



# Annual report 2019





## Foreword

As this annual report is published in the middle of a worldwide pandemic on a scale unknown in recent times, I would first like to wish all our readers, partners and donors sound health, courage and determination in confronting these challenging times. Geneva Call's headquarters staff has been working remotely since March 16th 2020, but our field work could continue thanks to our field structures that we have kept strengthening throughout 2019. Without our colleagues based in the field, Geneva Call's work would have been greatly diminished and damaged by the global pandemic.

In 2019 Geneva Call concluded its 2017-2019 multiyear strategy. Most of the objectives fixed have been achieved and only a few partially achieved, mainly due to field access difficulties. The overall situation in the zones of conflict has remained complicated, with constant breaches of humanitarian rules across the world. Geneva Call has engaged 96 Armed Non-State Actors (ANSAs) during the year and significantly contributed to a decrease of abuses in 15 specific contexts. Within these, in several very tense contexts we have developed contextualized training material in local dialect and with verses from

the Quran that reflect the main International Humanitarian Law (IHL) rules that should be respected by combatants. This has allowed our teams to initiate humanitarian engagements, based on trust, with several radical ANSAs on the respect for IHL. In the DR Congo, our team was able to convince a powerful ANSA to remove its outpost from the vicinity of a field hospital, as civilians and medical staff were too afraid to access the medical structure due to its presence. In Yemen, we obtained from the leadership of a major ANSA the signature of 3 *Deeds of Commitment (Deeds)* on prohibition of sexual violence, child protection and prohibition of use of anti-personal landmines. Following the signature, training started on the various topics with strong engagement from field commanders to respect the commitments taken by their leadership. In Syria, Geneva Call developed health protection campaigns and trained the combatants of an ANSA signatory to our Deed in the middle of heavy fighting. These are a few concrete examples of achievements throughout the year.

Geneva Call's staff has shown a high level of creativity in order to get in direct contact with difficult to reach ANSAs and to

develop compelling pedagogical materials that can be disseminated online, via radio or through poster campaigns. These tools, just as much as the direct involvement with community leaders, have proved to be an important way to open doors and allow direct access to the very ANSAs themselves.

2019 has also been a year of consolidation of Geneva Call's business model with a streamlining of all internal policies. A particular effort has been made by the finance department to establish sound internal control systems that have borne fruit in 2019 as highlighted in this report. In November 2019 the Board approved the next global strategy which is the result of a wide consultation involving staff, ANSAs, partners and donors and that will run from 2020-through 2023.

I would like to address my special thanks to our donors who have remained faithful to Geneva Call's mission throughout 2019 and continue being so in the challenging times of today.

**Alain Délétroz**  
Director General



# Countries of operations 2019



# Geneva Call Mission

## Vision

During situations of armed conflict humanitarian norms and principles are respected, and civilians are protected.

## Mission

In situations of armed conflict, Geneva Call, as a neutral, impartial and independent international humanitarian organization, endeavours to strengthen the respect of humanitarian norms by armed non-State actors, in order to improve the protection of civilians.

## Values

- Humanity
- Neutrality
- Impartiality
- Independence
- Accountability
- Dedication
- Respect

Geneva Call works in situations of armed conflict or armed violence where there are one or more armed non-State actors (ANSAs) fighting government armed forces or other ANSAs, whose practices may have a direct negative impact on the protection of civilians. During conflict, fighters must comply with humanitarian norms enshrined in international humanitarian law (IHL) and in relevant international human rights law (IHRL) sources. Geneva Call engages ANSAs to encourage them to comply with these norms.

Since Geneva Call began its work 20 years ago, it has developed a unique methodology to increase awareness of, and respect for IHL and IHRL by ANSAs. In fact, Geneva Call is the only organization in the world focused exclusively on creating lasting behaviour change among ANSAs and is widely recognised as such. It has managed to engage 158 key ANSAs in 25 countries, many of which have taken active steps and made formal commitments to respect specific humanitarian norms.

Geneva Call engages ANSAs on specific thematic IHL and IHRL-related areas such as the ban on anti-personnel mines and cooperation in mine action, the protection of children from the effects of armed conflict, the prohibition of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and towards the elimination of gender discrimination. Furthermore, it has recently developed its thematic humanitarian engagement efforts on the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict, the protection of health care, and the prohibition of forced displacement.

65 ANSAs have signed an innovative instrument known as the *Deed of Commitment (Deed)*. The Deed is a mechanism developed by Geneva Call to enable ANSAs to pledge to respect IHL and relevant norms of IHRL and to be held publicly accountable for their commitments.

Geneva Call subscribes to the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and ensures transparency by informing stakeholders, including the States concerned, of its engagement efforts with ANSAs.



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## Progress towards strategy 2017-2019

Geneva Call is the only international humanitarian organization that works exclusively with armed non-State actors (ANSAs) to improve their adherence to international humanitarian norms in order to enhance the protection of civilians in situations of armed violence and armed conflict.

During the last decade, the evolution of conflict patterns worldwide highlighted the need for Geneva Call to adapt as an organization in order to have a deeper impact in more situations. Following this trend, Geneva Call has therefore expanded its themes of engagement and its geographical reach over the past years to the benefit of conflict-affected civilians in those areas where ANSAs are active. The organization continuously strived to strengthen its systems and procedures to be more effective and efficient while retaining a clear sense of its values of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, independence, accountability, dedication and respect.

### Strategic Objective 1 – Consolidation and concentration of action

Geneva Call's operations are concentrated in 10 priority contexts of armed conflict and focused on those ANSAs having the most severe impact on civilian populations; it has developed its tools for engagement and for promoting the respect of humanitarian norms; and it has consolidated the assessment of its results and impact.

Throughout 2019 Geneva Call has pursued the consolidation and optimization of its presence in the field by strengthening the country teams and offices, e.g. in Libya, South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan & Pakistan. While financial challenges have led to a reduction of headquarters (HQ) staff and field staff in several underfunded missions/regions, particular efforts have been made to strengthen the existing capacities within the teams by enhancing their expertise and skillsets through specific capacity building training sessions. In parallel, a specific research project on ANSAs' practices and

perspectives on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is still ongoing.

Throughout the last period (2017-2019), Geneva Call continued to provide support in enhancing the capacity of the humanitarian community to engage with ANSAs by conducting multiple training sessions for humanitarian organizations working in conflict-affected areas. A clear shift in paradigm happened during this period: from a remote implementation and management approach, mostly led by HQ in the past, the organization transitioned to a field-based operations management approach. At the end of the period, Geneva Call has expanded its geographic coverage and is fully operational with its teams on the ground in a total of 15 countries worldwide. During this period, the evolution of conflicts throughout the regions led to an operational repositioning of interventions and priorities. While the interventions in some countries reduced throughout the years (e.g. India, Iran, Western Sahara, Sudan), other countries saw an increase in operations and field presence, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya, Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan & Pakistan.

### Strategic Objective 2 – Development of engagement and thematic and programme-related innovations

Within a renewed and gradually decentralized operational framework, Geneva Call has initiated dialogue with "new generation" ANSAs and/or ANSAs that are difficult to access; it has innovated with the adoption of new themes and subjects and the launch of pilot programmes to support its engagement efforts with ANSAs.

Geneva Call's operations are concentrated in those areas where ANSAs have the greatest impact on civilians in countries such as DRC, Syria, etc. Geneva Call successfully engaged "hard-to-reach" ANSAs notably groups in the Near & Middle East (both

Sunni and Shia), Sahel and Asian contexts. During 2019, trust has been built with the leadership of these groups, leading to the signing of *Deeds of Commitment*, reviews of internal codes of conduct and the adoption of unilateral declarations (signature of three *Deeds of Commitment* and the adoption of unilateral declarations in Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, the DRC, and Iraq).

In all the countries where Geneva Call is active, it seeks to deepen its engagement with ANSAs, increasing its monitoring capacities, making sure that ANSAs are tangibly committing to improving the protection of civilians.

In parallel, important efforts were made to increase the organization's capacities. Several processes aiming at strengthening Geneva Call's staff skills and knowledge were successfully implemented, along with development and/or improvement of tools and guidelines. While specific efforts and investment were dedicated to strengthening the staff's planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning capacities, other supporting and guiding tools were improved and produced, i.e. operational guidelines, ANSAs engagement guidelines (and disengagement strategies), evaluation of the *Deed of Commitment* tool, gender evaluation.

In addition, in 2018 Geneva Call developed its fourth *Deed of Commitment* for the protection of health care in armed conflict. The tool was successfully used during 2019 in several contexts, where ANSAs endorsed the concept by signing the *Deed* or expressing willingness to abide.

Overall, 80% of the results expected in the strategy were achieved.



### Strategic Objective 3 – Transfer of leadership and consolidation of governance

Geneva Call has successfully achieved the transition to a new leadership and its governance suits the development of its objectives and activities.

