warfare. The term «international humanitarian law» itself first appeared in the 1970s.

Prior to that, the foundations of modern IHL were laid by the adoption of the Geneva Conventions in 1949, which were influenced by earlier efforts like the First Geneva Convention of 1864 and the Hague Conventions. A major development came in 1977 with the adoption of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. Additional Protocol I significantly expanded and strengthened the laws governing international armed conflicts, while Additional Protocol II did the same for non-international armed conflicts occurring within states.

The push for these Additional Protocols in the 1970s came from the meeting of various actors pursuing different agendas - states, the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as new non-state actors like human rights organizations. However, many provisions of the 1977 Protocols remained vague and contested initially. It was only by the late 1990s that Additional Protocol I in particular gained widespread acceptance as the authoritative codification of IHL's humanitarian principles, thanks in large part to the advocacy efforts of human rights groups and academic international lawyers.

So in essence, while rooted in earlier conventions, IHL as a distinct and humanitarian-focused body of law crystallized relatively recently through the 1977 Additional Protocols and subsequent efforts to have them recognized as customary international law by the end of the 20th century.

### **IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**International Committee of the Red Cross:** The International Committee of the Red Cross is a private humanitarian institution based in Geneva, Switzerland that works globally to provide protection and assistance to victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. It is an impartial, neutral, and independent organization whose mission is to protect the lives and dignity of those affected by war and internal violence. The ICRC promotes compliance with



international humanitarian law, facilitates humanitarian aid, and acts as a neutral intermediary between warring parties.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is a United Nations body focused on coordinating global emergency response to humanitarian crises. The OCHA is also known for having organized the “ #NoMatterWhat” campaign to highlight the risks faced by aid workers worldwide.

The Aid Worker Security Database (AWSDB): The AWSDB is a project of the international research group Humanitarian Outcomes. It is supported by USAID and keeps track of significant instances of attacks on aid workers around the globe from 1997 to the present. The AWSDB was the first to compile all of this data comprehensively, and since then, it has served as a source of quantitative evidence on issues pertaining to the security of humanitarian operations in conflict. It has been cited in official UN statements, UN Security Council documents, UN General Assembly resolutions, UN Secretary-General reports, and policy discussions.

Palestine: Since October 2023, 196 aid workers have been killed, 161 of those deaths being in the first three months of 2024. This increase in the number of aid workers who have died is due to the Israeli -Palestinian conflict, in which aid workers are particularly at risk.

South Sudan: For several years running, South Sudan has been rated as the most dangerous and unstable place for humanitarian workers. Despite this, there has been no stop to the violence on aid workers in South Sudan; as of August 2023, there had been 40 documented attacks on aid workers, with 22 fatalities in that month alone. This startling number highlights the tremendous hazards that relief workers encounter when attempting to offer assistance in the middle of the ongoing war and instability that the country is experiencing.

Sudan: As of August 2023, Sudan had the second highest number of attacks and killings of humanitarian workers in the world, after South Sudan. During that time, there were 17 documented attacks in Sudan on humanitarian workers, which led to 19 fatalities. The death toll among humanitarian workers in Sudan for 2023 is concerning because it exceeded records set during the height of the Darfur conflict in 2006–2009, highlighting the country's escalating



insecurity. The level of violence against humanitarian workers in Sudan has made it the second most dangerous place in the world for assistance operations, after South Sudan.

Ukraine: Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Ukraine has been in need of humanitarian aid every day. This war has not only taken the lives of many citizens but also from many aid workers.

Africa Over all: Africa emerged as the worst region for humanitarian workers between 1985 and 1998. Over the course of those 13 years, a startling 64% of all recorded deaths among humanitarian workers took place in conflict-ridden areas and African nations. Almost half of the deaths of African charity workers occurred in the risky regions of the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes. These figures highlight the disproportionate risks that humanitarian workers operating in various conflict-ridden regions of the African continent during that period faced.

