

Pledge #1
Addressing sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains prevalent during armed conflict and other situations of violence. It occurs in various contexts and for various reasons with harmful and long-lasting effects on the persons who endure it. SGBV is often used as a tactical or strategic means of overwhelming and weakening the adversary, either directly or indirectly, by targeting civilians. It is important that all humanitarian actors operate under the assumption that sexual and gender-based violence occurs in armed conflict and other situations of violence, including detention. It is paramount to effectively address SGBV in a multidisciplinary way and at various stages by applying preventive measures and responsive actions.

The Icelandic Government and the Icelandic Red Cross are committed to continue to advocate for greater prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence during armed conflict and other situations of violence, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, and Iceland's fourth national plan for women, peace and security for the period 2024-2030.

For the years 2024-2028, the Icelandic Government and the Icelandic Red Cross hereby pledge:

- To continue to actively draw greater attention, in international fora, to the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict and other situations of violence and the importance of proactive and reactive response to SGBV.
- To provide financial support to the ICRC's Special Appeal Addressing Sexual Violence in armed conflict and other situations of violence, with the aim of supporting proactive and reactive activities within communities and amongst weapons bearers and increase capacities and the quality of services available to victims/survivors.

Evaluation criteria

- Examples of instances where the gravity and prevalence of SGBV in armed conflict and other situations of violence and detention have been highlighted and discussed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, jointly or in own capacity.
- Number of articles and press releases by the Icelandic Red Cross on the gravity and prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict and other situations of violence and detention.
- Multi-year financial support by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Icelandic Red Cross to the ICRC's Special Appeal to Sexual Violence of at least 20 million Icelandic króna.

Pledge #2
Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment are critical in humanitarian action to prevent harm and maintain trust, safety and integrity.

Humanitarian, fragile, and/or conflict-affected situations heighten the risks that humanitarian personnel commit sexual exploitation and abuse against those they serve. Such risks are underpinned and caused by power imbalances linked to social, age, and gender-related inequalities, compounded by weak or non-existent policies, operational accountabilities and frameworks and capacity to adequately equip staff to prevent and respond to such abuse of power. Incidents are frequently underreported due to fear of reprisals, lack of trust in reporting mechanisms, or lack of access to justice, health services, psychosocial support and other relevant services.

We pledge to better prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment through advocacy for institutional and leadership commitment and through increased support to capacity development and system strengthening. The aim of the pledge is to both support the strengthening of the Red Cross Red Crescent's protection of persons who come into contact with, or benefit from, the movement's protection or assistance, staff, volunteers, and associated personnel as well as support the movement's efforts to strengthen its victim/survivor-centred responses to ensure that support is provided to those whose rights have been violated by Red Cross Red Crescent movement's actors.

For the years 2024-2028, the Icelandic Government and the Icelandic Red Cross hereby pledge:

1. Advocacy

- To actively advocate for and support Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse at international fora including within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

2. Capacity strengthening

- To enhance the capacity of the Icelandic Red Cross to strengthen partners' capacity to prevent and respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

3. Implementation

- To increase financial and technical support to actions to prevent and respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- To keep supporting and implementing protection, gender-responsive and inclusive humanitarian action in order to prevent and build an environment for better response to safeguarding concerns.

Evaluation criteria

- Number of Icelandic Red Cross staff trained and further enabled to provide technical support to partners to build and maintain PSEA capacity.
- Number of National Societies in Africa region and/or Middle East supported to undertake safeguarding self-assessment or safeguarding action plans.
- Number of National Societies in Africa region and/or Middle East supported to develop policies on PSEA and to build and implement safe systems.

- Multi-year financial support by the Government of Iceland to Icelandic Red Cross's and movement partners' National Society Development/PSEA programme, of at least 16 million Icelandic króna.
- Training of staff working for or on behalf of the Government of Iceland, with refugees and asylum-seekers in Iceland.

Pledge #3
International Humanitarian Law

Protecting people in armed conflict is at the core of international humanitarian law (IHL). Grave violations of IHL in past and recent times have resulted in catastrophic humanitarian consequences for persons affected. The problem of preserving human life and dignity during armed conflict does not stem from the lack of rules governing warfare, but from the failure to respect them. A discrepancy between the universal commitment to IHL and the respect for its rules during armed conflict is not acceptable. IHL cannot and should not be perceived as an instrument that can be abandoned. It is crucial that all States enhance their advocacy efforts to demand full compliance with IHL to ensure protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure during armed conflict, including urban warfare. National implementation of IHL obligations, along with greater expertise and increased dissemination of the law, is crucial for the protection of civilians and their environment in all situations of armed conflict.

