



InterAction Statement
High Level Panel on Internal Displacement
Consultation on Peace and Security Dimensions of Internal Displacement
11 March 2021

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

InterAction thanks the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement for inviting us to this important consultation on reducing risks associated with conflict-induced displacement.

It is impossible to fully prevent displacement in armed conflict, particularly when military operations are carried out in populated areas. People's safest option may be to flee areas of active fighting and every effort must be made to ensure that they can flee in a safe and orderly manner, as envisaged in international humanitarian law.

However, displacement is not inevitable. The fear, the death and injury to civilians, the destruction of homes and public services that drive displacement are foreseeable and preventable. Preventing forced displacement – and avoiding harm during displacement – requires, in large part, changing how military operations are conducted.

For this purpose, we strongly encourage States to follow the leadership of Afghanistan to develop national protection of civilians policies which address the conduct of national security forces with a view to minimizing civilian harm and which include specific measures to avoid causing displacement.

These policies should be developed by civilian policymakers *and* military forces in consultation with civil society and affected communities. This process can catalyze an essential national dialogue on the civilian experience of armed conflict, the causes and consequences of displacement, and the means of minimizing civilian harm in military operations. Such an initiative may thus also serve as an important confidence- and peace-building measure.

Among other measures, we strongly encourage States to include in their policies:

First, a requirement for military forces to anticipate the potential indirect effects of damage to civilian property, public services, and civilian infrastructure, including protracted displacement, should be factored into military planning and operations in order to minimize foreseeable harm.

Second, policies should commit to avoiding the use of explosive weapons, particularly those with wide area effects, in populated areas.

Third, States should commit to acknowledging harm resulting from military operations and establish measures to provide amends, redress, and restitution to displaced people and others who have suffered harm.

Finally, States should invest in the regular collection of data on displacement and other civilian harm resulting from military operations and commit to carrying out after-action reviews. This should be done with a view to identifying and internalizing lessons to better avoid civilian harm, *including displacement*, in their future military operations.

States should also require *and* support their State and non-State security partners to develop and adopt comparable policies and consistently convey an expectation of pro-active steps to *avoid* displacement in their military operations.

Finally, national policy initiatives can additionally serve as a vehicle for identification and sharing of good practice *among* States and we urge you to cultivate a community of practice for this purpose. While also helping to inspire and stimulate policy dialogue at national levels, this community of practice could produce and disseminate a compilation of guidelines and practical measures to avoid causing displacement in armed conflict.

Thank you for your attention.