



## 2025 Global Humanitarian Policy Forum

### *Protecting Principles, Norms and Values*

11-12 December

In its fourteenth year, the GHPF will take place on 11 and 12 December under the theme of: ***Protecting Principles, Norms and Values***. Maintaining the broader objectives of building an inclusive policy community, identifying the latest trends and showcasing research and best practice, the GHPF 2025 will:

- Identify ***emerging risks faced by crisis-affected communities*** due to shifting geopolitics, loss of respect for international norms and values, the climate crisis and other threats.
- Through multi-stakeholder dialogue, identify areas to accelerate progress on the ***transformations and systems changes envisaged by the Humanitarian Reset and UN80***, building on lessons and practice from the Flagship Initiative and other country experiences.

The **2025 GHPF program** will consist of several panels organized over two half days. Discussions will convene key voices in the areas of global forecasting, protecting international norms and values, as well as those advocating for change at the forefront of humanitarian crises and the ongoing global reform processes, including the Humanitarian Reset and UN80.

**For the first time since 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the UN Foundation will co-host a hybrid forum. UNOCHA and UN Foundation invite those based in NYC to register and join in person while those based around the world are invited to register to tune in online. Due to financial constraints and limited space in the UN Secretariat Conference Room, please use registration links for in-person attendance, under each panel session.**

***2025 marks the year in which international cooperation took a drastic turn and put the global humanitarian system under unprecedented strain. Within this context, our shared principles, norms and values are at a crossroads.*** The massive funding crisis that emerged hit children, women and men living amid conflict and crisis hardest. It forced the entire humanitarian system to make impossible decisions and hyper-prioritize who gets support. These cuts threaten women-led and women's rights organizations on the front lines of today's conflicts and humanitarian crises particularly severely. Nearly half of those surveyed on the impacts of the cuts said they expected to shut down within six months and most had already reduced staff or suspended key services.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, global military spending has surged to unprecedented levels. In 2024, it reached an all-time high of \$2.7 trillion, although evidence suggests that heightened military expenditure does not necessarily lead to greater peace or stability.<sup>2</sup>

***The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)'s Humanitarian Reset and the Secretary-General's UN80 reform call for a bold rethinking of how we work, where we work, and what the future of multilateralism should look like.*** The ERC is prioritizing a system that delivers, defends and devolves power as the global humanitarian promise. Reflecting this need for change, the international humanitarian system is working towards a 'Humanitarian Reset,' to become lighter and more people centred, while the Humanitarian Compact under UN80 seeks to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of UN humanitarian operations. The Flagship Initiative, implemented between 2023 and 2025 in Niger, South Sudan, the Philippines, and Colombia sought to completely reimagine humanitarian coordination, and provides valuable lessons to ensure that UN80 and the Reset contribute to a meaningful shift for people affected by crisis.

***A cornerstone of the Humanitarian Reset is to collectively defend of our global norms and values to restore hope, trust and humanity.*** Over 36,000 civilians were killed in 14 armed conflicts in 2024, and 122.6 million people globally remained forcibly displaced. Over 870 medical workers were killed and more than 900 health facilities were damaged or destroyed in 20 conflicts. Most alarming, the UN verified 41,370 "grave violations" against children in armed conflict.<sup>3</sup> While underreported, over 4600 cases of sexual violence in conflict were documented in the Secretary General's annual report on Conflict Related Sexual Violence in 2024 against predominantly women and girls, an increase of 25% from the previous year. Conflicts continue to be deadly and destructive for civilians despite international humanitarian law (IHL) being clear on the obligation to do everything feasible to protect civilians and civilian objects.<sup>4</sup> The use of explosive weapons in populated areas, including cluster munitions and large-yield bombs, caused widespread destruction to civilian infrastructure, particularly in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, and Myanmar. The modern battlefield is changing before our eyes. It is becoming more digitized, and more automated, generating greater risks for civilians, which