For the years of 2024 – 2028, the Icelandic Government and the Icelandic Red Cross hereby pledge:

- To actively promote respect and demand full compliance with IHL by States and non-State armed groups in armed conflict, in order to protect all civilians and non-combatants without discrimination of any kind, with special attention to groups living with compounded vulnerabilities, including all gender identities, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
- To actively promote the Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) Declaration in international fora, pursue its adoption and effective implementation by all States and seek adherence to its commitments by all parties to armed conflict, including non-State armed groups.
- To advocate, at every opportunity in international fora, for the implementation of provisions of IHL into domestic legislation, in particular, the review, development or improvement of national policy and practice relating to the protection of civilians during armed conflict.
- To support the dissemination of IHL, both internationally and domestically, especially within government and academic community by supporting both professionals, scholars and students by creating interest and expertise in IHL that can benefit universal respect for and compliance with IHL.

Evaluation criteria

- Examples of actions taken in international fora to actively promote respect for IHL and demand its full compliance in armed conflict.
- Examples of active promotion of the Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) Declaration.
- Examples and good practices of national implementation taken in accordance with IHL obligations by the Icelandic Government.
- Number of IHL dissemination sessions for all Ministries and other key institutions in Iceland jointly organized by the Icelandic Red Cross and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
- Participation in a rotating Nordic IHL Symposium jointly organised by the Governments of the five Nordic countries and the respective National Red Cross societies.

Pledge #4
Organizing and hosting a Rotating Nordic/ IHL/LOAC Symposium

Objectives of the pledge

Recognizing the absence of a regularly occurring expert IHL/LOAC conference in the Nordic region;

acknowledging the increased need for collaboration between relevant stakeholders (including such as Red Cross societies in the region, academia, national defense universities and colleges or their equivalent, armed forces, governmental officials, and civil society organizations with relevant expertise);

emphasising the need for increased expertise, knowledge transfer, and dissemination of pertinent IHL issues due to recent global events;

The Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden and the respective National Red Cross societies, according to their respective competences, hereby pledge:

- To organize an annual rotating International Humanitarian Law (IHL) symposium aimed at strengthening collaboration, facilitating expertise and knowledge transfer, and enhancing the dissemination of IHL/LOAC principles among different stakeholders within the participating states and across the Nordic and potentially neighbouring regions by harnessing the collective convening power and resources of Nordic states in a sustainable manner.

Action Plan

- The first symposium will be organized jointly by the Swedish Defence University's Department of International and Operational Law and the Swedish Red Cross in 2025.
- Each year, a different participating Nordic stakeholder will organize the symposium in collaboration with the national Red Cross society, including developing the programme, inviting speakers, and determining the venue and time of the symposium.
- Representatives from both the Nordic States and the Nordic Red Cross societies, will be in regular contact as needed, to oversee the symposium's continuity throughout the pledging period and ensure seamless transitions between host countries.

Evaluation criteria

A symposium is held in a different Nordic state in each of the years of the pledging period beginning in 2025.

Pledge #5
Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict

The Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden and the National Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Objectives of the pledge

The Nordic Governments and the National Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have a long engagement in issues concerning protection of the environment in contemporary armed conflicts. They have consistently stressed that armed conflicts may cause serious damage to the environment and have severe and long-lasting consequences both to the nature and to populations that depend on it. Protection of the environment is necessary to effectively protect civilian population in times of armed conflict. Environmental effects of armed conflict also continue to be felt in its aftermath, sometimes for decades or longer, and timely action to address them may prevent greater harm and facilitate the transition to a sustainable peace.

Recent developments, in particular the issuance of the ICRC Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict and the adoption of the International Law Commission's principles on Protection of the Environment in relation to Armed Conflicts, have clarified how international law protects the environment in and in relation to armed conflict. This pledge aims at increasing awareness of this protection and contributing to the implementation of the relevant legal obligations and recommendations.

The Nordic Governments and the National Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden are aware that operational humanitarian response in armed conflict and in conflict-affected areas may have a negative impact on the environment. It is therefore necessary to consider the environmental consequences of humanitarian operations and to seek to adapt the operations to better protect the environment.

The Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden and the respective National Red Cross Societies, according to their respective competences, hereby pledge:

- To support both nationally and in relevant international contexts the dissemination of IHL and other relevant international law related to environmental protection in conflict-affected areas.
- To promote a green humanitarian response including by ensuring that environmental and climate-related considerations are taken into account in operational humanitarian response.

Action Plan

- Use national and international fora, platforms and initiatives to increase awareness of international law protecting the environment in areas affected by armed conflict and promote its implementation.
- Support choosing, whenever possible, sustainable and more environmentally friendly solutions for humanitarian operations.

Evaluation criteria

- Number of Nordic or national statements or other actions taken to promote IHL and other relevant international law protecting the environment in and in relation to armed conflict.
- Number of measures taken to promote environmental sustainability in humanitarian activities.