The process of management and governance change, along with the transition of leadership implemented during 2017-2018, successfully resulted in the revision and adoption of Geneva Call's mission statement and values and a new Board structure with new members joining the structure and being operational in 2019.

### Strategic Objective 4 – Communication and appeal for acceptance and influence

Geneva Call has an overall communication and advocacy strategy, suited to the changes in the organization, which promotes its acceptance and influence among priority audiences.

Geneva Call's new visual identity adopted in 2018, was further implemented in 2019 with the updating of all external visibility material and notably the launch of a newly designed website that better portrays the evolution of the organization. New videos and animations were produced using latest technologies to better engage targeted audiences e.g. a series of virtual reality clips on key international humanitarian norms.

A draft of Geneva Call's advocacy strategy has been produced which will be finalised and implemented during the next strategic period 2020-2023. The following key areas of focus have been defined:

- Urging key stakeholders to systematically insist on the importance to engage all armed actors, especially ANSAs, in their strategies for protection of civilians.

- Stressing that engaging with armed groups on IHL does not legitimize them.
- Urging stakeholders to facilitate access to funding for humanitarian outfits who engage ANSAs, making sure that they are protected from counter-terrorism legislation.
- Highlighting the need for parties to conflict to take ownership of IHL, including through training, public commitments (*Deeds...*) and monitoring behaviour change.

### Strategic Objective 5 – Successful management of growth

Over the three-year period of the strategy, Geneva Call has increased its budget by 33% and its staff by 50% by adapting its financial and administrative management to structural and operational changes and by guaranteeing the motivation and skills of its staff.

During 2019, Geneva Call increased its income and its operational expenses.

The challenging situation of the organization when closing 2018 was further complicated by changes to arrangements with the European Union for non-EU NGOs whereby the Framework Partnership Agreements of DG ECHO were withdrawn, requiring Geneva Call to amend its budget for 2019 during the implementation period. A conservative approach was adopted, with a budget close to Geneva Call's acquired funding as of March 2019.

The main objective of the programmatic response was to be able to maintain the level of activities already launched and to respond to the engagements taken with the stakeholders (current donors and local partners). The operations and geographical teams reviewed their respective planning:

- The volume of activities and the field presence were re-adapted according to the funding acquired and/or being negotiated (high potential for positive outcome);

- The headcount was also reduced, with the implementation of projects and activities realized via an optimization of existing resources (re-organization, trans-projects/countries for the human resources at the field level and trans-regions at the headquarters' level).
- The foreseen scale of geographic expansion was downsized, except for the new deployment of the mission in South Sudan.

As a result of close follow up on the financial situation and also based on the fundraising opportunities, another budget review had been undertaken in September.

Overall, the 2017-2019 strategic period for Geneva Call was marked by a continuous growth of the organization. There was an increase of 52% in the organization's income during the last three years and the overall staff amounted to a total of 80 employees by the end of 2019. Particular efforts have been put in place to strengthen the human resources (HR) department through development and endorsement of HR management strategies and tools.





# International Humanitarian Norms and Principles

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

The four Geneva Conventions entered their seventieth anniversary, since they were adopted by their signatories. As stated in the conventions, those who are not or no longer taking a direct part in hostilities must be protected and their life and dignity upheld without adverse distinction. Nevertheless, continued violations of international humanitarian norms by parties to armed conflict had a devastating effect on the civilian population. The core of Geneva Call's work is to improve the protection of civilians during armed conflicts by engaging ANSAs to respect international humanitarian norms – IHL and international human rights law (IHRL), in particular on the thematic areas listed in the following sections. The possibility of impartial humanitarian organizations engaging all parties to the conflict is provided for in Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. This work in no way affects the legal status of ANSAs.



Geneva Call's operations target ANSAs having the greatest impact on civilians as well as initiating contacts with "hard-to-reach" ANSAs. Efforts in building trust with the leadership of these groups, has led to the signing of *Deeds of Commitment*, reviews of internal codes of conduct and the adoption of unilateral declarations. In addition, Geneva Call has strived to share its experience and expertise with the humanitarian community through conferences, research, training and other activities.

- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Alliance des Peuples pour un Congo Libre et Souverain (APCLS) issued a unilateral declaration committing to facilitate humanitarian access to areas under its control. Another ANSA, the Nduma Défense du Congo-Renové (NDC-R) shared its Code of Conduct for revision by Geneva Call's policy and legal unit. Two ANSAs nominated focal points to improve cooperation with humanitarian workers and facilitate humanitarian access to areas under their control.

Leaders of four affected local communities made public declarations about their wish to facilitate humanitarian access in their areas. These declarations have a signal effect on ANSAs in their zones.

- In Mali, as a result of the humanitarian engagement and training sessions, several ANSAs have taken initiatives to increase their respect for IHL, such as displaying key rules in their camps, conducting refresher sessions and setting up internal training on the topic of respect of the norms. ANSAs have also requested additional training on IHL by Geneva Call and training materials that they can share internally. One ANSA also shared its code of conduct with Geneva Call requesting a review and legal input.

- In the Philippines, Geneva Call launched a booklet on 15 Key Rules for Fighters in Non International Armed Conflict with integrated Islamic references and in Maguindanaon dialect. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) expressed its support and proposed to integrate the content of the booklet to the madaris curriculum in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

- Together with the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, Geneva Call launched a major research project on the practice and interpretation of IHL and human rights norms by ANSAs. Drawing on the database [www.theirwords.org](http://www.theirwords.org) and case studies, the project aims to increase knowledge of ANSAs' views and inform strategies to promote their compliance with international law. In 2019, Geneva Call conducted field missions to interview ANSAs and other key stakeholders in Myanmar, Colombia, Mali, the Philippines and Somalia/Somaliland. Preliminary results were presented in a Research Brief and at a side-event during the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December.

- In October, Geneva Call organized a 2-days thematic workshop on engaging ANSAs for humanitarian protection, in collaboration with the International Association of Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP). The workshop, which combined lectures with role-playing, exercises and group discussions, reviewed the international legal framework applicable to non-international armed conflicts and the normative basis for humanitarian engagement with ANSAs. It also addressed key concepts, methods and challenges associated with engaging with ANSAs on protection issues.

# Child protection and education

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

According to Save the Children, 415 million children worldwide are living in conflict settings, including 149 million children living in high-intensity conflict zones. They are being killed and maimed, abducted and raped, recruited and used in hostilities.

Of the parties that are listed as perpetrators of grave violations against children in the last report of the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, most are ANSAs.

The disruption of education is another major concern. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), between 2013 and 2017, there were attacks on schools in 74 countries. In addition, the use of education facilities for military purposes not only creates a risk for the students and teachers but also has an impact on their access to education.

On the other hand, the denial of humanitarian access has also led to devastating consequences for children, who were, in some cases, denied food, shelter and medical care.

Geneva Call has been working on the protection of children and education in armed conflict since 2010. To date, 29 ANSAs have signed the *Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict* and have taken measures to implement them, such as the demobilization of child soldiers. Other ANSAs have undertaken similar pledges.

- Through regular dialogue with the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Yemen, Geneva Call took a significant step to bring the STC's policies and behaviour in line with international standards by signing Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict* in July 2019.



- In November 2019, the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) in Myanmar signed the Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict*. The RCSS has also committed to install an age verification mechanism to avoid accidental recruitment of children.
- In February, Geneva Call briefed the UN Security Council during an open Arria-Formula meeting on the protection of children during armed conflict.
- In May, Geneva Call participated in the III International Conference on Safe Schools, where it advocated for the need to engage ANSAs on the protection of education.
- Geneva Call drafted an academic article to be published in the *International Review of the Red Cross*. The piece is based on Geneva Call's experience engaging ANSAs in Myanmar, the DRC and Syria on the prohibition of recruitment and use of children in hostilities.
- In Myanmar, following humanitarian engagement with Geneva Call, the Chin National Front/Chin National Army (CNF/CNA) shared its revised Code of Conduct which notably included provisions on the minimum age of recruitment.



# Gender

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?



In terms of gender and sexual violence, the 2019 report of the UN Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence lists ANSAs suspected of committing conflict-related sexual violence in eight countries (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Syria). In addition, certain aspects of ANSAs' policies or practices are discriminatory, notably regarding women's access to education, health and other services and/or participation in decision-making processes, such as peace negotiations.

Geneva Call has been working on gender issues since 2012. To date, 25 ANSAs have signed the *Deed of Commitment prohibiting sexual violence in armed conflict and towards the elimination of gender discrimination* and have taken measures to implement them. Other ANSAs have undertaken similar pledges. In addition to engaging ANSAs

specifically on the prohibition of sexual violence and working towards the elimination of gender discrimination, Geneva Call addresses sexual violence and the differentiated impact of armed conflict on women, girls, men and boys as part of its other thematic topics.

