



DENMARK
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Delivering on International Humanitarian Law:

Mobilizing Action to Protect Health Care in Conflict

Side Event of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

18 June 2026, 1:15:2:30pm, CR11 - UN Headquarters, New York

Please register to attend here: <https://forms.office.com/e/VLmw2qVc9P>

Sponsors/Organizers:

Organizers: Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Confirmed co-Sponsors: Colombia; New Zealand; Poland; United Kingdom; Denmark; Japan; Oxfam International; World Health Organization (WHO); Researching the Impact of Attacks on Healthcare (RIAH); Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition; Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC); Physicians for Human Rights (PHR); Save the Children.

Background and Objectives:

This side event marks the tenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2286 (2016), which condemned attacks on medical personnel, facilities, and transport in armed conflict and called on all parties to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law (IHL). A decade later, the humanitarian community continues to confront an alarming implementation gap: attacks on health care are rising, accountability remains rare, and the political will to enforce existing norms is insufficient.

The challenge is not the absence of legal standards. IHL is clear: health care workers, facilities, and transport enjoy protected status in armed conflict, provided they are used exclusively for medical purposes, in accordance with obligations under international law. What is lacking is consistent political commitment, operational compliance, and robust accountability mechanisms to give effect to these norms. The cascading and reverberating humanitarian consequences of attacks on health systems — disrupted care, preventable deaths, long-term collapse of health infrastructure, and compounding

protection risks for women and girls — are well-documented and foreseeable. Yet some actors continue to contest the legal obligation to account for these indirect harms in precautionary and proportionality analyses, a trend that must be firmly challenged.

Beyond attacks on health care, this event will also address the broader protection of humanitarian and medical personnel — including aid workers — who operate under severely increase risk of attacks including killings, injuries, arbitrary detentions; and while legal protections are being eroded in practice. Their safety and access are essential for them as human beings, for the continuity of essential service delivery, and for the accountability healing and deterrence from further attacks that must follow attacks on health systems. Accountability and justice for attacks on health can take many forms, including through urgent measures for justice for the victims, as well concrete actions to mitigate suffering, ensure continuity of care, and address violations of the right to health. Positioned within the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, this event will help to consolidate momentum, translate expert-level discussions into policy-level commitments, and draw on the work of Workstream 5 of the Global IHL Initiative and ongoing dialogue among humanitarian organizations, States, and civil society on how to strengthen the protection of health care in armed conflict. Frontline practitioners will share their direct experience of attacks and their foreseeable consequences, grounding the policy discussion in lived reality.

This side event aims to:

- Reinforce high-level political commitment to the protection of health care in armed conflict and the implementation of IHL obligations, including those established under UNSCR 2286;
- Promote a shared strategic understanding of the “implementation gap” — the persistent disconnect between existing legal norms and their application — and its severe humanitarian, systemic, and human rights consequences;
- Challenge dangerous pushback on the legal obligation to account for foreseeable indirect and reverberating harms from attacks on health facilities and infrastructure;
- Explore the link between adequate humanitarian response, accountability, and healing following attacks on health, including how humanitarian actors plan for and respond to such attacks;
- Advance practical, action-oriented recommendations emerging from expert discussions under the Global IHL Initiative;
- Mobilize Member States and civil society around a joint statement or political declaration renewing commitment to implementation of Resolution 2286 and IHL.

Discussion Points or Guiding Questions:

- The Implementation Gap: Why does a gap persist between the robust legal framework protecting health care in armed conflict and its application on the ground? What are the most

consequential political, military, and systemic barriers to implementation of UNSCR 2286 ten years on?

- Foreseeable Harm and the Duty of Precaution: How should the foreseeable and cascading humanitarian consequences of attacks on health facilities and infrastructure — including disruption of care, disease outbreaks, and the collapse of health systems — inform the precautionary and proportionality obligations of parties to armed conflict? How can humanitarian actors' planning processes help demonstrate the predictability of these harms?
- Protection of Aid Workers and Medical Personnel: What are the specific risks faced by medical and humanitarian personnel today, and how can political, legal, and operational measures better protect them? How does the safety of frontline responders affect the continuity and quality of health care in crises?
- Accountability and Justice: What accountability mechanisms exist for attacks on health care, and how effective are they? What is the role of humanitarian actors in documenting attacks and supporting justice? How do measures such as the Ljubljana Convention and the draft Crimes Against Humanity treaty contribute to closing the accountability gap?
- Humanitarian Response and the Right to Health: How is adequate humanitarian response — including rebuilding of health systems — essential to healing, prevention of further rights violations, and the protection of civilians following attacks on health? What commitments are needed from Member States to ensure such response?
- Political Action and the Role of Member States: What concrete national and multilateral measures can Member States take to strengthen implementation of UNSCR 2286? How can the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment serve as a catalyst for renewed political commitment and broader coalition-building beyond the Security Council?

Co-Chairs:

- Lucía García Rico, *Director General for UN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain;*
- James Kariuki, *Ambassador, Chargé d' Affaires a.i., Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations TBC.*

Moderator:

- Fatima Khan, *External Relations Officer World Health Organization Office at the UN*

Panel Composition:

SESSION 1: FRONTLINE REALITIES: IMPACT OF ATTACKS ON HEALTH CARE

- Dr. Yasir Yousif Elamin, *Frontline Health Worker in Sudan (Speaking on independent expert capacity; Member of SAPA- Sudanese American Physicians Association);*
- Dr. Thaer Ahmad, *Emergency Medicine Physician in Lebanon.*
- Bushra Khalidi, *Oxfam's Humanitarian Policy Lead;*

SESSION 2: CLOSING THE IMPLEMENTATION GAP: LEGAL OBLIGATIONS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND POLITICAL ACTION

- Sam Zarifi, Executive Director, *Physicians for Human Rights*;
- Elyse Mosquini, *Permanent Observer International Committee of the Red Cross*;
- Joe Amon, *co-chair of the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition and Director of the Center for Public Health and Human Rights and Professor of the Practice in the Department of Epidemiology at the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.*

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Background Material:

- World Health Organization, Surveillance of Attacks on Healthcare (SSA) Initiative – annual data and reports on attacks on health facilities and personnel in conflict settings.
- International Committee of the Red Cross, Global Initiative on International Humanitarian Law – working documents and outcomes of the IHL initiative, including Workstream 5 on the protection of health care.
- Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, Annual Reports on Attacks on Healthcare – global monitoring reports documenting incidents and trends.
- Researching the Impact of Attacks on Healthcare (RIAH) – evidence-based research on the health and humanitarian consequences of attacks on health facilities.
- UN Secretary-General, Annual Reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict – key thematic findings and recommendations.

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 2286 (2016) – the foundational political and legal reference for this event.