<sup>1</sup> UN, S/2025/556, *The Secretary-General's annual report on Women, Peace and Security*, <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/556>

<sup>2</sup> UN, 2025, *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*, Report of the Secretary-General, [https://front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/SG\\_Report\\_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf](https://front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/SG_Report_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> UN, A/79/878-S/2025/246, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict*, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/247>

<sup>4</sup> UN, S/2025/271, *Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, Report of the Secretary-General, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/protection-civilians-armed-conflict-report-secretary-general-s2025271-enarruzh>

raises serious legal and ethical concerns over its impact on civilians.<sup>5</sup> Urgent collective action to protect people by upholding principles and norms and enforcing international humanitarian law is overdue.

## **PROGRAMME**

### **2025 GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN POLICY FORUM**

*Online and United Nations Secretariat Building, New York*

*All times are in EST*

#### **11 December**

<b>9:45 – 09:55</b>	<b>Arrival and Check-In</b> <i>Registration For NYC-Based In Person Attendance</i>
<b>10:00 – 11:15</b>	<b>Global Forecast – Flashpoints and Risks In 2026</b>
<i>11:15 – 11:30</i>	<i>Break</i>
<b>11:30 – 12:30</b>	<b>Defending Norms and Principles – How Technology Is Putting Civilians At Risk During Conflict</b>
<b>12:30 – 13:15</b>	<b>The Front Line - Protecting Civilians and First Responders</b>

#### **12 December**

<b>9:45 – 09:55</b>	<b>Arrival and Check-In</b> <i>Registration For NYC-Based In Person Attendance</i>
<b>10:00 – 11:00</b>	<b>Panel 1: Delivering Change and Devolving Power</b>
<i>11:00 – 11:15</i>	<i>Break</i>
<b>11:15 – 12:30</b>	<b>Panel 2: Delivering Change and Devolving Power</b>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

**THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER**  
**DAY 1**

**Panel: Global Forecast - Flashpoints and Risks in 2026**

10:00 – 11:15 EST

*Register for online attendance [here](#)*

*Register for in person attendance [here](#)*



**OVERVIEW:** Major world powers have shifted their national priorities, as reflected through reoriented foreign policy and development and humanitarian assistance. The session will consider new flashpoints and risks. As global insecurity intensifies and geopolitical rivalries deepen, global military spending has surged to unprecedented levels - reaching an all-time high of \$2.7 trillion in 2024. Yet evidence suggests that heightened military expenditure does not necessarily lead to greater peace or stability.<sup>6</sup> This is contrasted by the annual financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals, which now stands at \$4 trillion,<sup>7</sup> a costly imbalance paired with unprecedented aid cuts to humanitarian assistance, forcing humanitarians to make impossible decisions on who does and does not get support. As global priorities shift, and aid is increasingly politicized, the panel will discuss:

- **What are the emerging risks and flashpoints? What are the implications for those already vulnerable to humanitarian crises?**
- **What role will climate, and economic instability play in shaping conflict and cooperation in 2026?**
- **As humanitarians are forced to close offices, including in areas with communities at risk and no State presence – what are the consequences on the ground?**

<sup>6</sup> UN, 2025, *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*, Report of the Secretary-General, [https://front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/SG\\_Report\\_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf](https://front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/SG_Report_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*



- What are the organized and transnational crime trends, and what does this mean for civilians?
- What are the critical regional security pressures—and their global impact? How can the multilateral system help prevent these risks from turning into future flashpoints?

