



**PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK**

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SECURITY COUNCIL - PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT

**STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER**

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

Thank you for organizing the yearly open debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. The high relevance of this topic reflects the extent to which the international community fails to protect the most vulnerable from harm during armed conflict, despite the many obligations and commitments to the contrary. The world continues to witness routine and systematic violations of the fundamental principles for the protection of civilians as contained in international humanitarian law, as military attacks are carried out without due consideration of the obligation to ensure their necessity, proportionality and distinction. In only a few days we will mark the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Safe Schools Declaration - a political commitment to protect students, teachers and education facilities from the worst effects of armed conflict. Liechtenstein is a proud signatory to the declaration and continues to be fully committed to its principles. The current global situation sadly illustrates its high importance. Schools continue to be deliberately targeted and used for military purposes, eroding their sanctity as safe spaces and exposing schools, teachers and students to attack. Such attacks gravely violate the human right to education and can constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. Depriving children of access to education

has a devastating long-term impact on sustainable development, in particular SDG 4, and inflicts irreparable damage on children, families, communities and societies.

Liechtenstein is particularly concerned about the scale, severity and recurrence of violations and abuses endured by children in Yemen. Starvation is used as a weapon of war, in blatant violation of international law, gravely affecting children and other particularly vulnerable populations. It is of utmost urgency that all parties to the conflict immediately end and prevent all violations of international law, including attacks on schools, comply with all their obligations under international law and provide immediate and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to all those in need.

Mr. President,

Widespread sexual violence continues to be a blight on the lives of countless civilians in armed conflicts, with extremely deep and long-lasting consequences on the affected societies. In this regard, Liechtenstein is alarmed by reports emerging from the Tigray region of Ethiopia of the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war in what appears to be an environment of complete impunity. Among the many victims are girls as young as eight. There must be accountability for the perpetrators of these crimes. If there is an unwillingness or inability to provide justice at the national level, the responsibility to ensure accountability lies with the international community. Reports on rape and other forms of sexual violence are even more concerning in light of the fact that these crimes are often underreported. Stigmatization and cultural taboos continue to be strongly associated with all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and particularly strong in case these crimes are perpetrated against men and boys. A culture of silence continues to impede accountability and justice, and contributes to further cycles of violence and persistent harmful gender stereotypes. In response, the Council must do more to implement SC Resolution 2467, in particular its survivor-centered approach, and in doing so should benefit from the important work done with civil society actors such as the All Survivors Project.

Mr. President,

Today Syria is in the midst of an enormous humanitarian crisis, potentially its deadliest yet: 60% of all Syrians are food insecure, children are hungrier than ever and the health care institutions and medical personnel are under constant attack. The Syrian government has systematically attacked medical facilities over 400 times since the beginning of the war. At the same time, humanitarian access continues to be used as a political tool, including by members of this Council. Syrian government forces have destroyed vital humanitarian aid supplies intended for its own people for many years, including as recently as March in an airstrike on an NGO-supported warehouse. In this context, the ongoing threat to end the mandate for the final border crossing at Bab al-Hawa seriously jeopardizes the survival of 2.8 million civilians in need in Syria's northwest. This is one of many instances, albeit a particularly blatant one, of how the constant threat and use of the veto prevents the Security Council from taking vital action. It is also a grave violation of the ACT Code of Conduct enshrining the expectation of 122 States for the Council to do better in precisely those situations. If the Security Council does not take its responsibility seriously, we must be ready to use all available tools of the General Assembly to support the Syrian people.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, Liechtenstein underlines the strong preventive dimension of the Protection of Civilians agenda. In Myanmar, an unaccountable military elite with a long history of attacking its own civilian population continues to violently trample on peaceful dissent, adding a new bloody chapter to its long history of brutal oppression and threatening regional stability. Time and again the international community has failed to live up to its responsibility to hold those to account who are guilty of grave violations of international humanitarian law. We must draw the right lessons from that failure, in particular for the sake of the people of Myanmar, and pursue justice in the face of atrocity crimes.

I thank you.