- In Myanmar, following humanitarian engagement with Geneva Call, the Chin National Front/Chin National Army (CNF/CNA) shared its revised Code of Conduct which notably included provisions on the prohibition of sexual violence.
- Geneva Call has established and maintained a regular dialogue with the STC in Yemen. As a result, the targeted ANSA has signed the *Deed of Commitment prohibiting sexual violence in armed conflict and towards the elimination of gender discrimination*.
- Geneva Call participated in a series of international conferences and workshops with a view to highlight the importance of engaging ANSAs on conflict-related sexual violence and their policies and practices that discriminate against women and girls, including in terms of access to services and participation in decision-making processes.

# Landmines and explosive weapons

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

The 2019 Landmine Monitor reveals that 59 States were contaminated by anti-personnel mines (AP) as of October of that same year. These weapons have particularly grave consequences for civilians. Of the 6,897 casualties of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) recorded by this report in 2018, civilians represented the vast majority of casualties. In addition to the human cost, AP mines and other explosive weapons hamper the delivery of essential services, such as health and education. Their presence also severely hinders the delivery of humanitarian relief, the return of displaced people and economic development.

The same report states that ANSAs used AP mines in at least six countries: Afghanistan, Myanmar, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Yemen. There were unconfirmed allegations of new uses of AP mines by ANSAs also in Cameroon, Colombia, Mali, Libya, the Philippines, Somalia and Tunisia. Moreover, some ANSAs also have effective control over territories that are affected by AP mines and ERW. Communities living in such areas often receive little or no humanitarian assistance.

Geneva Call has been working on landmine issues since it was set up in 2000. To date, 54 ANSAs have signed the *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* and have taken measures to implement them such as stockpile destruction. Other ANSAs have undertaken similar pledges. Moreover, in recent years, Geneva Call has also addressed the use of explosive weapons in populated areas by ANSAs.

- Following a long engagement with the Central Division, an active ANSA operating in north west Syria, the group signed the *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action*.

- As a result of a regular dialogue with the STC in Yemen, Geneva Call took a significant step to bring the STC's policies and behaviour in line with international standards by signing Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action*.

- In Myanmar, direct humanitarian engagement with ANSAs covering the issue of AP mines continued with the Karen National Union (KNU) and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). As a result, the group has enforced policies on mapping the location of mines, with only military targeting being permissible.

- Geneva Call briefed the 22<sup>nd</sup> International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers during a side-event on how to engage ANSAs on the prohibition of AP mines, with a focus on the case of the Polisario Front in Western Sahara.





# Displacement

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the end of 2019, an unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world were forced from their homes by armed conflict, persecution or violence. Direct attacks and ill-treatment, the loss of property, the increased danger of families being torn apart and of children being separated from other family members, a greater risk of sexual violence, and restricted access to health care and other essential services are among the common threats to displaced persons. As they struggle to meet their essential needs, they are placed in further jeopardy by tensions with their host communities (who are very often themselves affected by armed conflict and lack of access to basic services), forced recruitment (especially children), settlement in unsafe locations, and their forced return to unsafe areas. Moreover, displacement also affects the communities from where people flee.

ANSAs may contribute to internal displacement in several ways. First, in some instances, ANSAs have forcibly displaced people themselves or prevented displaced persons from returning home. Second, the failure to respect IHL in general indirectly fosters internal displacement in many contemporary armed conflicts. ANSAs also play a role in allowing humanitarian access and facilitating assistance for internally displaced people (IDP) and refugees living in the territories they control.

Geneva Call started to engage ANSAs on displacement issues in 2017.

- In Iraq, the general context during 2019 was deeply affected by the displacement and forceful return of IDPs in conflict affected areas. Responding to this situation, Geneva Call provided several training sessions with particular focus on displacement to Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and Yazidi Forces as well as civil society organizations and IDP leaders. Geneva Call facilitated dialogue between international organizations (i.e. IOM) and major PMF groups on the return of IDPs in Diyala governate.

- At the regional level in Near and Middle East, a regional workshop organized with the participation of Shia religious leaders at the Islamic University of Najaf on "Islam and the Protection of IDPs" has resulted in issuing a common declaration on the prohibition of forced displacement of civilians and the protection of displaced persons during armed conflicts and beyond (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-xh2M-rNRFw>).
- Geneva Call developed a series of new training and dissemination materials to engage ANSAs on displacement during times of armed conflict, including an illustrated booklet, a short animated video and an immersive video tailored towards discussing in training sessions with ANSAs the prohibition of forced displacement under IHL, unless the safety of the civilians or imperative military reasons require such displacement.
- Geneva Call participated in a series of international conferences and workshops to share the lessons learned from its 2018 pilot engagements with ANSAs on forced displacement during armed conflict.



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# Cultural heritage

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?



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Armed conflicts also threaten cultural heritage. On the one hand, some ANSAs undertook deliberate and systematic attacks against cultural heritage, most famously the attacks against the World Heritage Town of Timbuktu in Mali in 2012 or the various acts of destruction by the Islamic State group carried out in Syria and Iraq since 2014. On the other hand, cultural heritage may become damaged or lost during hostilities, in particular due to a failure to take adequate precautionary measures for the protection of cultural property. Moreover, the illegal excavation of archaeological sites, looting of museums and illicit trafficking of cultural objects further endanger cultural heritage during times of armed conflict.

Geneva Call started to engage ANSAs on the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict in 2018.

- Geneva Call developed a series of new dissemination materials to engage ANSAs on the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict, including an illustrated booklet and a short, animated video.
- In Mali, an animated video specifically focusing on the protection of the diverse national cultural heritage was produced for local needs and promoted via an extensive social media campaign. The video campaign also addressed the protection of cultural heritage as

a basis of reconciliation and stabilisation. Several ANSAs were specifically engaged on this theme, and efforts supported to locate certain manuscripts in ANSAs' possession.

- Geneva Call participated in a series of international conferences and events, notably at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law and the Hague University, to share the findings of its landmark report "*Culture under fire: armed non-State actors and cultural heritage in wartime*" published in 2018.



# Protection of health care in armed conflict

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

ANSAs have often been involved in incidents of violence against health care. Although many of these consisted of mere threats, ANSAs have also killed medical personnel or patients. Additionally, they have looted health care facilities and forced medical staff to provide free treatment and treat their own members before others.

In recent years, it has become increasingly common in armed conflict situations for medical personnel and facilities to come under attack. Although comprehensive worldwide data is lacking, the reality on the ground is unequivocal. The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition's latest report documented incidents of violence against health care in 23 countries in 2018. Similarly, MSF has referred continuous attacks against health facilities in Syria, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen.

Geneva Call started to work on the protection of health care in armed conflict in 2018. To date, 2 ANSAs have signed the *Deed of Commitment for the protection of health care in armed conflict* and have taken measures to implement them. Other ANSAs have undertaken similar pledges.

- Following a long engagement with the Central Division, an active ANSA operating in north west Syria, the group signed the Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment for the protection of health care in armed conflict*.
- In the DRC, Geneva Call has developed substantial dialogue and relations with the main ANSAs in North Kivu on a wide variety of topics over the years. As a result, the APCLS has signed the *Deed of Commitment for the protection of health care in armed conflict*. In addition,

following Geneva Call's intervention, the NDC-R accepted to dismantle and relocate a military base that was located in the vicinity of a hospital.

- Geneva Call developed a series of new training and dissemination materials to engage ANSAs on the protection of health care, including an illustrated booklet, a short, animated video and an immersive video tailored towards discussing in training sessions with ANSAs on the collection and evacuation of the wounded and the prohibition of attacks on medical personnel and facilities.
- Geneva Call spoke at different events on the importance of engaging ANSAs on the protection of health care, including at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week, at Chatham House, and at the Geneva Peace Week.



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## Near and Middle East (NAME)



## Near and Middle East: regional approach - Regional Support Unit

### What were the regional developments?

Given the current protection crisis in the Near and Middle East region and the overwhelming lack of respect for IHL from parties to the various on-going conflicts, there is an increasing need for humanitarian engagement with ANSAs. Recent developments in the region predict an inevitable spiral of violence proving this line of action's continued relevance. In northern Syria, fighting has intensified between the Turkish military and their proxies on one hand and Russian-backed government forces and Kurdish ANSAs on the other. In Yemen, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating beyond measure prompting the UN's emergency food relief agency, to suspend aid to areas controlled by Houthi opposition forces as a last resort, given failed attempts to channel aid to populations in need. In the north, fighting was reinvigorated between Houthi forces and the Saudi-led coalition, whereas tensions in the south remain between the Hadi government and various ANSAs. In Iraq, the U.S. operation leading to the killing of Iranian general Soleimani and Iraqi militia commander Mohandisi caused U.S.-Iran tensions to soar and aggravated tensions between U.S. Forces and Iranian backed PMF groups in Iraq. When it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the White House's Middle East peace plan was met with anger and rejection by the Palestinian leadership, undermining already dim prospects for peace with potential consequences in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Furthermore, several waves of anti-government protests have erupted in the region namely in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon with clashes – ranging from violent to deadly – occurring between protesters and security forces.