**Moderator:**

- **Shakuntala Santhiran**, International broadcast journalist

**Keynote:**

- **Warren Hatch**, CEO of [Superforecasting | Good Judgment](#), will provide a probability forecast of emerging global events and risks

**Panellists:**

- **Yasmeen al-Eryani**, Executive Director for Knowledge Production at the [Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies](#)
- **Ashok Swain**, Head of Department of [Peace and Conflict](#) Research
- **Victoria Dittmar**, Project Manager and Senior Researcher at [InSight Crime](#)
- **Fahiraman Rodrigue Koné**, Project Manager for the Sahel Program at [ISS | Africa](#)

*This session has been co-curated with Institute for Security Studies*

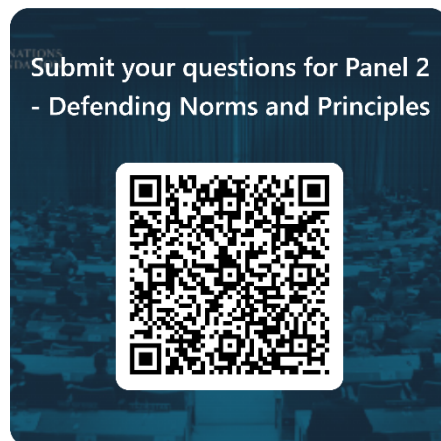


## **Panel: Defending Norms and Principles - How Technology Is Putting Civilians At Risk During Conflict**

11:30 – 12:30 EST

Register for online attendance [here](#)

Register for in person attendance [here](#)



**OVERVIEW:** Protecting international standards and norms is a cornerstone of the Humanitarian Reset and a shared responsibility. The Emergency Relief Coordinator has been clear: we must protect civilians, including aid workers, uphold IHL, defend gender equality and create space for humanitarian diplomacy to ensure respect for the rules of war that protect civilians. This is even more critical as the modern battlefield itself is changing before our eyes. It is becoming more digitized and automated, generating greater risks for civilians. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) invites civilians and civilian tech platforms to play a growing role in armed conflict, thus exposing them to harm. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence has reportedly been used in armed conflict to select targets and make life-or-death decisions at high speed and in high numbers. The scale, speed and reach of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech are amplified by digital technologies to polarize beliefs, distort facts and influence behaviour, dehumanizing populations and leading to civilian harm. It is vital to limit the human cost of new technologies in war and to reaffirm the application of existing norms and values to regulate them. This session asks:

- **What risks do new technologies - from artificial intelligence and autonomous weapon systems to the use of ICT - pose for civilians? How is the *Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law* helping foster understanding of how IHL applies to them, particularly amidst increasing use of ICT in armed conflict?**

- What regulatory measures are needed, by States and the tech industry, to ensure the protection of civilians when developing and using AI/tech in conflict?
- How does the use of ICT magnify the scale, speed and reach of harmful information and how are the harms different in conflict? What measures should States, parties to conflict, and other actors take to prevent and address misinformation, disinformation and hate speech during armed conflict?
- How does the use of ICT by civilians on tech platforms expose them to harm in armed conflict, and what is the specific impact on youth as key users of tech?

**Moderator:**

- **Shakuntala Santhiran**, International broadcast journalist

**Keynote:**

- **Yoshua Bengio**, Professor at the Université de Montréal, Co-President and Scientific Director of [LawZero](#), as well as Founder and Scientific Advisor of Mila - Quebec AI Institute

**Panellists:**

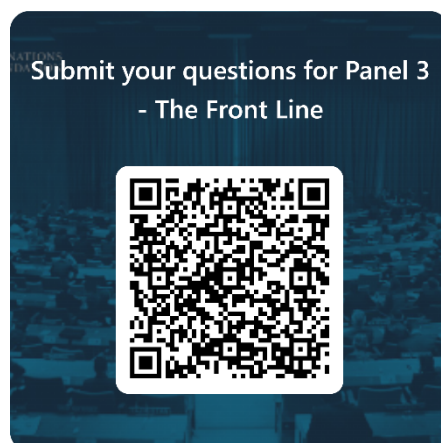
- **Elyse Mosquini**, Permanent Observer for International Committee of Red Cross to the UN
- **Jessica Dorsey**, Assistant Professor of International Law at Utrecht University
- **Gisella Lomax**, Senior Digital Advisor at UNHCR
- **Samir Elhawary**, Chief of the Humanitarian Policy Section at UNICEF

