

Submission from Australia to the UN Secretary General's Report on the Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts (2024-2026)

Australia co-led, as part of a cross-regional Ministerial Group of States, the development and launch of the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel in September 2025. The Declaration seeks to enhance respect for and adherence to international humanitarian law (IHL), calls for safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access, and supports accountability mechanisms to end the cycle of impunity. The Declaration seeks to translate political commitment into practical action to protect humanitarian personnel. As at June 2026, 112 States had endorsed the Declaration. Australia supported efforts to promote visibility of the Declaration and its integration into multilateral processes and outcomes. Australia co-chairs the Geneva-based Group of Friends for the Declaration, which facilitates ongoing engagement, advocacy and the exchange of good practices among endorsing States. Australia also committed AUD 15 million to support practical measures to enhance the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, including training, support to affected workers and their families, and initiatives to strengthen accountability.

Australia continues to contribute to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Global Initiative to Galvanise Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law, including as co-chair of the workstream on prevention good practices. In that capacity, Australia supported a series of State consultations aimed at identifying and promoting effective strategies to prevent violations of IHL. Australia emphasised the complementarity between the Global Initiative and the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, noting that both initiatives seek to strengthen respect for IHL and connect principles to practical measures that prevent violations of IHL, save lives, and reduce the suffering of those caught up in conflict.

Australia supported the identification of common understandings on how IHL applies to cyber activities conducted in the context of armed conflict. Australia supported the submission of a cross-regional working paper to the final session of the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) 2021–2025. The paper outlined areas of convergence on the application of existing law to cyberspace including the application IHL principles to States' cyber activities during armed conflict. Australia remains committed to furthering common understandings among States through the United Nations Global Mechanism on ICTs in the context of international security.

In October 2024 Australia released its national report on the implementation of IHL at the domestic level, outlining Australia's legal, institutional and operational framework. The report highlights the integration of IHL into military doctrine, training and accountability processes, and reflects efforts to incorporate gender perspectives, including through the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the contributions of women and girls to the sustainment of peace.