

Protection of humanitarian aid workers



UN Human Rights staff member supports victims of disappearance in Mexico during a National Search Journey in 2024. Credit: OHCHR

Protecting humanitarian action is a priority to UN Human Rights' work: When humanitarian workers and infrastructure come under attack, communities in crisis pay the price. UN Human Rights documents, reports violations, raises urgent protection concerns, and advocates for accountability. By promoting respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, we help safeguard humanitarian access and ensure crisis-affected communities can receive the assistance they need.

Examples of reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights addressing the protection of humanitarian aid workers



This 2026 report on **Yemen** highlights a sustained pattern of arbitrary detention of UN and humanitarian personnel in Yemen, compounded by raids on UN premises, which has severely obstructed humanitarian access and the delivery of life-saving assistance.



This 2024 Report on **Ukraine** contains a dedicated subsection on "Casualties among first responders, medical workers, and humanitarian workers."



This 2024 report on **Gaza** examines attacks on hospitals and includes shooting of civilians, including medical personnel, siege tactics and legal analysis concerning the protected status of hospitals and medical personnel.

The international human rights system provides complementary mechanisms and tools that can contribute to the protection of humanitarian aid workers as well as complement the efforts of field presences.

These include Human Rights Council mechanisms, fact-finding and investigative mechanisms, Treaty bodies and Special Procedures, which can examine violations, communicate with States, identify patterns and make recommendations.

The **Human Rights Council** has recently reinforced the legal framework to protect humanitarian aid workers. At its 62nd session in July 2026, a resolution on the protection of healthcare in armed conflict, and a resolution on the human rights implications of the obstruction and denial of humanitarian access and threats to the safety of humanitarian personnel in armed conflict were adopted.



Independent investigative bodies established by the Human Rights Council (commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and other investigative mechanisms) document serious violations and crimes affecting humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities. Their work helps to establish the facts about attacks and other violations; preserve evidence for future investigations and proceedings; identify possible violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including war crimes; support national, regional and international accountability efforts; and keep pathways to justice open, even when immediate accountability is not possible.



This 2025 report of the Fact-Finding Mission on the situation in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces of the **Democratic Republic of Congo** reported medical facilities have been impacted by the conflict.



This 2025 paper of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the **Occupied Palestinian Territory** documented the destruction and denial of access to medical facilities and findings on the killing of health and humanitarian workers.



This 2025 report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the **Sudan** found that humanitarian and medical workers and facilities were targeted or caught in the crossfire.



This 2024 report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the **Syrian Arab Republic** documented the striking of hospitals, as well as the targeting and killing of first responders.

The **Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council** are complementary avenues for the protection of aid workers by responding to allegations and urgent risks facing humanitarian and medical personnel through direct engagement with States. Their communications, country visits and public reporting can help prevent violations, strengthen protection and promote accountability.



This 2025 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in **Afghanistan** highlights the gender dimension of protection and its impact on humanitarian delivery.



This 2025 report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in **Myanmar** reports that the military junta blocked relief efforts in areas outside its control and threatened, harassed and extorted humanitarian workers following the March 2025 earthquake.