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### What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

Geneva Call has developed a more structured approach to the transnational ANSAs in the region. The approach targets the main and/or complex, yet well-organized and sophisticated ANSAs. It addresses the changing dynamic of conflicts with a clear tendency to transnationality and cross-conventional borders activities. By consolidating Geneva Call's experience and capitalizing on its regional knowledge, expertise and stakeholder relationships, more targeted and result-oriented approaches and strategies are being developed and put in place. The regional unit project's purpose is to help establish backing strategies for engagement with ANSAs at a transnational level through offices established in Beirut and Erbil. The project has been focusing on advocacy and capacity building work as well as indirect engagement with regional/transnational stakeholders, while the ANSA engagement itself takes place at a country program level. Several meetings, roundtables and capacity building seminars have been successfully implemented since the launch of the regional office.

- Provision of support to Geneva Call's field operations in the region: Geneva Call's knowledge of conflict actors and dynamics was consolidated through specific mappings and research on transnational humanitarian issues, ANSAs, and influential regional actors, culminating in the development of engagement strategies.
- Regional Advocacy: Geneva Call engaged with influential regional stakeholders to increase support for engagement with ANSAs and its work in the region. It held meetings with religious leaders to further the protection of civilians and gathered expert humanitarian actors to discuss the challenges faced when working with and around ANSAs.



- Capacity building on humanitarian norms in the region: In 2019, Geneva Call established the foundation for building the capacity of journalists on IHL and conflict sensitive reporting. The organization further built the capacity of partners and local staff on IHL and training methodology to enable further dissemination at the field level. Relevant training and research material were developed and disseminated to improve respect for IHL in the region, including core thematic topics such as child protection, gender, anti-personnel (AP) mines /explosive weapons (EW), displacement, cultural heritage and health care.
- A regional workshop organized with the participation of 23 Shia religious leaders at the Islamic University of Najaf on “Islam and the Protection of IDPs” has resulted in the issuing of a common declaration on the prohibition of forced displacement of civilians and the protection of displaced persons during armed conflicts and beyond.
- Provision of ad-hoc support to other humanitarian actors: Geneva Call’s longstanding experience in the region has made it possible to successfully engage at different levels with a wide range of political and armed actors as well as influential members of civil society in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, and Yemen. Geneva Call has been able to use this expertise to generate a more informed discussion among humanitarian actors when it comes to the engagement of ANSAs and to facilitate communication between these actors to overcome operational challenges.

### What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

The setting up of such a regional structure for Geneva Call posed new challenges involving ongoing coordination across the matrix of HQ and field units as well as cross-country programming.

Geneva Call has launched a lessons-learned process to capture the knowledge and understanding acquired via the experience and identify the opportunities for continuous improvement and adapt the structure accordingly.





# Iraq

## What was the conflict situation?

The presence of political and religious militias, fragile government and the growing intensity of the demonstrations are making the situation more vulnerable as Iraq also faces a plethora of other issues related to IDPs, refugees and the resurgence of Islamic State group (ISg). The society is severely divided along ethnic, sectarian, religious and communal lines, which poses an imminent threat to the long-term stability and security, since armed actors outside the region, or representing only parts of the population, find themselves in control of large populations. Since 2018, several incidents of ISg attacking Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in the governorates of Anbar, Salahdin, Ninveh, Diyala and Kirkuk have been reported. The current wave of violence has created new dynamics of intra Shia tensions between Iranian backed PMF groups and Shia communities. The killing of Qasim Suleimani, major general in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and Abu Mahdi al-Mhandes, the deputy commander of PMF Iran-backed militias, aggravated the tensions between the US Forces and the mentioned groups. The humanitarian situation was further exacerbated after the decision to close or merge the camps in the governorates of Nineveh, Salahdin and Anbar without any duly planned process.



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## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Enhanced engagement for humanitarian access:** important dialogue was facilitated between IOM and major PMF groups on the return of IDPs in Diyala. As a result, the governor pledged his support in conducting return related assessments.

Upon a request of UN OCHA, Geneva Call engaged commanders of Brigade 30 PMF in Nineveh and facilitated the resumption of humanitarian access to certain camps.

- **Strengthened ANSAs' knowledge & capacities:** activities were implemented throughout the year, such as Training of Trainers with Shia and influential PMF groups in Baghdad, Sunni and Yazidi Forces, which contributed to reinforcing Geneva Call's relations with PMF.

- **Deeds of Commitment and other humanitarian commitments:** the consolidated relations with PMF groups resulted in their willingness to sign unilateral humanitarian declarations. Support was provided to the development of the Code of Conduct of the Ministry of Peshmerga, accompanied by follow up training sessions, for commanders of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and their forces in Sulaymaniyah, including the Ezidkhan Yazidi Forces from Sinjar, on complying with the humanitarian declaration signed in December 2018.

- **Consolidated awareness:** through the Regional Support Unit (RSU), a workshop gathering humanitarian experts was organized in Erbil, on humanitarian issues and ANSA engagement. This contributed in developing research studies on engagement strategies with transnational ANSAs. Another workshop with Shia religious leaders' in Najaf resulted in signing a declaration on protection of IDPs. Several training sessions on displacement were provided to PMF and Yazidi Forces, civil society organizations and IDP leaders.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

Stakeholder support for humanitarian engagement with Shia armed forces proved challenging to obtain. The team developed strong advocacy through a series of bilateral meetings with various donors and discussed the importance of continued engagement with Shia and other armed actors within the framework of humanitarian norms.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	449 057

# Lebanon

## What was the conflict situation?

Recurring tensions and armed clashes, especially in the Palestinian camps, put human rights and security at growing risk of violations. The end of 2019 saw turbulent times with anti-government protest gripping the country amidst a spiraling economic crisis. Despite the relative calm at the time of writing, the situation may still deteriorate quickly, with arms easily accessible throughout the country. Rising tensions and escalations can trigger armed violence and disruption, especially in the south, the north and the Beqaa; with the ever-delicate balance of sectarian and tribal powers and control that has further been fragilized by the influx of refugees. In this context, the vulnerable population and especially women and children are at an increased risk of exploitation and abuse.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Strengthened internal ANSA policies:** the long-term humanitarian engagement with the Palestinian factions and their affiliated security bodies was crowned with the official adoption of a *Code of Conduct and a Code of Ethics* for the Palestinian National Security Forces (PNSF) in March 2019. In May, Geneva Call held its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Iftar with Palestinian factions. This tradition enabled relevant players to interact and discuss ways to improve the humanitarian situation in the camps.
- **Enhanced engagement on protection of civilians:** A mapping of Lebanon's Influential Religious Actors was conducted, enabling a deeper understanding of religious structures. The outcomes have been used for deepening discussions with Shia actors in Lebanon and the region. Based on a previous study identifying the lack of mediation and de-escalation mechanisms in Ain al-Hilweh, Geneva Call launched broad discussions about the necessity to jointly establish a roadmap with key actors from the Palestinian society.

- **Strengthened community and religious leaders' knowledge & capacities:** The efforts in the north, Tripoli, Akkar, and the Beqaa continued via awareness raising, directly or through the partnership with Dar al-Ifta', the official Sunni Authority, on IHL principles and their convergence with Sharia Law. Furthermore, core thematic topics (children/education, gender, AP mines/EW, displacement, cultural heritage, health care) were tackled during the sessions.
- **Consolidated and broadened awareness:** The Friends of IHL Network – launched by Geneva Call in 2017 and replicated in other countries in the region – shed the light on contemporary challenges of IHL compliance in Lebanon and the region. Academics, practitioners, political parties and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from all parts of the country as well as Palestinian and Syrian actors joined the public discussions.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

The challenges in securing funding for the context resulted in having to close Lebanon, by May 2019, Geneva Call's longest standing programme in the region. Despite continuous efforts to maintain minimal presence and follow-up with key stakeholders, the withdrawal of Geneva Call would have negative consequences on all the work done with ANSAs and communities in this turbulent region.



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## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	141 328



# Syria

## What was the conflict situation?

Syria continues to be a context where civilians are exposed to major protection issues in various areas. The country is affected by multiple armed conflicts, both non-international and international. The involvement of foreign states, with their conflicting agendas, further complicates the picture.

Attacks on medical facilities and schools remain a hallmark in the crisis. The UN estimates that almost half of these facilities are either fully or partially not functional as a result of hostilities. Moreover, attacks on schools were constantly reported, preventing children from pursuing their education. The effects of new and protracted displacement also resulted in the use of collective shelters, including schools for IDP, putting civilians in dire living conditions. In addition, women and girls continue to face gender-based violence risks and a high number of children used in hostilities has been reported by all sides.