#### **V. Previous attempts to solve the issue**

Various attempts and initiatives have been launched throughout the years to address the critical issue of assuring the safety and protection of humanitarian aid workers working in conflict zones and unstable conditions. However, search results show that prior attempts, while well-intentioned, have been ineffective in reducing the continually high incidence of attacks and casualties among assistance staff around the world.

One major focus has been on improving security risk management systems so that assistance organizations may better analyze and mitigate hazards to their workforce. In the late 1990s, NGOs and entities such as the International Committee of the Red Cross collaborated to develop global interagency security training in areas such as risk assessment, facility protection, and convoy management.

However, expanding effective security risk management (SRM) strategies to local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) remains a substantial gap.

Advocacy initiatives have also sought to overcome obstacles provided by donor rules and NGO internal processes that prevent constant, dedicated funding for vital security costs such as people, training, equipment, and communications. The idea is to minimize trade-offs between operational and security resources, which could jeopardize aid activities.

Capacity-building activities such as research studies and guidelines have attempted to raise security training standards and benchmarks throughout the humanitarian sector. UN



leadership, relief groups, and others have repeatedly called for the upholding of international humanitarian law, promoting accountability, and ending the "impunity" for attacks on aid workers, which has been described as "a scar on our collective conscience."

## **VI. Possible solutions**

Ensuring the safety and protection of humanitarian organizations and their staff in crisis and conflict zones continues to be a serious concern that necessitates a diversified approach combining several partnerships. Previous measures have failed to reduce the high rate of attacks and injuries among aid workers around the world. Several viable solutions have been presented to deal with this essential issue.

A significant priority is on developing accountability systems to combat the perception of impunity for crimes committed against aid workers. Recommendations include monitoring and documenting attacks, punishing perpetrators, and establishing a barrier against humanitarian activities. Facilitating secure, open humanitarian access to communities in need in accordance with international law is also emphasized. This includes creating safe passageways, reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks, and encouraging discussion between conflict parties and humanitarian organizations.

Capacity-building activities are critical, particularly in enhancing security training standards, policies, and risk management for local assistance organizations that face the greatest threats. Developing targets, making training more accessible, and implementing effective security frameworks used by significant international NGOs could help improve preparation.

Another potential option is to remove impediments to dedicated funding for vital security needs such as staff, equipment, and communications. This tries to prevent trade-offs between operational and security resources, which might jeopardize aid activities.

Along with following international humanitarian law, all parties should respect humanitarian values of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Increased IHL training for armed personnel, as well as open discussion between soldiers and humanitarian groups, could help to promote these concepts.





Investing in and elevating the work of local humanitarian actors is advocated to improve the speed and effectiveness of disaster response and encourage increased state participation in these initiatives.

While these solutions address a variety of issues, earlier initiatives were deemed insufficient, prompting calls for more comprehensive, coordinated pledges and activities by nations, military, donors, and the assistance sector. Addressing the safety of aid workers necessitates a collaborative, multi stakeholder strategy supported by strong political will and a genuine commitment to upholding international humanitarian principles and standards.

### **VII. How to prepare as a delegate**

As delegates you are obligated to write at least **one draft resolution** and a minimum of **two preferably three position papers** so that you are properly prepared for all the topics.

You have time to hand in your position papers and resolution until **21.09.2024**.

If you hand in your position papers and resolution later than that, we will not correct them. If you have problems or questions during your research, you are welcome to contact me via my email address: [malilolu@web.de](mailto:malilolu@web.de)

### **Questions you should consider during research:**

As you are writing your position papers, it might be helpful to ask yourself these questions:

What is my country's stand on weapon trade?

Does my country have special laws concerning that topic?

Is my country involved in any conflict ?

Has my country taken a stand on that topic or similar topics before ?

If you have problems finding information about your country's stand on the topic, it is always useful to look up the biggest and most influential trading partners.

### **VIII. UN resolutions**

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