

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Although international humanitarian law establishes a comprehensive legal framework to limit the effects of armed conflicts, violations are daily, causing immeasurable suffering to the civilian population. Examples include: deliberate attacks on civilians or civilian facilities such as schools and hospitals; torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including sexual violence; summary executions; recruitment and use of children in hostilities; forced displacement; looting; obstruction to humanitarian assistance and attacks on humanitarian workers. Civilians, particularly women and children, are the primary victims of these acts of violence, whether as an unintended result of the fighting or because they are deliberately targeted.

Such violations of international humanitarian law are committed by all parties to conflicts, States forces and non-State armed groups alike.

Geneva Call is a neutral and impartial NGO dedicated to engaging armed groups in dialogue to promote their adherence to and compliance with international humanitarian norms. Geneva Call focuses its efforts on armed groups as they cannot become parties to international humanitarian treaties and thus may not feel bound to respect rules they have not created nor adhered to.

Geneva Call focuses on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, in particular on specific protection issues such as the protection of children, the prohibition of sexual violence and the ban on anti-personnel mines. Geneva Call also provides trainings to armed groups on broad international humanitarian norms and advice on how to implement them in practice.

Since its creation 15 years ago, Geneva Call has engaged over 100 armed groups worldwide. Half of them have made commitments to respect humanitarian norms and have taken measures to enforce them, such as the destruction of anti-personnel mines or the demobilization of child soldiers.

In the Middle East region, Geneva Call is in dialogue with armed groups active in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Yemen.

Geneva Call has a long-standing history of engagement in Iraq. In 2002, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) committed under Geneva Call to ban anti-personnel mines and once they became part of the national government successfully advocated for Iraq ratification of the Mine Ban Convention. Geneva Call has also been engaging and training all Kurdish opposition groups on international humanitarian law.

Building on these past efforts, Geneva Call, with support from Switzerland and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO), is now launching a new advocacy program in Iraq. The program will consist on trainings and awareness raising activities on the rules of war as enshrined in international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions. It will target all armed groups (Shia, Sunni and Kurdish) as well as political parties, religious and tribal leaders, civil society organizations and media.

In addition, a public campaign, entitled "Fighter not Killer", and promoting international humanitarian law, will be launched. Geneva Call has produced innovative booklets and videos to

disseminate the rules of war. These tools illustrate key rules of behavior that fighters must respect during war, what is allowed and what is not, in other words the *do's* and *don't* under international humanitarian law.

Let me show you two examples.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITFsQQEi85M&index=1&list=PLAbPtxlQ_07C1GO0PSudgTO4ShZbedFwp

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4lm-VF_RPk&list=PLAbPtxlQ_07C1GO0PSudgTO4ShZbedFwp&index=2

So far, we have developed nine such videos and four booklets. The messages are simple and straightforward: do not target or attack civilians, respect and protect medical personnel and objects, do not recruit children or use them in combat, etc. All videos start with the same introduction: "In times of war, not everything is allowed. War has rules too."

The videos and the booklets will be soon available in Arabic and Sorani on the website www.fighternotkiller.org

This campaign will build on Geneva Call's experience in Syria where its "Fighter not Killer" campaign has reached a broad range of fighters, their supporters and members of civil society. Over 400,000 views of Geneva Call's videos have been recorded in Syria.

In Iraq, Geneva Call will use media and social networks as channels of dissemination. Geneva Call will also use a newly launched quiz application downloadable on mobile phones. This interactive educational tool allows fighters to test their knowledge of rules of international humanitarian law from a series of real-life scenarios.

The overall goal of Geneva Call's new advocacy program in Iraq is to sensitize armed groups' about their responsibilities under international humanitarian law and influence their behavior. Compliance with the law of war by the warring parties is essential to prevent further escalation of armed violence and may facilitate national reconciliation and peace.

You have all received a copy of a declaration calling on all armed forces involved in the ongoing conflict in Iraq to take necessary actions to protect civilians and to respect international humanitarian law. We asked you to support this declaration by signing it.

Let me conclude by showing two other videos that illustrate some of the key messages we want to convey as part of our campaign "Fighter not Killer".

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sESVJcNqRA&index=4&list=PLAbPtxlQ_07C1GO0PSudgTO4ShZbedFwp

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-16YcuKk0k&list=PLAbPtxlQ_07C1GO0PSudgTO4ShZbedFwp&index=8

I thank you for your attention.