In 2019, intense fighting occurred in both north east (NES) and north west Syria (NWS), including Idlib, Aleppo countryside, and eastern Deir-Ez-Zor Governorates. The hostilities led to massive human losses and maiming, as well as damage to property and cultural heritage and negative impact on other necessary services to daily life.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Enhanced dialogue for humanitarian access:** Geneva Call developed a new partnership with the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), having for the first-time access to NWS, enabling the team to directly engage with active Syrian CSOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the area.
- **Strengthened ANSAs knowledge & capacities:** Geneva Call conducted its first training on the protection of medical care for key ANSAs operating in NWS.

A significant achievement was the release of 30 recruited children from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) contingent.

- **Deeds of Commitment:** Following a long engagement with the Central Division - active in NWS, Geneva Call achieved the signature of two *Deeds of Commitment*:

- *Deed of Commitment for the protection of health care in armed conflict*
- *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action.*

- **Consolidated awareness:** Geneva Call held its first training session on sexual violence and gender discrimination for the Educated Woman Association. In collaboration with its partner, Afaq Academy, over 30 training sessions were conducted, including awareness raising to local CSOs, CBOs and ANSAs.

During the intense fighting involving ANSAs in north east and north west Syria, Geneva Call conducted an IHL training session with ANSAs directly participating in the hostilities. During the same period, Geneva Call launched a two-week radio and internet broadcast, disseminating audio messages on the general rules of IHL.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

Despite the access gained in NES, Geneva Call's activities remained constrained, limiting direct training to ANSAs and were implemented through its partner, Afaq Academy. The dialogue with the Syrian government remains very limited, despite the efforts to access Syrian government-held areas. The fluidity of Syrian ANSAs (changing alliances, dissolving to reappear under new ones) jeopardizes Geneva Call's work. Moreover, the volatile situation provoked difficulties recruiting new staff at the field level.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	765 772



# Yemen

## What was the conflict situation?

The current conflict in Yemen is a mosaic of complex local, regional and international power struggles. The situation has deteriorated since 2015 when President Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi was forced to flee to Saudi Arabia by Ansar Allah/Houthi rebels. In response, a Saudi-led coalition was mobilized aiming to reinstate the Hadi government. The Houthi group has a strong grip on Sana'a, while the STC seized power in Aden in 2019.

Since the start of the conflict, two major peace agreements were signed:

- *"Stockholm Agreement"*, between the Government of Yemen and the Houthi group in 2018.
- *Riyadh Agreement*, between the Government of Yemen and the STC under the patronage of Saudi Arabia in November 2019.

Yemen continues to be the world's worst humanitarian crisis, driven by conflict, economic collapse and the continuous breakdown of public institutions and services. The escalation of the conflict has dramatically aggravated protection risks for millions of civilians. Over 410,000 people were displaced during 2019. Despite global attention and political talks, immense suffering persists across the country.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Deeds of Commitment:** through careful and sustained dialogue with the STC, three *Deeds of Commitment* were signed in 2019:
  - *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action;*
  - *Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict; and*
  - *Deed of Commitment prohibiting sexual violence in armed conflict and towards the elimination of gender discrimination*



- **Enhanced engagement for humanitarian access:** Due to regular contacts, sustainable and confidential dialogue with two of the main ANSAs in Yemen, Geneva Call continued playing a central role in facilitating effective humanitarian access for humanitarian organizations on the ground.

- **Strengthened ANSAs' knowledge & capacities:** Geneva Call strengthened the ANSAs' knowledge on IHL through training sessions targeting high-ranking officials within the STC. Thematic sessions focused on the protection of children and the prohibition of their recruitment, the prohibition of use of AP mines, and ERW near highly populated areas.

- **Consolidated awareness:** Key influential community stakeholders in different governorates representing more than 35 CSOs/CBOs, traditional/religious and political leaders, media workers and local NGOs, increased their awareness on international humanitarian norms.

Despite significant challenges in the north, Geneva Call successfully implemented awareness-raising activities in Sana'a, leveraging its proximity to local organizations, working with and through them to organize activities and disseminate key messages on humani-

tarian norms. Geneva Call reached local NGOs and civil society organizations, contributing to enhance the respect of international humanitarian norms, via the Friends of International Humanitarian Law Network, a unique innovative initiative developed first in Lebanon.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

The security situation is volatile, any tension is often coupled with restricted access to security forces and the ANSAs to be trained. The increase in conflict in August 2019 resulted in several months of delay in the implementation of planned activities. In the north, the National Authority for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Recovery (NAMCHA) and the Supreme Council for The Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (SCMCHA) have not yet accepted Geneva Call's work which resulted in the lack of approval to register there. Despite the authorization to work through local partners this complicates the monitoring of activities.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	977 830



# Latin America



Colombia

# Colombia

## What was the conflict situation?

Following the “*Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace*” signed between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP) and the Colombian State, the withdrawal of the FARC-EP, along with the power vacuum created, triggered competition among other actors for the control of territories and illegal economies. This led to the reconfiguration of ANSAs such as the ELN, the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), the Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC) and paramilitary groups, and the emergence of new and numerous local, smaller armed groups. These new developments have dramatic consequences for the civilian population as it means the continuation of armed violence and even in some case its exacerbation. Indeed, three years after the signing of the Agreement, the UN Verification Mission and the UN Security Council describe the current context as both very serious and “more complex” than before the Agreement, calling for “the full implementation of the Agreement”. The implementation is seen as much too slow, in particular with regards to the land tenure and rural reforms (report UNSG, 4 October 2019).

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Enhanced engagement on protection of civilians:** Geneva Call organized workshops with ELN members detained in the women’s prison of Bucaramanga (Santander department) as well as in the high security detention centre of Valledupar (Cesar department). Although, no official statement has been made by the ELN to commit themselves to respect international humanitarian norms, the participants showed great interest in the thematic issues tackled and willingness to pursue the work.
- **Strengthened community, civil society, media and traditional/religious leaders’ knowledge & capacities:** The efforts in the most affected departments (Chocó, Cauca, Nariño, Putumayo, Arauca and Norte de Santander) continued via awareness-raising seminars on IHL principles and core thematic topics (children/education, gender, AP mines/

EW, displacement, cultural heritage, health care). CBOs/CSOs were provided with comprehensive training on the above-mentioned thematic issues and more than 95 journalists deepened their knowledge of humanitarian norms and reporting skills related to IHL violations.

- **Consolidated and broadened awareness:** For the first time in Colombia, two media campaigns were launched to raise awareness among the broader civilian population on the basic principles of IHL and the importance to respect them, as well as to reach those committing the violations. The first campaign was called “*During wartime, not everything is permitted!*”, whereas the second one, more culturally-anchored, was launched with the headline “*Neither in matter of war nor in matter of love everything is acceptable, there are limits!*”.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

The difficulties raising funds for the context provoked the temporary closure in December 2019 of one of Geneva Call’s first programmes. Despite continuous efforts to maintain a minimal presence and follow-up with key stakeholders, the withdrawal of Geneva Call would have negative consequences on all the work done with ANSAs and communities in this particular context.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	231 682





# Africa



## Africa: regional approach

### What were the regional developments?

Africa has the largest number of conflicts in the world. Most of these conflicts have transnational aspects and therefore do not only affect national stabilities but more broadly regional balances, as is the case in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, or DRC and Burundi. All these conflicts are different in nature and involve local grievances, but they have a common feature: the threat that ANSAs pose to states' presence and deployment. This phenomenon, as well as conflict at large, reduce the civilian population's access to basic and essential services, which in turn feeds the cycle of enrolment, and more broadly, of violence, exposing civilian populations to increasing violations of international humanitarian norms. Africa is also hosting more and more ANSAs qualified as "radical", which tend to operate through cross-border set-ups.

### What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

In 2019, a high-level of analysis relating to cross-regional and cross-continental issues affecting the African continent has been maintained, in order to identify and target the most suitable interlocutors for its advocacy for increased respect of IHL. This was done through close monitoring of the regional developments as well as regular exchanges with various political and humanitarian stakeholders.

Geneva Call presented its activities and specifically those implemented in Africa during its participation in an OCHA event organized in Montreux in May 2019, on the issue of "behavior, norms and standards". The importance of engaging with ANSAs on humanitarian norms and their respect to ensure better civilian protection was highlighted.

Representatives also intervened during the Children and Armed Conflict Pan African Conference, organized by Save the Children in Addis Ababa in October 2019. Geneva Call stressed the challenges of addressing IHL violations against children, and notably child recruitment in the DRC. For instance, it was emphasized that not all ANSAs know that the use of children is prohibited, therefore highlighting the crucial need for substantive humanitarian engagement of these actors. Likewise it was also stressed that often children lack suitable educational and professional perspectives leading them to join ANSAs on their own initiative.

