

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 7 May 2025 from the Permanent Representative of
Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that, during the presidency of Greece, the Security Council plans to hold a high-level open debate on the theme “Protecting civilians in armed conflict: addressing emerging threats, ensuring the safety of civilians, humanitarian and United Nations personnel, journalists and media professionals and enhancing accountability mechanisms” in connection with the item entitled “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”. The open debate will be held on Thursday, 22 May 2025, at 10 a.m. and will be chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Georgios Gerapetritis.

Please find attached a concept note to guide discussions on the topic of the debate (see annex). I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Evangelos **Sekeris**
Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 7 May 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme “Protecting civilians in armed conflict: addressing emerging threats, ensuring the safety of civilians, humanitarian and United Nations personnel, journalists and media professionals and enhancing accountability mechanisms”, to be held on 22 May 2025

1. Introduction and objective

The Secretary-General’s annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict provides an opportunity to reflect, *inter alia*, on the commitment of States Members of the United Nations to international humanitarian law as the fundamental framework for the protection of civilians and to consider action that the Security Council and the broader United Nations membership can take to advance the agenda.

Greece, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of May 2025, will hold an open debate to assess evolving threats to civilians, in particular women and children, to humanitarian personnel, including their assets and access, as well as to journalists. The debate is also aimed at raising the issue of their full protection and exploring ways to implement international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to enhance accountability mechanisms.

The open debate is aimed at providing a platform to Member States, international organizations and civil society to share their views on challenges related to the protection of civilians in times of conflict. It will also provide the opportunity for Member States to: reaffirm their commitment to upholding international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to implementing Security Council resolutions; protect independent, unbiased and fact-based information; consider steps to fight mis- and disinformation; support journalists as crucial sources of trustworthy news; and advance concrete and effective approaches to safeguarding the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and to reinforcing accountability mechanisms.

2. Background

The protection of civilians in armed conflict remains a cornerstone of the Security Council agenda and a core obligation under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. However, the nature of armed conflicts has undergone profound changes in recent years. Having become more protracted and complex, contemporary conflicts are marked by the involvement of State and non-State actors, urban warfare, including the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, cyberthreats and the use of new technologies of warfare, further exacerbating risks for civilians and posing challenges to humanitarian assistance.

Civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts as they face escalating threats that undermine their protection and have devastating humanitarian consequences.

Moreover, the growing use of technologies that create new risks to civilians and amplify the spread of harmful information in places affected by war can incite violence and exacerbate conflict dynamics. Misinformation, disinformation, hate

speech and the targeting of journalists and media professionals pose a direct threat to the safety of civilians and to democratic values.¹

Armed conflicts disproportionately affect women and girls and create distinct needs. Women and girls deal with the consequences of conflicts, including food insecurity, destroyed civilian infrastructure, contaminated natural resources and displacement. They are frequently subjected to sexual violence and often lack access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and psychosocial support. Women journalists, media professionals and associated personnel face specific risks in the conduct of their work. It is therefore crucial to consider the gender dimension of measures to address their safety in situations of armed conflict.

Social media and digital spaces can also be misused for the recruitment and use of children by parties to conflict, or for the purpose of sexual violence. Armed actors can also use information shared in digital spaces, including on the whereabouts and routines of children, to target them for other grave violations, such as abduction or killing and maiming.

The protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, alongside journalists and media professionals, remains high on the agenda of the Security Council. The year 2024 saw the highest ever number of humanitarian workers, including United Nations personnel, killed. Conflict-affected civilians, and particularly children, were left without life-saving assistance, including access to essential healthcare, education, protection and basic necessities, including food and clean water. Such a situation had a devastating impact on civilians' physical well-being and their mental health, including children's cognitive development.

In this context, locally driven peacebuilding is crucial so that the people involved in, and most affected by, violent conflict work together to create and enact their own solutions to prevent, reduce and/or transform the conflict, with the support they desire from outsiders. This is an inside-out, bottom-up approach that involves mobilizing local capacities, knowledge and resources to amplify local ownership of conflict transformation.

3. Guiding questions

- How can the Security Council and Member States strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law and the implementation of Security Council resolutions pertaining to the protection of civilians, and enhance accountability mechanisms?
- How can the United Nations system, Member States, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations enhance the coordination of their action pertaining to the protection of civilians?

¹ In 2006, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [1738 \(2006\)](#), penned by France and Greece, in which it condemned intentional attacks against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict. In 2015, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2222 \(2015\)](#), penned by France and Lithuania, in which it recognized the important role of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in protection of civilians and conflict prevention and condemned the use of the media to incite violence. In 2024, in resolution [2730 \(2024\)](#), penned by Switzerland, the Security Council highlighted the protection of humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel, including national and locally recruited personnel, and their premises and assets. It also condemned disinformation, information manipulation and incitement to violence against humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel, including national and locally recruited personnel. These resolutions mark significant achievements, highlighting the pressing need to enhance the protection of civilians and safeguard their security and dignity.

- How does the changing nature of conflict impact civilians, especially the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children? What are the effects of armed conflict on children's physical and mental health, including their cognitive development, and what can be done to address them?
- How can the United Nations system and Member States tackle the targeting of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, alongside journalists and media professionals, including women in those roles? What measures can be taken to combat gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence?
- What are the challenges associated with combating misinformation, disinformation and hate speech and how can civilians be protected from the misuse of new technologies? What can the Security Council do to protect United Nations mandates and organizations targeted by dis- and misinformation?
- How can the United Nations system, especially through the peacebuilding architecture, and the international community in general (e.g. international non-governmental organizations, aid workers, academics and funders) further promote locally led peacebuilding projects aimed at protecting civilians?

4. Participation and format

The meeting will be held in the format of an open debate. It will be chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georgios Gerapetritis.

Member States wishing to participate in person should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a.i., requesting to participate in accordance with rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. Inscription for said meeting will open on 19 May 2025, at 09.30 a.m.

The presidency encourages the participation of as many Member States as possible. Statements or interventions should, however, not exceed three minutes.

Briefers

- Thomas Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator
 - Mirjana Spoljaric, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross
 - Sima Bahous, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
 - Janti Soeripto, President and Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children US
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