

Humanitarian workers face deadliest year on record – *Protect Humanitarians* urges global action to protect those risking their lives to save others

Brussels, 19 August 2025 – Attacks on humanitarian workers have reached unprecedented levels, with 861 victims in 2024 alone. On World Humanitarian Day, [Protect Humanitarians](#) and its partners call for urgent global action to increase protection, support and advocacy for those risking their lives to save others.

Record violence against humanitarians

In 2024 alone, **861 humanitarian workers** were victims of major security incidents: **383 killed, 308 wounded, 125 kidnapped, and 45 arrested or detained**¹. From Gaza to Ukraine, Sudan to DR Congo, those who help innocent civilians are increasingly under attack.

*"Every attack on a humanitarian is an attack on the civilians we serve. **On average, one humanitarian is killed every day, and another abducted every two days.** The erosion of respect for International Humanitarian Law is putting both humanitarian workers and vulnerable communities at unacceptable risk. **Inaction by the international community is costing innocent lives.**"* said Olivier Vandecasteele, Founder & Executive Director of *Protect Humanitarians*.

*"International law is clear : humanitarians must be respected and protected. They can never be targeted. This rule is non-negotiable and is binding on all parties to conflict, always and everywhere"*², recalls UN Secretary General António Guterres.

Local humanitarians disproportionately affected

Nearly 97% of those killed, injured, or abducted were local or national staff—the very people from affected communities who form the backbone of humanitarian assistance. For the first time, **local NGOs bore the largest share of incidents (35%), compared to international NGOs (29%), the United Nations (24%) and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (10%)**. This underscores the disproportionate risks faced by local organizations delivering frontline aid.

"Local humanitarians face the greatest risks, yet paradoxically receive the least protection and support. Their protection and support must be embedded as a right in every partnership, budget, and humanitarian plan. Could that be our shared resolution this World Humanitarian Day?" asked Sudhanshu Shekhar Singh, CEO of [Humanitarian Aid International](#).

¹ Humanitarian Outcomes, Aid Worker Security Database, aidworkersecurity.org.

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/world-humanitarian-day-un-chief-calls-action-protect-aid-workers>.

In Ukraine, the dangers are equally stark. *"World Humanitarian Day takes on a profound and painful resonance in Ukraine. **Ukrainian humanitarians' powerful force born of necessity demands our unwavering commitment in return. Protecting those who protect the vulnerable is paramount.** Their sustainability and safety are non-negotiable."* said Mila Leonova, Director of the Alliance of Ukrainian Civil Society Organizations ([Alliance UA CSO](#)).

Four urgent actions to Protect Humanitarians

Protect Humanitarians and its partners urge States, institutions, and field actors to adopt immediate and measurable steps to better protect, support and advocate for humanitarian workers:

- 1. Strengthen accountability** – Investigate violations of International Humanitarian Law and guarantee access to justice for victims and survivors.
- 2. Promote Duty of Care** – Ensure minimum standards of protection, support, and assistance for local and national staff.
- 3. Increase mental health and psychosocial support** – Provide accessible training, care, and long-term psychological support.
- 4. Amplify survivor voices** – Place victims and survivors at the center of advocacy, policies, and reforms.

***"This is a decisive moment for the humanitarian sector. When we act together, our voice is stronger.** This World Humanitarian Day, let us not only honour humanitarian workers but commit to protecting them—because protecting humanitarians means protecting lives."* said Olivier Vandecasteele.

About Protect Humanitarians

Protect Humanitarians is an independent NGO advocating for better protection of humanitarian workers worldwide. We promote good practices in Duty of Care for staff and volunteers working on the frontlines. We provide Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and legal advice to humanitarian personnel and NGOs. We advocate for justice alongside victims and survivors of incidents. *Protect Humanitarians* is a neutral organisation, established in 2024 with the support of the King Baudouin Foundation, the European Union and the generosity of individuals whose commitment makes our work possible.

Learn more: www.protecthumanitarians.org

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