Geneva Call also actively participated in the EU Initiative called "Protect medics, Save lives", through its activities with ANSAs in the field (South Sudan, DRC), and provided input to the design of the "Digest on the Attacks on Health Care in the DRC", released during the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The organization and its operations in Africa were introduced and there was an exchange on contextual analysis of the region with the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in Stuttgart in November 2019. This allowed Geneva Call to present its work in Africa, globally as well as to gain a better understanding of the functioning of AFRICOM.

A round table on the theme "Operating in violent extremism and counter terrorism environments" was co-organized with the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Global Protection Cluster in Geneva in November 2019. Participants were provided with an in-depth analysis of counter terrorism mechanisms and of the impact they have on humanitarian action, with a specific emphasis on protection work in the Sahelian region as well as in central Africa (Nigeria, Chad).

The Africa Unit at HQ continued to oversee operations in contexts where no field structure is in place, such as in Sudan and Western Sahara.

In **Sudan**, in the two areas (Blue Nile and South Kordofan, in the eastern part of Sudan), the two branches of the SPLM-N (Malik Agar and El Hilu) remained active and still controlled stockpiles of AP mines. In 2019, Geneva Call therefore maintained its relationship with the group, and with the Malik Agar branch in particular. When the political situation in the country drastically changed, Geneva Call facilitated the dialogue between SPLM-N and humanitarian stakeholders, on humanitarian issues. The goal was to allow safe deployment of humanitarian agencies in SPLM-N held areas, with a specific focus on the mine issue.

In **Western Sahara**, on 6 January 2019, Geneva Call monitored the destruction of 2,485 stockpiled AP mines by the Sahrawi Mine Action Coordination Office (SMACO) in accordance with Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action*, signed by the Polisario Front in 2005. This marked the eighth and final such destruction since the Polisario Front signed the *Deed of Commitment*, bringing the total number of stockpiled AP mines they have destroyed to date to 20,493. Proceeding with this destruction phase, the Polisario Front has fulfilled all its obligations under the *Deed*. Geneva Call therefore reduced its level of monitoring. Geneva Call also shared its experience in Western Sahara with the humanitarian community in February 2019, through a side event to the 2019 yearly meeting of the directors of national demining centres, in Geneva. This event was organized with the participation of Norwegian People's Aid, as well as the SMACO.



# Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

## What was the conflict situation?

In December 2018, the presidential and general elections took place after two postponements. National and international observers have reported several irregularities across the country, including, members of armed groups allegedly forcing some voters to cast their vote for candidates of the Front Commun pour le Congo. In January the victory of Felix Tshisekedi was announced, but his presidency has been contested to this day by the runner-up Martin Fayulu and the National Episcopal Conference of Congo.

Nevertheless, a new government has been formed leading to a change in the conflict dynamics in North Kivu. New alliances have emerged, including between the Congolese national forces (FARDC) and the Nduma Defense of Congo – Rénové (NDC-R), an ANSA engaged by Geneva Call. Other ANSAs with whom Geneva Call was in dialogue have surrendered. ANSAs have also relocated to other provinces, bringing additional protection risks to the new host communities. Therefore, despite political change, the population of North Kivu still faces a wide range of IHL violations and protection needs remain high, not the least related to education and health care which remained affected by the tenth Ebola epidemic.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Behavior change towards better protection:** The Alliance des Peuples pour un Congo Libre et Souverain (APCLS) proactively informed Geneva Call of several children leaving other ANSAs and needing to be referred to specialized organizations. The APCLS also requested Geneva Call to contribute to the evacuation of a wounded combatant to a secure health facility and, following Geneva Call's advocating, accepted to release a woman who was taken hostage. Two ANSAs nominated focal points to improve cooperation with humanitarian workers and facilitate humanitarian access to areas under their control. Following Geneva Call's



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intervention, the NDC-R accepted to dismantle and relocate a military base that was in the vicinity of a hospital.

- **Policy change towards respecting IHL:** The APCLS signed the *Deed of Commitment for the protection of health care in armed conflict*. The group also issued a unilateral declaration committing to facilitate humanitarian access to areas under its control. The NDC-R shared its Code of Conduct for revision by Geneva Call's Policy and Legal Unit.
- **Increased knowledge:** Geneva Call maintained an engagement with 6 ANSAs and trained 150 of their officers on different thematic priorities.
- **Community-led advocacy efforts:** As a result of Geneva Call's training sessions and focus group discussions with close to 900 community members, four communities in the Masisi and Rutshuru territories made public declarations about their wish to facilitate humanitarian access in their areas. Moreover, following Geneva Call's intervention, three communities put in place a space for dialogue with ANSAs controlling the zone.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

Following the presidential elections, the ANSA landscape has significantly changed in North Kivu and Geneva Call has lost touch with one of them, due to its relocation out of Geneva Call's operational area. On a positive note, however, Geneva Call was able to initiate dialogue with other ANSAs that showed an interest in further engagement on IHL.

Due to limited funding, Geneva Call has been unable to strengthen its field office in Goma which impacted the level of follow-up that the organization would like to apply to its work with ANSAs and communities.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	446 197

# Libya

## What was the conflict situation?

2019 was marked by the escalation of the conflict around Tripoli. The Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), who had already launched an offensive to take control of Southern Libya in early 2019, mobilized to capture Libya's capital in April. The conflict also involved external stakeholders from the subregion and beyond, therefore increasing the complexity of the conflict itself. Many IHL violations were reported during the fighting, including targeting of civilian infrastructure, such as a migrants detention center and the airport. This conflict also resulted in a high number of IDPs in need of humanitarian assistance. This escalation halted the ongoing UN attempt to find a political solution to the conflict. The National Conference, which was supposed to bring together all actors relevant to the Libyan conflict and was planned to be held only a few days after, was cancelled. Ever since, the political process has severely stagnated. This volatile situation deeply impacted the humanitarian community and its ability to implement in-country and in safe conditions. Despite the very challenging environment, Geneva Call managed to rapidly adapt its logic of intervention and to implement activities directly in Libya, both in the eastern and western parts of the country.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Enhanced knowledge and multiplication efforts:** Geneva Call conducted an IHL training for Libyan influencers who in turn will go back to Libya to organize awareness raising sessions for armed actors affiliated with the Government of National Accord. Geneva Call held an IHL training session with three Libyan CSOs which, following the training, conducted awareness raising sessions with teachers in Sabratha, with journalists in Tripoli and with jurists and civil society activists in Benghazi.
- **Deepened engagement:** Geneva Call maintained engagement on IHL and held three awareness raising sessions with one Libyan armed actor in Benghazi, who expressed interest in receiving in-depth training on IHL.
- **Increased awareness:** Right after the military escalation around Tripoli in April 2019, Geneva Call launched a new phase of the IHL "Fighter not Killer"-Campaign on Facebook which reached more than 660 000 individuals. Comments from the viewers were globally very positive and allowed Geneva Call to adapt its focus to issues identified as most relevant by the communities.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

Geneva Call's major challenge in 2019 was the conflict escalation from April 2019, and the ongoing armed violence ever since. Given the conflict intensity in and around Tripoli, Geneva Call had difficulties to reach out and maintain dialogue with armed actors who were heavily involved in fighting, and less available to participate in dialogue and training sessions.

Due to the conflict dynamics institutional polarization has also increased, impacting Geneva Call's registration and thus its ability to implement activities in-country. However, this challenge was overcome by an increase of partnerships with Libyan CSOs from all over the country.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	367 404



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# Mali

## What was the conflict situation?

Throughout 2019, the political instability in Mali has persisted and insecurity deteriorated. The centre and north of the country experienced attacks that were directed against both national and international regular armed forces as well as civilians, causing a heavy toll in casualties. In Menaka, Ansongo, Koro and Bankass, deliberate attacks against civilians, the recruitment and use of minors and children among many groups as well as the use of AP mines and the prevalence of explosive remnants of war, are serious issues affecting the population. Moreover, the protection of health care and humanitarian access at large is becoming an additional point of concern. On a more global perspective, the ANSA landscape remained very fluid, including reshuffling in the preexisting alliance systems.

