

European Humanitarian Forum Forum humanitaire européen



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European Humanitarian Forum (EHF) - Regional Consultation in MENA and European Neighborhood

“Protecting Civilians and Essential Civilian Infrastructure in Urban Warfare”

24 November 2021

Advocacy Messages

- All parties to the conflict must refrain from intentionally targeting civilians or civilian infrastructure and respect International Humanitarian Law (IHL) when carrying out military operations. IHL should be used as the baseline for all advocacy on protecting civilians, in addition to actual peace negotiations on the ground.
- To Strengthen the Accountability mechanisms or investigative mechanisms by engaging local community members and collating data and evidence about IHL violations.
- Enhance coordination—find a way as humanitarians to have a dialogue with parties to the conflict, be that through civilian-military coordination or another route. Expand on proper ways to liaise with parties to the conflict.
- Share lessons learned and exchange experiences on civilian harm mitigation from operations through coordination mechanisms.
- UN systems and humanitarian leaderships should take a more prominent role in supporting advocacy with parties to the conflict.
- Multi-disciplinary teams should analyse the effects of war and present to wide range of stakeholders.
- Utilize a risk-sharing methodology—instead of one of risk-transfer—with local organizations when dealing with protection concerns. Include CSOs and local NGOs in humanitarian fora and increase their capacity to contribute to the protection of civilians.
- Increase training opportunities for staff and partners.

Identified Recommendations

- EU should continue its support to NGO coalitions in the region by providing the financial means and expanding support for advocacy with key institutional donors and through diplomatic communication and advocacy efforts with members states.
- Increased quality and longer-term funding for humanitarian assistance in order to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid to civilians in armed conflict, requiring all parties to allow

immediate, safe, and unhindered access for all actors, including across conflict lines in urban areas.

- The EU should support investigative mechanisms/commission of inquiry and hold perpetrators accountable for their violations. The EU can boost the technical expertise of humanitarian actors conducting this work.
- The EU should encourage projects supporting the triple nexus approach i.e. joining humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, and development interventions.
- The EU is expected to focus on addressing the lack of knowledge on IHL, humanitarian negotiations and risk awareness by expanding its focus on the strengthening and learning programs targeted at all actors (international and local).
- Increase investment, education, and tools in humanitarian negotiations and the capacity of humanitarian actors to conduct such negotiations engaging not only state authorities but non-state actors.
- Humanitarian actors that work in the field should have increased access and coordination with academic institutions, government, and external stakeholders.