## **Panel: The Front Line - Protecting Civilians and First Responders**

12:30 – 13:15 EST

*Register for online attendance [here](#)*

*Register for in person attendance [here](#)*



**OVERVIEW:** 2024 saw a new record of aid workers killed in global hotspots while on duty or in their homes, making it the deadliest year for humanitarian on record. Behind each number was a person who stepped into the crises to help others. These deaths must be a wake-up call to protect civilians caught in conflict and all workers trying to help them. The humanitarian community stands united with frontline responders across the world and call on those with power and influence to act for humanity, protect civilians and aid workers and hold perpetrators to account. This will be a discussion where the Emergency Relief Coordinator hands over the mic and space to those risking their lives, every day, to help others.

**Moderator: Tom Fletcher**, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA

### **Panellists:**

- **Salwa Elsadik**, Founder and Director of the Women Advocacy and Development Initiative ([WADI](#))
- **Dr. Jamal Eltaeb**, Aurora Prize Laureate, General Director at Al Nao Hospital in Omdurman, Sudan
- **Fidaa Shurrab**, Resources Mobilization Manager for Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children
- **Mathieu Bichet**, Deputy Medical Director at Doctors Without Borders (MSF)



**FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER**

**Panel: Delivering Change and Devolving Power**

10:00 – 12:30 EST

*Register for online attendance [here](#)*

*Register for in person attendance [here](#)*



**OVERVIEW:** The unprecedented funding crisis has brought the humanitarian community to a crossroads: either we scale back the scope of the current system or we completely reform it. In early 2025, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) stated that “we must innovate or become obsolete,” calling for a Humanitarian Reset to make the system faster, leaner, more accountable, and more locally led. The Reset is accompanied by UN80, which aims to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of the United Nations system. It also coincides with the conclusion of the Flagship Initiative, which piloted a more “people-centred, agile, locally driven response.” Most importantly, the Flagship Initiative challenges us to deliver better for people affected by crises and advance on our commitment to a humanitarian system that is “as local as possible, as international as necessary.” Divided into two panels, this session will feature perspectives on the current reforms, opportunities, and challenges, from different stakeholders, ranging from the UN and INGOs to governments, local, women and youth actors, donors, and academics. The two panels will address the following questions, followed by an invitation to participants to pose questions from the floor and online via QR code:

- **What is the commitment of the international humanitarian system to change, and what are some concrete steps that can be taken in 2026 to advance this commitment?** (Panel 1)
- **How do INGOs and local actors see the Humanitarian Reset? How can we collectively bring about real change?** (Panel 2)

**Moderator: Lewis Sida**, Co-Director of the Humanitarian Learning Centre at IDS

***Panel 1: 10:00 – 11:00***

**Keynote & welcome: Elizabeth Cousens**, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations Foundation

- **H.E. Brian Wallace**, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the UN
- **Denise Brown**, RC/HC in Sudan and former Reset Advisor to the ERC
- **Mireia Villar Forner**, RC/HC in Colombia
- **Ally Raza Qureshi**, Director of the WFP Global Office
- **Dominik Stillhart**, Delegate for Humanitarian Aid and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit

*11:00- 11:15 break*

***Panel 2: 11:15 – 12:30***

- **Abby Maxman**, President and CEO of Oxfam America
- **Sameera Noori**, Executive Director at COAR & Convener - Afghanistan Localization Lab
- **Apiyo Anna Goretty**, Youth Humanitarian and Volunteer with ActionAid Uganda
- **Kennedy Mabonga**, Country Representative for NRC in South Sudan
- **Andrew Thompson**, Professor of Global and Imperial History and Professorial Fellow at Nuffield College, University of Oxford

***Q&A from the floor in the conference room and online via QR code***