

# Event Concept Note

## Protecting Civilians in Escalating Armed Conflicts: Strengthening Compliance with International Humanitarian Law

### Background

Armed conflicts are intensifying and spreading across regions, bringing devastating consequences for civilian populations. Modern warfare increasingly involves missile and drone strikes, siege tactics, forced displacement, filtration practices, and deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure and various other violations against the civilian population.

In a growing number of conflicts, electricity grids, district-heating systems, water supply networks, and other essential services have been deliberately targeted, as they are extremely important for the survival of the civilian population. These attacks weaponize both winter cold and extreme heat, depriving civilian populations of warmth, light, and water, and exposing them to freezing temperatures, dehydration, disease, and the collapse of essential services.

Such practices represent grave violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and undermine the fundamental principles of warfare, such as distinction, proportionality, precaution, and humanity. Strengthening global commitment to IHL compliance is therefore essential to prevent further humanitarian catastrophe and protect civilians in armed conflicts.

### Format / Programme

The event will combine **policy dialogue, expert insight, and human narratives** to illustrate the real-life consequences of violations of International Humanitarian Law and raise awareness of the requirement to comply with it.

**Opening remarks** will set the global context of escalating armed conflicts, the growing risks for civilians, and the importance of reinforcing respect for IHL.

**Panel discussion** will feature Members of Parliament from all over the world and IPU representatives, who will share their own experiences and challenges in promoting civilian protection and enforcing compliance with IHL.

**Documentary Screening.** The event will feature the screening of the short documentary *Fight and Dance* (17 min 11 sec), directed by **Hanna Mamonova** and **Anna Tsyhyma**, which portrays the impact of war on children in conflict-affected areas. Through personal testimonies and lived experiences from the city of Sumy, the film highlights the profound human consequences of armed conflict and the particular vulnerability of children, following stories such as a family rebuilding their lives after a missile strike and a young athlete who saved passengers from a burning bus while continuing to pursue his sporting dreams. The documentary grounds the policy discussion in the lived realities of affected communities and reinforces the urgency of strengthening civilian protection, particularly for children living under conditions of war.

In addition, there may be **exhibits and artifacts** on display, showing firsthand how civilians, especially women, suffer during armed conflicts, further bringing to life the human cost behind policy discussions.

## **Joint Action Agenda on IHL Compliance**

As an outcome of this event, a statement will be issued on behalf of the organisers outlining a **Joint Action Agenda** to strengthen the protection of civilians and enhance compliance with International Humanitarian Law. The agenda will call for stronger national implementation of IHL through legislation and effective parliamentary oversight; enhanced roles, capacity, and cooperation of National International Humanitarian Law Committees; support for accountability mechanisms addressing serious violations of IHL; increased protection of critical civilian infrastructure essential for survival, including energy, water, and heating systems; and improved international coordination and humanitarian access in conflict situations to ensure timely assistance and protection for affected populations.

## **Expected Outcomes**

1. Reinforced political and parliamentary commitment to strict adherence to International Humanitarian Law and the protection of civilians in armed conflict.
2. Increased awareness of the humanitarian consequences of escalating armed conflicts, including the impact of attacks on energy, heating, water, and other critical infrastructure on civilian populations, as well as regarding the destruction, damage, theft, and appropriation of cultural property during armed conflict, and the transformation of culture into both an instrument and a target of war.
3. Greater visibility and recognition of the role of National International Humanitarian Law Committees in supporting states to implement and ensure compliance with International Humanitarian Law, as well promote progressive development and evolution of international humanitarian law.
4. Strengthened cooperation and dialogue among parliaments, international organizations, humanitarian actors, and National IHL Committees to advance prevention, accountability, and civilian protection mechanisms.
5. Galvanized political support within the Inter-Parliamentary Union for an emergency item on protecting civilians from armed conflicts.