**Model pledge**

# War in cities

**Proposed by**: Norwegian Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

**Contacts:** Tobias Ehret and Caroline Baudot

**Email:** tobias.ehret@redcross.no, cbaudot@icrc.org

*Note:* *This model pledge offers an array of potential actions that States, National Societies and observers can choose from to make their priority commitments. It gives a list of examples, which are not intended to be adopted in full. The proposed actions can be prioritized and adapted to the national context.*

## A. Objective/introduction of the model text

*Background*

The 2022 Council of Delegates (CoD) resolution “[War in cities](https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2022/06/CD22-R06-War-in-cities_22-June-2022_FINAL_EN.pdf)” expressed deep concern about the devastating humanitarian consequences of urban warfare and committed the Movement, through its 2022–2027 Movement Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Humanitarian Impacts of War in Cities (Movement Action Plan), to undertake a set of activities in order to prevent and respond to these consequences. The resolution acknowledged that the volunteers and staff of the Movement cannot adequately prevent or remedy the profound and lasting humanitarian impact of urban warfare on their own. That will require a holistic approach by all States, including affected and donor States and States’ armed forces as well as humanitarian organizations, including the Movement components. The CoD therefore urged States to make collective or individual commitments on this issue at the 34th International Conference (International Conference).

On that basis, the Movement will present to the International Conference two initiatives designed to increase cooperation to address the civilian suffering caused by urban warfare:

* a CoD resolution, “War in cities”, which will include a Solemn Appeal to all States and non-State armed groups party to armed conflict
* a set of model pledges that may be used in individual or joint pledges by International Conference members and observers.

*Objective*

This document presents the proposed model pledges for strengthening action by States and Movement components on urban warfare in line with the Fundamental Principles and in coordination where possible. These pledges will help translate the “War in cities” CoD resolutions into concrete, action-oriented commitments. The pledges focus on four priority areas:

- protection of civilians as a strategic objective

- use of explosive weapons in populated areas

 - humanitarian access and the Movement’s operational response

- protection of critical infrastructure enabling essential services to civilians and essential service providers.

*Use of the model text*

This document sets out a **menu of potential commitments** for those participating in the International Conference (i.e. States, National Societies and observers), who are invited to consider these commitments related to war in cities, some of which are better suited to States and others to National Societies.

We encourage **joint pledges** between National Societies and their governments to reinforce cooperation and practical steps. National Societies may also wish to consider regional pledges or cross-regional pledges.

The **language of each pledge can be adapted** to better reflect who is committing to a specific action and their capacities, priorities and national contexts.

We recommend **including measurable indicators**, such as time frames and target numbers, where relevant and possible, to make the pledges more meaningful and impactful and make it easier to monitor progress.

National Societies may also consider developing their own pledges and making **different or additional pledges** to implement other actions related to the Movement Action Plan and/or other areas.

This document has been prepared by the Norwegian Red Cross and ICRC, with input and comments from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and National Societies.

## B. Actions to be considered

The National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society/State/observer or the State and National Society together is/are encouraged to choose actions from the list below that best correspond to their individual situation and priorities:

**Protection of civilians as a strategic objective**

* **Develop specific doctrine** and/or review and adapt existing doctrine(s) to include concrete measures for preventing, mitigating and responding to civilian harm in urban warfare by [year].
* Appoint a **focal point at the national level** to work with relevant government ministries and agencies to review and make recommendations for improving policies and practices related to the protection of civilians.
* Integrate, with the support or involvement of National Societies and the ICRC, concrete measures for protecting civilians in urban warfare into **dissemination and military training sessions** given to all forces likely to be involved in the planning, decision-making and execution of attacks, starting in [year].
* Ensure that armed forces are progressively **equipped with, and trained in, the proper means and methods of warfare**, i.e. appropriate for use in urban and other populated areas, including weapons that do not have wide area effects, with a view to minimizing the risk of civilian harm.
* Prior to military operations in cities, ensure that the protection of civilians is explicitly identified as a **strategic objective at the highest level(s)** and that practical measures aimed at strengthening the protection of civilians are clearly reflected in rules of engagement and articulated in operational frameworks.
* Create, by [year], a **mechanism to track, assess and investigate**, to the extent possible, all civilian casualties, damage to civilian objects and impacts on essential services, with a view to learning lessons and incorporating them into doctrine, training, planning and practice in the future.

**Use of explosive weapons in populated areas**

* Adopt, if not already in place, an **avoidance policy** to the effect that explosive weapons with a wide impact area should not be used in populated areas unless sufficient mitigation measures are taken to limit their wide area effects and the consequent risk of civilian harm. Ensure by [year] that such an avoidance policy and the good practices operationalizing it are integrated into military doctrine, training, planning and practice.
* Take effective steps at the national level to endorse, if this has not already been done, and to **faithfully and effectively implement** the *2022 Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas*. This includes:
* placing the implementation of the Political Declaration on the agenda of the national IHL committee in [year]
* launching in [year] a review of national policies and practices related to the protection of civilians during armed conflict that involves the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and to implementation of the commitments undertaken under the Political Declaration
* preparing a [yearly] report starting in [year] on the findings of the review and outlining the measures taken and envisioned to develop or improve national policies and practices.

**Humanitarian access and the Movement’s operational response**

* Review military policies, practices and training, and develop and implement appropriate procedures to **ensure that the movements of impartial humanitarian organizations, civil defence members and essential service providers are not hindered** in the context of military operations in urban settings.
* Engage and consult with relevant components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other humanitarian actors prior to and during military operations to **understand their roles in urban warfare situations and the principles they abide by**.
* Engage with the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, other relevant humanitarian actors, and parties to armed conflict to ensure **rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access, notably through regular humanitarian pauses in armed hostilities in urban areas,** in order to facilitate safe and continued delivery of humanitarian, including medical, activities.
* Allocate additional funds [amount or percentage of increase] to the National Red Cross/Red Crescent Society of [country] to:
	+ **develop and strengthen the Movement’s capacity** to implement actions contained in the Movement Action Plan
	+ increase the [National Red Cross/Red Crescent Society]’s skills, knowledge and capacity to exercise their **auxiliary role** at the national and municipal levels to allow them to implement these concrete actions.

**Protection of critical infrastructure enabling essential services to civilians and essential service providers**

* Review and take steps, as part of emergency preparedness, **to strengthen the resilience of essential service systems**, so that, during an armed conflict, they can continue to operate at capacity and maintain the level of service necessary to meet civilians’ basic needs and preserve their lives, security, physical integrity and dignity.
* Develop and further refine existing procedures for estimating collateral damage/incidental harm during targeting operations. Ensure that such processes can account for **reasonably foreseeable direct and indirect effects,** and the capacity and time required to repair the damage and restore services.
* Ensure that **practical measures aimed at ensuring essential service continuity** during urban operations are clearly articulated in operational frameworks such as operational orders and standard operating procedures.
* Ensure that **efforts by armed forces to understand the civilian environment** include:
	+ engaging with service providers and humanitarian organizations, with due consideration for their operating principles (neutrality, impartiality and independence)
	+ seeking and integrating the views of women, men, girls and boys affected by the conflict
	+ monitoring and assessing the consequences and cumulative impact of urban warfare on essential services and essential service providers.
* **Develop operational plans, in coordination with essential service providers,** to support their safe and sustained access to affected areas so that they can deliver a steady supply of consumables; operate, maintain and repair critical infrastructure; and stem the rate of decline in service, including by:
	+ building environments conducive to IHL compliance, for example, by explicitly highlighting in public communication the need to protect essential service providers as civilians operating, maintaining or repairing critical infrastructure indispensable to the survival of the civilian population
	+ identifying and proposing actions as a neutral intermediary, such as notifying, negotiating and coordinating with parties to the conflict and, where necessary and feasible, accompanying essential service providers during their movements and work
	+ supporting essential service providers’ crisis response capacities, including through developing emergency preparedness plans, providing first aid training, supporting visibility efforts and setting up coordination mechanisms.

## C. Potential indicators for measuring progress

The suggested indicators below may help measure progress on implementing the actions above. States and/or National Societies should adapt them and create additional indicators based on their final pledges. When indicators are based on numbers, States and/or National Societies should also indicate a target number.

* Number of military doctrines developed or adapted to include concrete measures on the protection of civilians in urban warfare
* Number of dissemination and military training sessions integrating measures for protecting civilians in urban warfare per year
* Appointment of a focal point to coordinate inter-agency and/or inter-ministerial processes on the protection of civilians in urban warfare (yes/no/number)
* Mechanism(s) to track, assess and investigate civilian harm under discussion/developed/ piloted/implemented
* Status of the process to review the national policies and practices (not launched, in progress, finalized) and year the review was launched compared to the target year
* Percentage of increase in funds dedicated to increase the National Society’s capacity to implement the Movement Action Plan (baseline 2024 compared to the target percentage)
* Number of essential service providers supported with emergency preparedness plans, first aid training, visibility efforts or coordination mechanisms

## D. Resource implications

The States and/or National Societies determine the resources that may be required to carry out this pledge based on their chosen objectives and actions.