The presence of international armed forces has not provided a clear military advantage and various observers state that in fact this pressure has rather increased the local rooting of "radical armed movements". It should be noted that beyond the borders

with Burkina Faso and Niger (in Liptako Gourma), an increase of violence affecting civilians has also been observed.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Concrete steps towards respecting IHL:** As a result of the humanitarian engagement and training sessions targeting 253 representatives, several ANSAs have taken initiatives towards a better respect of IHL, such as displaying key rules in their camp, conducting multiplication sessions and setting up internal training sessions on the topic. ANSAs have also requested additional training sessions on IHL by Geneva Call and training materials that they can share internally. One ANSA shared its code of conduct with Geneva Call requesting a review and legal input
- **Increased reach to ANSAs:** Thanks to Geneva Call increased visibility and reputation, ANSAs, including powerful self-defense militias, started to proactively reach out to Geneva Call in order to gain knowledge about and to improve their respect of IHL

- **Serving the humanitarian community:** Geneva Call published a study about Malian endogenous protection norms which was shared and well received by the wider humanitarian community; the study served as a base for an academic article published in the *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies* (February 2020, Brill, Leiden).
- **Increased awareness:** More than 1 million people were reached through a video campaign, based on culturally adapted IHL messages and original animations, in Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu and Bamako. The high number of viewers and positive comments indicate that the messages on protection of civilians resonate with the audience and echo their experiences and concerns. The video campaign also addressed the protection of cultural heritage as a basis of reconciliation and stabilisation. Several ANSAs were specifically engaged on this theme.
- **Local ownership and multiplication efforts:** Following the outreach to and the training of 195 representatives of civil society and the media, several organizations conducted dissemination activities on their own: the Communal Youth Council of Gao held three sessions for its members on the protection of civilians and set up of dedicated support cells; radio Annuya in Gao hosted a question & answer programme on the 15 rules of IHL; and radio Saghan in Mopti staged a contest based on child protection norms.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

Because ANSAs considered as "radical" are difficult to reach, Geneva Call developed strategies to convey protection-related messages in an indirect way.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	413 413



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# South Sudan

## What was the conflict situation?

Despite the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCISS) signed in September 2018, parties failed to implement some key provisions on security arrangements and the number of states and their boundaries, which led to two postponements of the beginning of the transition period. International pressure put on the parties to be able to close the pre-transitional period was to no avail in 2019. Hostilities between the two main signatories - Sudan People's Liberation Movement In Opposition In Government (Taban Deng); Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (Riek Machar) - nevertheless decreased.

However, fighting continued between the army and armed groups that were not part of the agreement (NAS), mainly in Central Equatoria and Upper Nile. Intercommunal clashes, often ethnically based, also increased, leading to a total rise of nearly 200% in the civilian casualties compared to 2018.

Armed actors continued to commit serious abuses such as indiscriminate attacks against civilians including aid workers, unlawful killings, beatings, arbitrary detentions, torture, sexual violence, looting and destruction of property. All sides restricted access provided to United Nations, ceasefire monitors, and aid workers.

This situation led to additional internal displacement, jeopardizing even further the already very fragile leaving conditions of the affected civilian population.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019 overall?

- **Increased awareness:** Geneva Call raised awareness on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts using 'Fighter Not Killer' campaign posts on Facebook. The campaign included video scripts on protection of medical mission which reached 33 752 viewers; prohibition of sexual violence (54 719 viewers) and prohibition of child recruitment and protection of education (50 494 viewers). Comments from the viewers clearly showed a deep interest



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on the prohibition of sexual and gender-based violence, which continues to be a main concern for the civilian population of South Sudan.

- **Strengthened knowledge:** Geneva Call conducted a workshop on IHL and its 15 main rules to 12 ANSA officers in Juba. The participants were drawn from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (Riek Machar branch), the South Sudanese Public Defence Forces, the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) and other signatory armed actors to the R-ARCISS, the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, National security and the South Sudanese National Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration Commission. As a result, Geneva Call was invited to conduct training sessions at field level in 2020 and engagement with parties that are not R-ARCISS signatories was initiated.

- **Reinforced conflict-monitoring and community outreach:** Geneva Call established a partnership with the Centre for Strategic Conflict Analysis (CESCA) in order to monitor the conflict situation on the ground and to implement awareness raising and training sessions targeting the communities.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

Following the signature of the Revitalized Agreement R-ARCISS, the status of certain armed groups is ambiguous and poses challenges with respect to the form of appropriate engagement.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	106 085



# Asia and Europe



# Asia and Europe: regional approach



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## What were the regional developments?

Peace processes are ongoing in most of Geneva Call's Eurasian operational contexts, fostering some hope, but also giving way to frustration and uncertainty about the future. In Myanmar, while some progress may be observed in areas under the control of the ANSAs who were signatories to the nationwide ceasefire agreement, hostilities are considerably on the rise in the north of the country, where engaging with ANSAs is severely criminalized. In Ukraine, despite presidential elections and prisoner exchanges, the political stance is solidified, and violation of the ceasefire is sustained, fragilizing hope for a unified country. In Afghanistan, while the USA and the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan negotiate, the Afghan Government is put

aside digging conflict lines. In Thailand, as peace negotiations resume, targeted military operations affect civilian safety and fragilize peace dividends. These trends highlight that some parties to the conflict may increase violence to strengthen their negotiating position, inflicting further unnecessary suffering on civilians, hindering peace negotiations and transitional justice efforts. This trend of 'fighting and talking' stresses the need to strengthen compliance by ANSAs with humanitarian norms to contribute to effective peace processes, overall stability and early recovery. Following the significant expansion in its countries of operations in Eurasia, Geneva Call has gained a strong reputation as a humanitarian actor with the capacity to engage ANSAs on humanitarian norms and the protection of civilian populations in difficult to reach areas.



**What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?**

In 2019, Geneva Call continued to use a multi-pronged approach, combining direct engagement with ANSAs, trust-building efforts with central authorities to secure and preserve access to non-governmental-controlled areas, indirect engagement with ANSAs via local opinion leaders, strong local partnerships and local capacity building, as well as complementary awareness-raising mass media campaigns.

As Geneva Call operates in environments where multiple ANSAs intervene, the organization focused on developing arguments to support compliance with humanitarian norms that are accepted by all. With this aim, Geneva Call developed tools, approaches and messages that use non-normative language and are rooted in religion and local customs.

Peace processes are ongoing in most of Geneva Call's Eurasian operational contexts, fostering some hope but also giving way to frustration and uncertainty about the future. Indeed, in several contexts, fighting parties increased violence to strengthen their negotiating position, inflicting further unnecessary suffering on civilians.

Geneva Call continued to work closely with CSOs/CBOs in communities affected by local insurgencies. This proximity enhanced Geneva Call's understanding of their protection needs, as well as the factors driving insurgents to transgress or comply with humanitarian norms. Geneva Call's inclusive approach ensures that communities both support and contribute to humanitarian engagement.

Geneva Call undertook a baseline survey to assess the perception of three categories of affected people: Civilians affected by armed conflict; ANSAs; and State Officials. The survey was conducted with 316 respondents in Afghanistan; 236 respondents in Myanmar; 170 respondents in the Philippines; 144 respondents in Pakistan; 45 respondents in Thailand; and 35 respondents in Ukraine. The objective of the survey was to provide a baseline on their awareness, knowledge and practices related to the protection of civilians in order to better ensure that Geneva Call's programme interventions address their needs.

The key findings of the survey are summarised in the table below:

**Key Findings**

AWARENESS	KNOWLEDGE	POLICY	PRACTICE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness among fighters on the importance of protecting civilians in conflict is strong.</li> <li>Responses reflect a general acknowledgement of the principle of distinction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General lack of knowledge of international humanitarian norms amongst ANSA members.</li> <li>Knowledge is strongest on protection of religious sites.</li> <li>Respondents note that rules/obligations derive from religion rather than international law.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few ANSA members can specific concrete measures/policy commitments their group is taking on protection of civilians.</li> <li>In several countries, responses indicate low acceptance among fighting parties on the need to strengthen compliance with humanitarian norms through policy development and engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responses indicate a high level of insecurity among the civilian population.</li> <li>High numbers of civilians indicate being exposed to daily conflict-related violence.</li> <li>Few civilian respondents believe that fighting parties currently respect humanitarian norms.</li> </ul>

# Afghanistan

**What was the conflict situation?**

The armed conflict in Afghanistan remains extremely volatile, with civilians being exposed to high levels of violence. The combined use of suicide and non-suicide improvised explosive devices (IEDs) was the leading cause of civilian casualties, followed by ground engagement and aerial operations. The security situation is significantly deteriorating, armed conflicts are reaching a concerning threshold, humanitarian norms are being blatantly violated, civilians suffer from inhumane treatment, and humanitarian work and assistance are under constant threat. More than a dozen ANSAs control about half of the country and operate inside the whole country. Civilians and civilian infrastructures, including schools, medical facilities and personnel, are being directly targeted in hostilities, putting lives and livelihoods at risk. In order to increase the focus towards preventing civilian casualties, UNAMA recommended training sessions for fighters on IHL.

Peace talks between the USA and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) took place in 2019 and were abruptly halted in September 2019. The breakdown in talks led to an increase in ANSA-initiated hostilities. The talks seemingly resumed by the end of the year. In September, presidential elections took place, which increased attacks from ANSAs and triggered political rivalries amongst presidential candidates

**What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?**

- Deepened engagement:** Geneva Call developed direct humanitarian engagement with two ANSAs, with the objective of increasing its acceptance as a reliable and neutral actor promoting humanitarian norms. Geneva Call managed to build relations of trust and mutual understanding and secured access to non-government-controlled areas (NGCA).

- Extending outreach:** Geneva Call led a series of indirect humanitarian engagement sessions with ANSA constituencies, including political parties, religious and tribal leaders and journalists to advance awareness of international humanitarian norms. These sessions opened direct humanitarian engagement with ANSAs focusing on the protection of education.

