

TOWARDS A NEW DECLARATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMANITARIAN PERSONNEL

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF AUSTRALIA, JORDAN, SWITZERLAND, INDONESIA, SIERRA LEONE, THE UNITED KINGDOM, JAPAN, BRAZIL AND COLOMBIA

1. Australia, Jordan, Switzerland, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom, Japan, Brazil and Colombia, today announced the formation of a Ministerial Group for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, dedicated to upholding and championing international humanitarian law and driving action to protect humanitarian personnel in conflict zones.
2. International humanitarian law is the foundation for alleviating human suffering in wars. It limits the effects of armed conflict and regulates the conduct of hostilities. It provides for the protection of civilians, including the protection and respect of humanitarian personnel who assist and protect the victims of armed conflict, and notably provide the food, water and medical care that civilians in conflict zones need to survive.
3. But respect for international humanitarian law is severely undermined, with consequences for current and future conflicts. Calls for compliance are not being heard.
4. 2023 was the deadliest year on record for humanitarian personnel, with 280 killed and hundreds more wounded and kidnapped. 2024 is on track to be even worse.
5. This year alone, we have seen humanitarian personnel killed in Sudan, South Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen and many other contexts. Gaza is the most dangerous place on earth to be an aid worker, with over 300 humanitarian personnel killed since the start of the war.
6. In forming this Ministerial Group, and in partnership with humanitarian organisations, we rededicate ourselves to the protection of humanitarian personnel. We stand together, seizing the momentum created by the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2730 in May 2024, to strengthen international commitment and translate it into action, to reverse current trends.
7. The Ministerial Group has decided to pursue a Declaration on the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel.
8. The Declaration will be developed over the coming months, and will demonstrate the unity of the international community's commitment to protect humanitarian personnel and to channel that commitment into action in all current and future conflicts. All countries will be invited to join the Declaration.
9. The Declaration will support the United Nations Secretary-General in his endeavours to improve the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, including in accordance with UNSCR 2730.

New York, 23 September 2024