

**Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law – Third state consultation on Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict (Workstream 5) 11/2/2026**

**Kingdom of the Netherlands intervention**

The Netherlands looks with great concern at attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel, especially local aid workers, reaching record levels in 2024. These attacks violate international humanitarian law and undermine the lifelines that sustains millions of people trapped in conflict and disaster zones.

We are a committed advocate for strict adherence to IHL, including the protection of hospitals and other medical facilities. We continue to call on parties to conflicts to respect and protect medical establishments, units and transports, as well as medical personnel, who must be allowed to carry out life-saving work without threat or obstruction.

We therefore support initiatives aimed at strengthening safeguards for medical staff in armed conflict.

In the workstream on IHL and the protection of hospitals in armed conflict, the Netherlands would like to focus its remarks on accountability, which is a longstanding priority within our foreign policy.

[Legislation and penal sanctions and investigations]

First of all, the Netherlands notes the importance of enacting domestic legislation covering grave breaches and serious violations of IHL. The Netherlands has done so in the International Crimes Act, which incorporates these articles, and integrates the Rome Statute. This enables effective criminal prosecution for individuals who have committed, or ordered to be committed, any serious violations of IHL in cases where the Netherlands has jurisdiction.

[Investigation and prosecution of serious IHL violations]

The Netherlands considers thorough and independent investigations to be an essential component of accountability and therefore provides general financial support for UN fact-finding missions and investigative mechanisms.

On the question of possible individual measures, the Netherlands has requested an advice from a national independent advisory body on what can additionally be done to combat impunity for violence against aid workers worldwide, including medical workers. The report is expected later this spring.

[Collective measures]

The protection of medical personnel and facilities has long been recognized as a shared commitment, as reflected in UN Security Council Resolution 2286.

On the margins of the Assembly of States Parties to the ICC last December, the Netherlands co-hosted a side event with Australia, MSF, the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, the Netherlands Red Cross and Legal Action Worldwide on accountability for attacks on medical and humanitarian workers.

The session aimed to raise awareness of the increasing violence directed against medical and humanitarian personnel. It examined barriers to accountability for crimes committed against this group and explored possible actions to strengthen accountability. A key takeaway was the call for States to actively reaffirm their shared commitment to IHL through public advocacy, humanitarian diplomacy and the initiation of legal proceedings.

Accountability serves justice for violations of IHL, and helps prevent a culture of impunity. As such, a strong commitment to accountability has a preventive and protective effect for medical personnel and facilities. The protection of medical activities and ability of medical actors to work safely should be taken as a given. What States endorse and tolerate today may affect them tomorrow.