



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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148th IPU Assembly

Geneva, 23–27 March 2024

High-Level Segment of the General Debate

Mitigating the humanitarian consequences of war: The role of parliaments

Debate organized within the framework of the 75th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions

Monday, 25 March 2024, 10:00–11:00,
Amphitheatre D (level 1), International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG)

Concept Note

The world is still facing major challenges due to ongoing armed conflicts and situations of violence. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), there are more than 100 armed conflicts in the world today, where people and communities are caught in the crossfire of war and violence and are suffering from its consequences. Some of these conflicts play out between States, but many more occur within the borders of a single State – opposing different non-State armed groups, with or without the involvement of government forces.

The humanitarian consequences raised by wars persist and are devastating. Conflicts around the world are forcing people to flee from their homes and leave their loved ones behind in the hope of finding safety elsewhere. According to UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, war and violence drove global displacement to an estimated 114 million by the end of September 2023. Other challenges brought by the current reality of armed conflicts include the use of explosive weapons in urban and populated areas, disruption in the education of millions of children and adolescents, sexual violence as a weapon of war and its impact on victims, and attacks on medical facilities and personnel.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial to abide by the rules of international humanitarian law (IHL), refugee law and human rights law, which afford protection to those affected by armed conflicts. 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which are at the core of IHL. This set of norms protect people who are not or are no longer taking part in armed conflict, and they place limits on the ways in which wars are fought. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, by containing the most important rules aimed at limiting the suffering caused by warfare and alleviating its effects, are instrumental to tackling the humanitarian issues presented by today's armed conflicts.

In the context of the 148th IPU Assembly general debate entitled *Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding*, this high-level segment brings together key international actors to highlight the humanitarian impacts of war and how parliaments play a role in mitigating these impacts. In the first part, the segment will focus on the humanitarian impacts of war, in particular with regard to displaced populations and sexual violence in conflicts. In a second part, the segment will look at the role of IHL, as the 75th Anniversary of the Geneva Conventions is marked.

Parliaments will be invited to reflect on how parliamentary diplomacy can both contribute to the prevention of armed conflicts and limit their humanitarian consequences by strengthening and upholding IHL, refugee law and human rights law frameworks.

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Agenda

10:00

Welcome remarks by Dr. Tulia Ackson, IPU President

*(or immediately
after the
emergency item
debate)*

10:10 – 10:40

Part 1: Humanitarian consequences of war – a focus on displacement and sexual violence

Keynote address by Mr. Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, on displacement as a consequence of war

Keynote address by Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, on the consequences of sexual violence in war

Q&A with IPU Members in the plenary, moderated by the IPU President

10:40 – 11:00

Part 2: Marking the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions – the importance of upholding IHL to mitigate the humanitarian impacts of war

Keynote address by Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the ICRC, on the 75th Anniversary of the Geneva Conventions

Q&A with IPU Members in the plenary, moderated by the IPU President

Closing remarks by the IPU President on the importance of the Geneva Conventions