



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
PERMANENT MISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK



PERMANENT MISSION
OF HUNGARY
UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HASHEMITE
KINGDOM OF JORDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS



Permanent Mission of the Republic
of Mozambique to the United Nations



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations



Global Alliance

TO SPARE WATER FROM ARMED CONFLICTS

Concept Note International Law Week

Side-Event on

Essential Services Providers and Their Safety in Contemporary Armed Conflicts

Date: Wednesday, 29 October 2025

Time: 1:15 – 2:45 pm (Light Lunch served at 1:00 pm)

Location: Permanent Mission of Kuwait, 321 E 44th St, New York

[RSVP HERE.](#)

The collapse of vital services like freshwater supply, water infrastructure, sanitation, and healthcare is a humanitarian disaster for civilians caught in conflict zones. During armed conflicts, essential service providers play a crucial role in repairing, maintaining and monitoring the operation of water systems and other essential services in both urban and rural settings. Civilians will only have access to these services if parties to conflict comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL), namely by not attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and by protecting the service providers and materials needed to keep them functioning.

The international legal framework is clear in protecting essential services providers. Like all other civilians, they are protected under IHL by the fundamental principles and rules governing the conduct of hostilities – distinction, proportionality, and precaution. Essential service providers who operate, monitor, maintain, assess, repair, or renovate water supply networks, freshwater facilities, or electrical systems must be respected and protected, and must never become targets, as highlighted by an [ICRC and Norwegian Red Cross Report of 2024](#). UN Security Council Resolution 2573 (2021) is an important development in this regard, as it explicitly mentions the protection of such essential service providers and their movements for the purpose of maintaining, repairing or operating objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and other civilian infrastructure that is critical to enable the delivery of essential services in armed conflict. Yet, in 2024, essential workers continued to be attacked or prevented from maintaining or repairing



damaged water installations and infrastructure in conflicts such as in Sudan and in Gaza, where 14 utility workers were killed while maintaining the water systems, depriving tens of thousands of civilians of safe drinking water.

This event, organized by the members of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, will address the protection of essential service providers under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. It will also focus on the special obligations to spare water resources, installations, and freshwater infrastructure from attack, misuse, or destruction, as they are indispensable for the survival of civilian populations.

The event will also showcase concrete actions by governments and international actors to safeguard essential service providers and to protect freshwater and water infrastructure in conflict settings. The speakers will suggest ways to improve respect for International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law and to end the impunity of those responsible for violence against essential service providers.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the most pressing humanitarian consequences when vital services like freshwater supply, water infrastructure, sanitation, and healthcare collapse during armed conflicts?
- How do the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols protect essential service providers? Are current legal protections sufficient and how can we close the gap between legal protections and compliance?
- Despite UNSC Resolutions 2573 (2021) and 2730 (2024), why do attacks on essential service providers and humanitarian personnel more broadly continue at such alarming levels? How can the culture of impunity for perpetrators of violence against them be effectively addressed?
- What concrete actions have governments or international organizations already taken to safeguard essential service providers in conflict zones? What lessons can be learned from successful cases of protecting humanitarian personnel?
- What role should alliances such as the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts play in promoting political will and accountability? How can States and civil society work together to build a stronger culture of prevention and respect for humanitarian principles and rules?

AGENDA

Opening remarks

- **H.E. Mr Tareq M. A. M. Albanai**, Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations

Scene Setter

- **Ms. Florence Poussin**, Deputy Director of Field Operations, UN Department of Safety and Security

Interactive discussion

- **Dr Cordula Droege**, Chief Legal Officer and Head of the Legal Division, International Committee of the Red Cross
- **Ambassador Dr Ana Polak Petrič**, Slovenia's Candidate to the International Law Commission for the 2028-2032 term
- **Dr Tadesse Kebebew**, Legal Researcher and Project Manager, Geneva Water Hub

Interventions from the Floor and Q & A Session

Moderated by Dr Marko Rakovec, Director-General for International Law and Protection of Interests, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia

Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts galvanises the efforts to protect water and water-related installations from the consequences of armed conflicts. Members are committed to promote and ensure respect for international law protecting freshwater, water-related installations and other essential services. The Alliance harnesses expertise from the development and humanitarian sectors to identify action, which can increase resilience in times of conflict and post-conflict situations. It also aims to improve preventive measures, and foster collaboration to reduce or mitigate civilian harm from armed conflicts.

This side event is co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Kuwait and Slovenia in New York and the Geneva Water Hub and co-sponsored by a broader group of Member States, who participate in the framework of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts.