

European Humanitarian Forum

Forum humanitaire européen



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European Humanitarian Forum

Ministerial Session - Improving compliance with IHL to safeguard the humanitarian space

21 March 2022, 17:45-19:00

Moderator: *Chris Burns*

Panelists: *Jean-Yves Le-Drian (Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France), Janez Lenarčič (European Commissioner for Crisis Management), Annalena Baerbock (Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Germany), Martin Griffiths (United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), Pekka Olavi Haavisto (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Finland), Eva-Maria Liimets (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Estonia), Luigi Di Maio (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy), Eamon Gilmore (EU Special Representative for Human Rights), Filippo Grandi (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Andreas Katsaniotis (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Greece), Daniela Gitman (Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania), Gašper Dovžan (Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia), Paweł Jabłoński (Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland), Robert Mardini (Director-General, International Committee of the Red Cross), Ilse Brands Kehris (United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights), Maria Arena (Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights), Jan Egeland (Secretary General, Norwegian Refugee Council), Gloria Gaggioli (Director, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights).*

Interventions from the floor: *Gunta Anca (European Disability Forum Board Member); Pim Kraan (CEO of Save the Children Netherlands); Manuel Patrouillard (Humanity and Inclusion Global Managing Director)*

Executive Summary:

In the context of the Ministerial segment, speakers expressed concern about the numerous International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations observed after the Russian aggression in Ukraine. These included attacks on civilians and key civilian infrastructure. In addition, since the beginning of the war, over 40 attacks on health facilities, and over 230 on educational facilities had been recorded. Speakers highlighted the commitment to defend IHL and humanitarian space, in Ukraine and other conflicts. It was also important to hold perpetrators accountable for violations of IHL. Placing respect of IHL at heart of EU external action was crucial. The available tools needed to be put to good use. In this respect, in 2019 Germany and France had launched a Humanitarian Call for Action, including with the aim to better coordinate efforts on respect and promotion of IHL. In this respect, in 2019 Germany and France had launched a Humanitarian Call for Action, including with the aim to better coordinate efforts on respect and promotion of IHL. Commissioner Lenarčič welcomed the Call for Action and stressed the Commission's readiness to support proposals with concrete data and examples. Speakers also stressed the importance of making sure that sanctions regimes do not affect humanitarian aid, and humanitarian actors can remain neutral and impartial.

Panel interventions noted that the many conflicts around the globe reminded us that respect for IHL cannot be taken for granted. IHL was as much about prevention and dialogue as it was about responding to violations. When IHL is disregarded, civilians, including children, persons with disabilities and humanitarian personnel, pay the highest price for these violations. While the armed conflict in Ukraine is dominating the headlines, it is important to ensure that the many other conflicts and grave humanitarian crises do not fall below the international radar. Speakers stressed the need to address the devastating consequences of urban warfare in populated areas, the importance of strong

humanitarian diplomacy with all parties and sponsors, depoliticizing humanitarian action and removing obstacles impeding their work by sanctions and counter terrorism regimes, as well as concrete mechanisms such as deconfliction and humanitarian notification. Fighting against impunity for IHL violations also remained crucial, and was a key focus among others of the European Parliament. Some speakers also stressed the importance of quality (credible, independent and unbiased) data on IHL violations. Monitoring of IHL was an essential precondition to ensure respect of IHL. Some speakers also noted that initiatives to monitor incidents that could amount to violations of IHL needed further support to ensure a global overview of the available data.