

Speech: Upholding Humanitarian Norms and Supporting Humanitarian Action in Times of Crisis

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow Members of Parliament

Today, I want to speak about a principle that lies at the heart of Norway's foreign policy and humanitarian engagement: the unwavering commitment to upholding international humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis.

We are living in a moment where international humanitarian law—designed to protect civilians and ensure dignity in war—is under attack. In multiple conflict contexts, we see blatant disregard for these norms. Hospitals are bombed, aid convoys are blocked, and humanitarian workers are targeted. This is not just a legal failure—it is a moral one.

Norway has made it a priority to defend international humanitarian law and promote compliance. This is not a passive commitment. It is active, deliberate, and principled.

We support organizations that provide life-saving assistance in some of the world's most challenging environments—Ukraine, Sudan, Palestine. These are places where civilians face unimaginable hardship, and where humanitarian access is often obstructed.

We stand by our partners when they are unfairly accused. When many donors suspended funding to UNRWA and other UN agencies in Gaza, Norway continued to support and defend their work. Because we believe that principled humanitarian action must not be politicized.

We also support organizations that work to improve compliance with international humanitarian law. This includes Centre for Civilians in Conflict, **CIVIC, which engages governments to protect civilians; Geneva Call, which works with non-state armed groups; and the International Committee of the Red Cross, **ICRC**, whose neutral and impartial work is indispensable. We also back advocacy efforts**

by Norwegian NGOs and others who raise their voices when violations occur.

Accountability is essential. Norway was among the 40 countries that referred the situation in Ukraine to the International Criminal Court. And we took the initiative to ask the UN General Assembly to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on whether Israel violated international law by preventing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians under occupation. These are not symbolic gestures—they are steps toward justice.

Norway has also played a leading role in humanitarian disarmament. We have contributed to conventions banning anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions—tools of war that disproportionately harm civilians. We co-initiated the EWIPA Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, hosted the first follow-up meeting in Oslo, and now serve in the Troika with Ireland and Costa Rica to guide its implementation. This work is about protecting civilians from the devastating impact of urban warfare.

We support the ICRC's initiative to galvanize political commitment to international humanitarian law. And most recently, we endorsed Australia's "Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel"—because those who risk their lives to help others must be protected.

In times of crisis, humanitarian principles must not be compromised. They must be defended—by governments, by civil society, and by each of us. Norway will continue to champion international humanitarian law, stand with those who uphold it, and speak out when it is violated.

Because in the end, our humanity is measured not by how we act in times of peace, but by how we respond in times of crisis.

Thank you.