

NATO Policy for Protection of Civilians



In the past decade, the commitment of NATO and its partner nations to the protection of civilians in the planning and conduct of NATO-led operations and missions has been underpinned by the development of specific policies and guidelines.

NATO and its operational partners have learned important lessons from the effort to mitigate civilian casualties during the past ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

At the Warsaw Summit NATO Heads of State and Government will adopt a **NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians**. The aim of this overarching policy is to set out a **coherent, consistent and integrated approach** to the **Protection of Civilians** in NATO and NATO-led operations, missions, and other mandated activities. The policy has been developed together with NATO partners and in consultation with the United Nations and relevant international organisations. It complements NATO's existing efforts in areas such as Children and Armed Conflict, Women Peace and Security, and Conflict-related Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

The protection of civilians involves many different aspects, including efforts when the Alliance defends its borders, implements tailored partnership-programmes, or engages in crisis management.

Conceptual Framework

The protection of civilians (persons, objects and services) includes **all efforts taken to avoid, minimize and mitigate the negative effects** that might arise from NATO and NATO-led military operations on the civilian population and, when applicable, to protect civilians from conflict-related physical violence or threats of physical violence by other actors.

Promoting long-term, self-sustained peace, security and stability is best achieved in **cooperation with the local authorities, population and civil society**, such as relevant organizations working for human rights, including gender equality.

The protection of civilians may include a range of activities including the use of force to **prevent, deter, pre-empt, and respond to situations** in which civilians suffer or are under the threat of physical violence.

To be effective in integrating the **Protection of Civilians**, NATO efforts need to take into account **the roles and activities of other international actors**.

Integrating the Protection of Civilians

NATO and its partner nations work on integrating the protection of civilians from the outset of NATO and NATO-led operations, missions and other mandated activities through a variety of means and measures, drawing on experience and available tools:

Civilian harm mitigation from own actions: NATO will continue to take measures for civilian harm mitigation from own actions, based on lessons learned and best practices. This will include institutionalising civilian harm mitigation measures through incorporating such measures in NATO Command Structure and NATO Force Structure processes.

NATO will also continue to engage with local authorities, populations and civil society, including with relevant organisations working for human rights and gender equality.

Protection of civilians from others' actions: NATO planners might be tasked, as appropriate, to recommend military response options, including a gender-sensitive approach, after having identified threats, type of perpetrators, their motivation, strategies and tactics, capabilities, and the expected outcome for civilians.

Support to Humanitarian Action: The NATO or NATO-led force can play an important role by contributing to the provision of a safe and secure environment. In exceptional circumstances, and based on humanitarian considerations, NATO may also respond to requests for assistance by humanitarian actors.

Lessons Learned on Protection of civilians: NATO will identify and implement lessons learned on protection of civilians, including through a gender-sensitive approach, in all relevant areas of operations and missions, as well as in training and education.

Communications aspects: NATO will continue to communicate measures it is taking to protect civilians. It will also continue to make every effort to communicate known civilian casualties to the host nation authorities, local population, and media.

NATO Headquarters-level and joint exercises: During exercises, Allies and NATO Military Authorities are encouraged to continue to include **Protection of civilians** elements as part of exercise scenarios.

Training of forces participating in NATO and NATO-led Operations and Missions: NATO Education and Training Facilities will continue to develop specific **Protection of civilians**-related modules in strategic- and operational-level curricula that will take into account the impact of conflict on women, men, girls and boys.

Training of local forces: When training local security forces is part of the agreed mandate, NATO should continue to share best practices and experiences on **Protection of civilians**, particularly civilian harm mitigation, as well as on the implementation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Defence and Related Security Capacity Building: Defence and Related Security Capacity Building packages may comprise elements on **Protection of civilians**, in line with the needs of requesting nations.

Partnership tools and programmes: Partner nations with an interest in developing interoperability with NATO on the **Protection of civilians** are encouraged to make use of partner programmes, tools and mechanisms and include **Protection of civilians**-related objectives as part of their partnership goals and objectives. Contributors to the Partnership Cooperation Menu should consider widening their **Protection of civilians**-related training offer in this field, including on such issues as civilian harm mitigation and casualty tracking.



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