



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



**Security Council Open Debate  
on the Protection of civilians in armed conflict  
20 May 2026**

Greece's Remarks delivered  
by H.E. Ambassador Aglaia Balta  
Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations, New York

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Thank you, Mr. President,

I would like to start by thanking the Director of the OCHA Crisis Response Division, Ms. Edem Wosornu, and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric, for their comprehensive and insightful briefings.

Colleagues,

We meet at a time of profound and worsening crisis for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as attested in the annual report of the Secretary-General for the year 2025. At a time of blatant disregard for international humanitarian law in armed conflict.

In more than 130 armed conflicts worldwide, in Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Syria, Lebanon, South Sudan, Yemen, and many other countries, the reality on the ground for civilians is far from the protection framework we established for them.

In Ukraine, the reported number of civilians killed and injured in 2025 increased by 31 per cent compared to 2024, and by 70 per cent compared to 2023, while the attacks on energy infrastructure increased by 32 per cent compared to 2024. In Gaza, at least 20,000 Palestinians were killed in 2025, and more than 80 per cent of all structures were damaged by the end of 2025. Sudan remained the largest displacement crisis globally. The weaponization of food and siege tactics exacerbated the famines confirmed last year in Gaza and Sudan.

Allow me to underline the following points:

Firstly, we must ensure that all parties to conflict comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. States must assume the political responsibility for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and to adopt and implement policies that provide effective and meaningful protection to civilians.

In this regard, Greece joined the Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law, launched by the International Committee of the Red Cross together with Brazil, China, France, Jordan, Kazakhstan and South Africa, and endorsed the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, initiated by Australia.

Secondly, we must ensure accountability. States must support independent, full, transparent and effective investigations and the prosecution of those responsible, the collection, verification and reporting of data, the protection for survivors of violence, the development of mechanisms for sanctions, and the provision of reparations to victims.

Thirdly, States and parties to conflict must respect and protect medical care and humanitarian workers, avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, prioritize safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access and enable peacekeeping and special political missions to effectively reach people in need.

Fourthly, we must acknowledge that technological advances fundamentally transform conflict. The evolution in warfare is not new. The extent, pace and impact of change is new. The increased use of drones, the deployment of AI in warfare, the use of Information and Communication Technology to spread misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, pose enormous risks on the ground for civilians.

It is our shared responsibility to have guardrails over technology and its responsible use in ways that prevent and mitigate the risks, and comply with international law.

Furthermore, we must preserve the protection of children, including from the risks of technology-facilitated violence, and commit to support women and girls and empower their participation in protection efforts.

Mr. President,

it is our legal and moral imperative to safeguard civilians and alleviate their suffering.

We have to act with urgency and resolve.

I thank you.