

# PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS



Civilian harm caused by parties to conflict is a key driver behind forced displacement and humanitarian need globally. In 2022, a record **103 million** people were forcibly displaced globally, with conflicts like Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and South Sudan being among those that have seen the largest displacements. In 2022, the U.N. estimated that **339 million** people would need humanitarian assistance. This is the highest number in decades.

While there has been a reasonable focus on direct civilian casualties in conflict, it is important to address broader issues of civilian harm that also drive humanitarian needs. Whether in **Ukraine, Yemen, Nigeria**, or elsewhere, attacks and damage to civilian objects, including infrastructure, as well as denial of free civilian or humanitarian movements, directly contributes to and exacerbates existing humanitarian needs.

As highlighted below, Congress and the U.S. military have taken key steps to assure U.S. leadership in efforts to prevent and mitigate civilian harm, though much of that has come in response to **its own shortcomings**. Additionally, many U.S. allies and partners, including non-state armed groups, have faced **serious civilian harm allegations** despite the U.S. often continuing to train, equip, advise, and provide other support to these forces. As the U.S. seeks to condemn and address the conduct of malignant actors, it is vitally important that Congress continues its oversight and legislative responsibilities to address civilian harm by the U.S. military and its partners.

## FAST FACTS

- ▶ In 2021, close to **193 million** people were acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance, of which 72% was directly caused by conflict and insecurity.
- ▶ As of September 27, 2022, **14,783** civilians have been killed or injured as a result of explosive weapons in 2022 alone. 94% of these casualties occurred in populated areas. This compares with the 11,102 civilian casualties reported in all of 2021, 93% occurring in populated areas.

## KEY U.S. LEGISLATION, STRATEGIES & PROGRAMS

- ▶ **Legislation:**
  - [National Defense Authorization Act](#)
  - [Hunger as a weapon of war resolution](#)
- ▶ **Caucuses:**
  - [Protection of Civilians in Conflict Caucus](#)
- ▶ **Strategies:**
  - [Department of Defense \(DoD\) Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan \(CHMRAP\)](#)
- ▶ **DoD Instruction on Civilian Harm Programs:**
  - [DoD Center for Excellence on Civilian Harm \(TBE\)](#)

The InterAction [Protection of Civilians Working Group](#) focuses on reducing the risk civilians experience during crises by educating its members, partners, and world leaders to ensure non-combatants are respected and protected as outlined by international humanitarian law.