



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 31 January 2019 from the representatives of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

We have the honour to transmit herewith a joint letter dated 31 January 2019 by members of the Group of Friends on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Uruguay (see annex).

The year 2019 marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1265 \(1999\)](#) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, in which the Council called, for the first time, for the protection of civilians in armed conflict to be considered as a key component of international peace and security, and of Security Council resolution [1270 \(1999\)](#) on Sierra Leone and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), in which the first-ever protection of civilians mandate was provided to a United Nations peacekeeping operation under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. We are also celebrating this year the seventieth anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which have been universally ratified and are among the most important treaties governing the protection of victims of armed conflict. As we mark these anniversaries, we deem it more important than ever that civilians in armed conflict are better protected.

We would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be circulated to the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(Signed) Gillian **Bird**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Australia

(Signed) Jan **Kickert**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Austria

(Signed) Jeroen **Cooreman**  
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Belgium

(Signed) Marc-André **Blanchard**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Canada



(Signed) François **Delattre**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of France

(Signed) Christoph **Heusgen**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Germany

(Signed) Christian **Wenaweser**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein

(Signed) Christian **Braun**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Luxembourg

(Signed) Karel Jan Gustaaf **van Oosterom**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of the Netherlands

(Signed) Mona **Juul**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Norway

(Signed) Francisco António **Duarte Lopes**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Portugal

(Signed) Jürg **Lauber**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Switzerland

(Signed) Jonathan **Allen**  
Ambassador  
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the United Kingdom

(Signed) Elbio **Rosselli**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Uruguay

**Annex to the letter dated 31 January 2019 from the representatives of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a key aspect of the maintenance of international peace and security, and the Security Council therefore has an important responsibility in this regard. As the recent presidential statement endorsing the aide-mémoire for the consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/PRST/2018/18) demonstrates, the Council has achieved considerable progress on the protection of civilians in armed conflict over the last 20 years. Nevertheless, in view of the many protection challenges in today's armed conflicts, more needs to be done, notably by systematically and consistently upholding and including core protection of civilians standards in the Council's deliberations and decisions. The anniversaries marked in 2019 offer a great opportunity in this regard.

While the protection of civilians is a responsibility of Member States as well as parties to armed conflicts, the Security Council has a crucial role to play. As members of the Group of Friends on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, we therefore encourage the Security Council and its members to mark the anniversary year by:

**1. Advancing the protection of civilians in armed conflict through Security Council deliberations, resolutions, presidential statements and other products**

- Systematically calling upon Member States as well as parties to armed conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law in all circumstances and to take all feasible precautions to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian objects
- Systematically calling upon parties to armed conflict to take, under all circumstances, all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event to minimize, harm to civilians and civilian objects
- Systematically calling upon Member States to ratify or accede to core international instruments aimed at protecting civilians and to ensure that national legislation and policies implement international obligations
- Calling upon Member States to take into account recommendations contained in the reports of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict
- Using more systematically the tools at the Council's disposal to establish facts and promote accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international refugee law, as well as for violations and abuses of human rights law, including by making use of existing fact-finding bodies or establishing ad hoc commissions of inquiry
- Using more systematically the tools at the Council's disposal to enhance accountability for violations, including through support and capacity-building to national justice systems and to the establishment and activities of transitional justice mechanisms, and, when appropriate, to ensure referrals to the International Criminal Court

- Systematically condemning sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, emphasizing the importance of the full implementation of all measures for the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Security Council resolutions [1325 \(2000\)](#), [1820 \(2008\)](#), [1888 \(2009\)](#), [1889 \(2009\)](#), [1960 \(2010\)](#), [2106 \(2013\)](#), [2122 \(2013\)](#) and [2242 \(2015\)](#)
- Adopting concrete measures to minimize the impact of sanctions and counter-terrorism measures on principled humanitarian action, for instance through the systematic inclusion of humanitarian exemption clauses in sanctions regimes and counter-terrorism resolutions
- Systematically calling for strict compliance by Member States as well as parties to armed conflicts with their obligations to allow and facilitate the rapid, safe and unhindered passage of relief consignments, equipment and personnel to people in need, encouraging the implementation of clear, simple and expedited procedures to facilitate safe, rapid, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access and condemning impediments to impartial humanitarian relief operations
- Systematically calling upon Member States as well as parties to armed conflict to ensure respect for and protection of medical personnel and humanitarian personnel
- Systematically calling for the implementation of measures to ensure the protection of medical care in armed conflict in accordance with Security Council resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#)
- Systematically condemning the use of starvation as a method of warfare and calling for country-specific briefings by the United Nations Secretariat on conflict-induced food insecurity under Security Council resolution [2417 \(2018\)](#)
- Reiterating the importance of regular discussions associating the whole United Nations membership under the protection of civilians agenda, including annual open debates around the issuance of the reports of the Secretary-General
- Stressing that the protection of civilians agenda and the women and peace and security and the children and armed conflict agendas are mutually reinforcing

## **2. Fostering the delivery of protection of civilians mandates by peace operations**

- Ensuring that the host State is primarily responsible and should be fully committed to protecting the civilians on its territory
- Ensuring that relevant peace operations have a clear mandate and adequate support to carry out key protection of civilians activities as a matter of priority, including physical protection from threats of violence
- Supporting the anchoring of protection of civilians mandates into the long-term political strategy of the peace mission, in coordination with the Secretariat, troop- and police-contributing countries and the host State
- Promoting an integrated approach of peace missions to the protection of civilians
- Encouraging systematic human rights monitoring and reporting, systematic data collection and analysis on the impact of conflict on civilians, including casualty tracking, and systematic threat identification and early warning
- Systematically calling for performance and accountability in the implementation of protection of civilians mandates, consistent with Security Council resolution [2436 \(2008\)](#) on performance and accountability in United Nations peacekeeping operations

- Encouraging community engagement, the establishment of alert networks and local-level conflict resolution, mediation and reconciliation efforts

### **3. Enhancing Security Council working methods and improving the Council's situational awareness on the protection of civilians in armed conflict**

- Inviting more regularly mandate holders related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict (the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and special procedures mandate holders), force commanders and police commissioners from United Nations peace operations, senior protection of civilians advisers, the Head of the United Nations protection cluster and heads of civil affairs divisions of United Nations peace operations and representatives of local, national and international non-governmental organizations to brief the Council
- Encouraging the provision of relevant information and reporting to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including in the context of reports on country-specific or thematic issues, as well as in the context of the activities and implementation of protection of civilians mandates by United Nations peacekeeping operations
- Holding more regular meetings of the informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians beyond mandate renewal discussions, such as on early warning of potential protection of civilians concerns in country-specific cases
- Convening informal meetings or briefings, in particular Arria formula meetings, on the protection of civilians, including in the context of country-specific situations on the Council's agenda
- Considering the protection of civilians in armed conflict as a standing agenda item of the wrap-up sessions at the end of each Presidency, during which the President of the Security Council briefs on actions taken by the Security Council to address protection of civilians concerns

After 20 years of the protection of civilians in armed conflict being formally on the agenda of the Security Council, the action of the Security Council on these different issues is of key importance and will contribute to uphold the Council's leading role in advancing the protection of civilians agenda.

We look forward to engaging constructively with the Security Council on the aforementioned issues, during the anniversary year and beyond, and in particular on the occasion of the forthcoming annual open debate around the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.