

Concept Note for the Security Council Open Debate on “Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict”

I. Introduction and objective

During its Presidency of the Security Council for the month of May, China will convene the annual open debate on “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”, to be held on 20 May 2026. The open debate will consider the Secretary-General’s annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The open debate is an opportunity for the Security Council and the wider membership to take stock of the existing challenges to the protection of civilians, reaffirm the importance of and urge respect for applicable legal frameworks, including international humanitarian law, and explore how the Council, Member States, parties to conflict and other stakeholders can better ensure the safety and dignity of civilians in armed conflict.

II. Background

Civilians continued to suffer alarming levels of harm and suffering in armed conflicts in 2025, with widespread deaths, injuries and forced displacement. Civilian objects were systematically damaged or destroyed, including homes and energy, water, health and education infrastructure, with cascading effects such as displacement, food insecurity, public health crises and prolonged service outages. Indiscriminate attacks and disproportionate use of force in urban and densely populated areas caused serious harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure. Attacks against aid workers remained at record levels, with local responders comprising the overwhelming majority of those killed.

Ten years since the Security Council adopted resolution 2286 (2016), violence and attacks against medical facilities, personnel and transport and a range of other impediments to the provision of medical care is on the rise. The ability of the wounded and sick to receive medical care without discrimination in conflict is a fundamental tenet of international humanitarian law.

The rapid development of military applications of emerging technologies is reshaping the conduct of warfare, creating new risks for civilians and civilian infrastructure, and giving rise to humanitarian, legal and ethical concerns. The International Law and International Humanitarian Law continue to be

disregarded and distorted in the pursuit of military objectives, reflected in the increasing erosion of limits on the conduct of hostilities and the continued rise in civilian casualties. Against this backdrop, there is an urgent need to reinvigorate respect for International Humanitarian Law and ensure its full and effective implementation, a call that has been widely echoed by the international community. In this regard, Brazil, China, France, Jordan, Kazakhstan and South Africa, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross, has launched the “Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law” which has garnered the support of over 100 countries.

III. Focus of discussion

Member States are invited to discuss ways to address existing challenges; reaffirm their attachment to applicable legal frameworks, particularly IHL; share good practices, including preventive and preparedness measures on how to better ensure the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Guiding questions include:

- How can the Security Council and the international community address the root causes of armed conflict and promote its political resolution, so as to ensure more effective and sustainable protection of civilians?
- How can the Security Council, Member States and all parties to conflict ensure greater respect and accountability for international humanitarian law and work to reduce the level of harm to civilians in armed conflict?
- How can the Security Council, Member States and all parties to conflict promote more systematic implementation of existing frameworks and instruments, including resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#) and resolution [2573 \(2021\)](#), to address the protection of medical care in conflict? What more could be done to ensure the aspiration of Security Council resolution 2286 to protect medical care is fulfilled?
- How can Member States promote technology for good, mitigate technology-related security risks and challenges, and strengthen the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure?
- How can the Security Council and Member States better support national authorities in fulfilling their primary responsibility to protect civilians, including through capacity-building and development efforts that help address the drivers of conflict and sustain peace?
- What are the challenges to and the good practices for the protection of civilians, including preventive measures to ensure their safety and dignity during armed conflict?

IV. Participation and format

The meeting will be held on 20 May, in the format of an open debate. It will be chaired by H.E. Ambassador Fu Cong, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations.

Member States that wish to participate under rule 37 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council should register their speakers through e-deleGATE, beginning at 9:30 AM on 15 May 2026, and upload a letter from their Permanent Representatives or Chargé d'affaires a.i. to the President of the Security Council. Participating Member States are not required to submit written statements through e-dateGATE. The statements made will be included in the provisional verbatim record of the meeting.

Briefers

- Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director, Crisis Response Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- Mirjana Spoljaric, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross