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#### NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
On: 10 November 2021  
To: Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA)  
Subject: IHL compliance: engagement with non-state actors  
- presentation by Geneva Call

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Following the informal COHAFA videoconference of 8 December, delegations will find in Annex presentation made by Geneva Call<sup>(1)(2)</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Appel de Genève / Geneva Call, identification number in the EU Transparency Register: 302979911822-71.

<sup>2</sup> This document contains a presentation by an external stakeholder and the views expressed therein are solely those of the third party it originates from. This document cannot be regarded as stating an official position of the Council. It does not reflect the views of the Council or of its members.



## Protecting civilians in armed conflict

Vanessa MERLET  
Deputy Director of Operations

COHAFA, 10 November 2021



### Mission

Geneva Call is a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organisation.

In situations of armed conflict, its mission is to strengthen the respect for **humanitarian norms** by armed non-State actors (ANSAs), to enhance the **protection of civilians**, while also facilitating efforts to promote **peace and stability**.

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## Main Goals



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## Factsheet

Date of creation	2000 (Following the Ottawa Treaty)	
Headquarters	Geneva, Switzerland	
Number of employees	149 (2021)	Headquarters 23% In the Field 77%
Number of countries of intervention	16 (2021)	
Number of field offices	19	
Annual budget	13 M EUR (2021)	
Number of armed groups it has had a dialogue with	Over 160 in 26 countries	

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## Operations



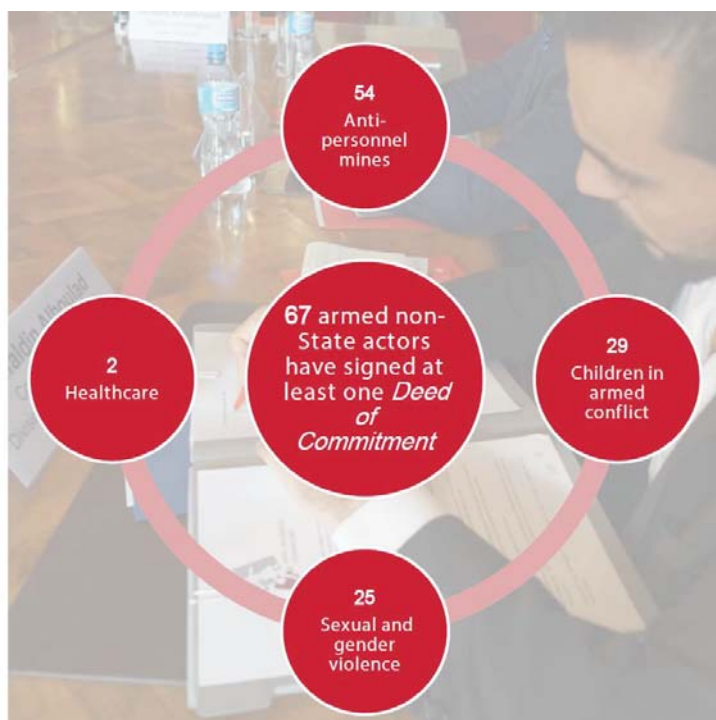
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## The Deed of Commitment

### 5 Deeds of Commitment :

- Banning Anti-Personnel mines (2000)
- Protecting children in armed conflict (2010)
- Prohibiting sexual violence and gender discrimination (2012)
- Protecting health care in armed conflict (2018)
- Preventing starvation and addressing conflict-related food insecurity (2021)

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## The Unilateral Declaration

### 17 Unilateral Declarations

Humanitarian  
access

Protection of  
healthcare

Protection of  
children and  
education

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## ANSA Engagement: Opportunities and Challenges

### In figures

- 169 ANSAs engaged in 26 countries in 20 years
- 66 ANSAs signed one or more DoCs

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### Opportunities for Engagement

- Open to collaborating
- Knock-on engagement
- Theory of change

### Recent Successes

- DRC: Age verification and release of hostages
- Syria: Return of IDPs
- Thailand: Reduction of violence against civilians.



## Dissemination Tools

Mobile applications

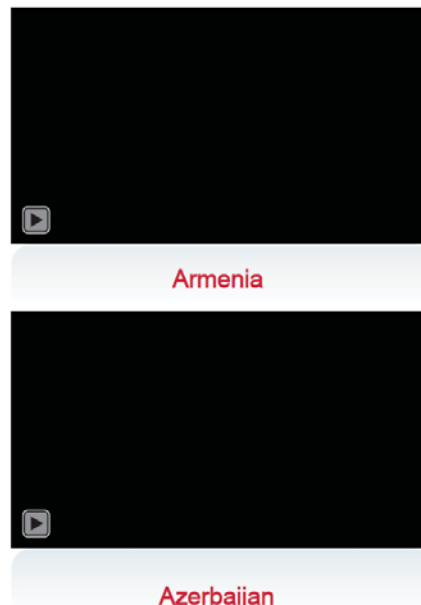
Social media campaigns

Radio campaigns

Posters

Booklets

Innovative videos



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## ANSA Response Monitor

Tracking responses and measures (positive and negative) from ANSAs to address and prevent COVID-19:

- ❖ Coordinate crisis response
- ❖ Support development of response strategies
- ❖ Persuade ANSAs to adhere to humanitarian norms



➤ **Expansion: health outbreaks, natural disasters and food insecurity/starvation**

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## Afghanistan

### Context and conflict

- Game change: IF withdrawal and IEA takeover
- IEA is now formalizing and structuring but lacks governance skills
- Hostilities resuming IEA/ISKP/Northern Resistance Forces
- Threat on global security on the rise



### Humanitarian issues

- 2021: 634 800 new people were displaced.
- 13 million Afghans faced malnutrition (likely to reach 20 million)
- 96% of the population to be below the poverty line before the end of the year
- Shrinking humanitarian space : CT and legitimacy crisis

### Impact and action

- Technical legal advice to MoD, Mol and MoH on safe passage of humanitarian aid, protection of medical care and women rights
- Training for ground fighters and commanders on the protection of civilians including women and children
- Launch of training sessions for women by women on self protection
- 4 Ministry representatives of IEA attending Garance Talks in Geneva

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## Sahel

### Context and conflict

- In Mali the security situation is worsening
- A large part of the Malian population is living under the control of ANSAs
- In the Eastern region of Burkina Faso massive influx of IDPs
- In Fada-Ngourma major problems with security and livelihoods



### Humanitarian issues

- Further deterioration of the security situation in Mali
- Possible disintegration of ANSAs in smaller and independent groups
- Climate change impacting on livelihoods
- In the Eastern region of Burkina Faso lack of livelihoods and control by ANSAs
- Access constraints

### Impact and action

- Release of medical personnel, wounded and an ambulance detained by an ANSA in Mali
- Release of humanitarian personnel and objects detained by an ANSA in Mali
- Facilitation of humanitarian access in Central Mali
- Opening of a new office in Burkina Faso

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## Syria

### Context and conflict

- NW **hostilities continue** v. GoS (airstrikes, shelling – civilian attacked)
- NW **inner ANSA tensions** remain
- Active **frontline Aleppo** NWS AA v. SDF
- NE hostilities in Qamishli – SDF proxies v. GoS proxies
- NE RoL/Governance tensions v. Arabs
- NE ISIS presence



### Humanitarian /Protection concerns

- NW 2,8 mill. IDPs (limited assistance/XB & unprotected v. ANSA/de-facto authorities not being engaged)
- NW civilian **infrastructure occupied**
- NE camps access/**protection issues**
- NW/NE **access concerns** v. ANSA/de-facto authorities
- NW/NE lack of accountability mechanisms

### Impact and action

- **Hundreds of combatants** trained on IHL
- 7 ANSAs signed our *Deeds of Commitment* (total of 19 DoC signed)
- 9 Unilateral Declarations on COVID-19 signed
- IDP population in Al Hol trained on **women & IDP rights**
- **Demining in** Al Ghouta area
- ANSAs left **Medical premises in Idlib area**
- **Landmine prevention** hotline developed in NES

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## Ukraine

### Context and conflict

- 200 violations of ceasefire/IHL hampering the peace process
- Cycles of escalations (cf. April 2021)
- Hybrid methods of warfare
- Potential for mobilisation on both sides of the contact line
- Isolation of NGCA



### Humanitarian issues

- 1.5 million displaced
- 3.4 million need humanitarian assistance
- Daily **civilian casualties** : mines/ERW, shelling and light weapons fire
- Damaged civilian infrastructures
- Hampered freedom of movement
- Industrial and environmental risks
- COVID socio economic environments

### Impact and action

- Training of 600 soldiers and 400 veterans, 50 volunteer battalions on the protection of civilians;
- Pilot project for 240 children on self protection measures basic humanitarian principles in schools along the frontline;
- IHL trainings for volunteers bataillons integrating to Ukrainian army to enhance their compliance with IHL and IHRL (CANSAs);

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# Thank you.

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