- Engagement initiated:** Geneva Call presented its approach to support the ban on AP Mines to two ANSAs by promoting the *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action*.

- Adapting to the context:** Geneva Call initiated the development of educational materials to be used during training sessions and awareness raising campaigns. These include the contextualization of Geneva Call's 'Fighter, not Killer' mobile app and linking the 15 rules for fighters in internal armed conflict to relevant Islamic references.

**What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?**

The unprecedented level of intensity of hostilities has limited humanitarian access and narrowed the space for humanitarian work. Geneva Call has adopted a low-profile approach and moved cautiously to ensure access to NGCA from both State and non-State stakeholders. The approach of 'talking and fighting' made it challenging for Geneva Call to get interest from its main interlocutors involved in the presidential elections or in peace talks. Geneva Call had to develop tangible arguments to convince ANSAs that the respect of humanitarian norms during hostilities could generate a positive effect in ongoing peace-talks.



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**Expenditure**

	CHF
TOTAL	387 748



# Myanmar

## What was the conflict situation?

The impact of armed violence on ethnic minority communities in Myanmar is entrenched in generations of conflict, marked by a protracted humanitarian crisis. Subnational conflicts with communal violence involve an exceptional number of ANSAs as well as numerous other armed actors, including state forces and government-backed militias. Notwithstanding the adoption of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and unilateral ceasefire announcements in 2019, hostilities continue and have intensified in certain areas. Further efforts to find any lasting form of peace settlement remain elusive. The level and incident of violence in northern Myanmar has been sharply rising in recent years, and its impact on civilians has grown accordingly. Fighting and the use of AP mines continues to impact civilians in northern Shan State, with several civilian casualties. Conflict, associated instability and weak rule of law have created fertile conditions where growing and continuous humanitarian norm breaches go unpunished. Conflict-affected communities are caught between warring parties' crossfire and endure gross human rights

violations and abuses in the country, but also as displaced persons abroad. Children have been among those most affected by these harmful trends, with little or no safe access to education in their home areas.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Policy changes towards respecting IHL:** Following humanitarian engagement with Geneva Call, the Chin National Army (CNA) shared its revised Code of Conduct which notably included provisions on the minimum age of recruitment and the prohibition of sexual violence. The Karen National Union (KNU) has enforced policies on mapping the location of mines, with only military targeting being permissible. Moreover, following direct meetings with the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS)'s education commission to discuss the protection of and access to education, child protection and humanitarian access, the ANSA signed the *Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict*. It also committed to set up an age verification mechanism to avoid accidental recruitment of children.

- **Enhanced knowledge towards implementing the Deeds:** A training with the CNA was dedicated to reviewing the three *Deeds of Commitment* they had signed on the total ban of AP mines, child protection and the prohibition of sexual violence and gender discrimination; and Geneva Call's latest *Deed of Commitment for the protection of health care in armed conflict*.
- **Deepened engagement:** Direct humanitarian engagement with ANSAs covering the issue of victim-activated AP mines took place with the KNU and CNA, highlighting their interest in the matter.
- **Strengthened knowledge:** 25 training and awareness raising sessions were held with various stakeholders across Shan, Chin and Karen States, delivering key messages on IHL to 920 fighters who now have an enhanced knowledge of basic IHL that applies in armed conflict.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

The ongoing conflict in northern Shan increased the security risks for Geneva Call to implement regular engagement with ANSAs/stakeholders. Geneva Call adapted programme related activities by not intervening in active conflict zones, restricting staff movement and maintaining its usual low-profile activities. In other circumstances, as communities can be weary of external interference, Geneva Call successfully utilised and expanded upon longstanding relationships of trust with local civil society and partner organizations to slowly extend activities and operations.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	462.471



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# Philippines

## What was the conflict situation?

2019 began with a breakthrough in the peace process between the government and the strongest ANSA in the country, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) with the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), establishing the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Despite this, serious violent incidents continued to transpire in areas included in the BARMM, especially the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and Sulu. Maguindanao has consistently been the province most affected by armed conflict in the region for most of the past decade and remains Geneva Call's focus.

Armed conflicts in Mindanao have been marked by violations of humanitarian norms, including targeting civilians, the use of human shields, abductions and summary executions, as well as attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and places of worship. The United Nations has continued to report the recruitment and use of children for combat and non-combat roles by ANSAs. Armed conflict is often intertwined with grassroots conflicts between political families or powerful clans, ethnic groups, and ANSAs which often blur the lines between the different contexts.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Expanding the reach to religious targets:** Following consultations with Islamic religious experts, Geneva Call launched in Cotabato City a Booklet on 15 Key Rules for Fighters in Internal Armed Conflict with integrated Islamic references and in Maguindanao dialect. More than 150 attendees were present, representing different stakeholders expressing direct support in broadening access to hard-to-reach ANSAs. MILF expressed its support and proposed to integrate the content of the booklet to the madaris curriculum in BARMM. A video describing this non-normative approach to promote IHL in hard-to-reach areas was produced and viewed 180.000 times.
- **Capacitating local partners for increased outreach:** Geneva Call launched its collaboration with two CSOs, Ti-



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yakap Kalilintad Inc. and UnYPhil – Women and conducted several training sessions in order to capacitate them. The CSOs will conduct awareness raising sessions with communities, distribute educational materials and monitor and evaluate ANSA's actions.

- **Increased awareness:** Geneva Call continued its communication campaign 'Conflict has rules too', with six videos in Filipino, a radio campaign in Maguindanao and Tagalog across four radio stations, the Fighter not Killer mobile app as well as four thematic illustrated booklets in Tagalog on the conduct of hostilities, protection of children, protection of education and the prohibition of AP mines. In total, 1.4 million people were reached.
- **Policy changes towards respecting IHL:** Geneva Call initiated new humanitarian engagement with two hard-to-reach ANSA factions with Islamic inspiration in Maguindanao. It continued its engagement with a long-term established ANSA by advocating towards the inclusion of the provisions of the *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* into the regional law of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

Frequent clashes led to repeated postponements of meetings with difficulties to reach ANSAs. In addition, the State offensives and intelligence operations caused fear among contacts to discuss and facilitate ANSA engagement.

In some parts of Mindanao, some ANSAs still perceive humanitarian norms as a 'western' concept. To tackle this challenge, Geneva Call has reinforced existing working relations with faith-based organizations, Islamic lawyers and scholars in an attempt to harmonise the promotion of IHL with religious teachings. However, different ANSAs with different ideological underpinnings disagree on how to interpret these and Geneva Call consults a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the messages are accepted.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	266.717



# Ukraine

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## What was the conflict situation?

After presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine in spring-summer of 2019, both sides to the conflict in Donbas resumed dialogue, including on humanitarian issues. During 2019, two troops disengaged in Luhansk and one in Donetsk. A pedestrian bridge in Stanitsa Luhanska, the only connection between government and non-government-controlled areas of Luhansk region, has also been restored. Major simultaneous releases of detainees were organised in Moscow and Kyiv in September, and in Kyiv and Donetsk/Luhansk in December, with nearly 300 people released. 167 conflict-related civilian casualties were registered in 2019, according to OHCHR: 27 killed and 140 injured. This is a 40% decrease compared with 2018 and the lowest annual civilian casualty figures for the entire conflict period.

Yet violations of IHL and IHRL are still reportedly committed by all parties. Reports document amongst others the use of AP mines, shelling of civilian infrastructure, limited access to healthcare and freedom of movement, mistreatment of detainees. Along the contact line, there is weak rule of law and a lack of respect for the guiding

principles of international humanitarian and human rights law.

## What did Geneva Call achieve in 2019?

- **Engaging both sides:** Geneva Call engaged in cross-line/cross-border dialogue initiatives, operating in Russia, Government Controlled Areas (GCA) and Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCA) to establish dialogue and raise awareness of Geneva Call and the need to protect civilians, IHL and education.
- **Increased knowledge:** Provided awareness sessions on Geneva Call's role and basic IHL to low and mid-level fighters before their deployment to the front-line. The training and awareness-raising sessions directly reached approximately 500 frontline commanders and fighters and indirectly 2'000 who benefited from second hand information.
- **Promoting protection of health care:** Geneva Call led a discussion on the protection of health care in times of armed conflict with civilian and ANSA military medics. Specifically, Geneva Call advanced their consciousness on the protection of medical transport.

- **Extending outreach:** Geneva Call led workshops on humanitarian norms for local communities along the front line and local CSOs. Local partner organizations were identified to consolidate program-related activities.
- **Enhanced awareness:** In both N/GCA, Geneva Call has built its acceptance and reputation in the country through the launch of a mass media campaign 'War has rules too' in Ukrainian and Russian promoting humanitarian norms via social media. It includes a phone app to learn IHL; short videos with clear and powerful messages; photos and quizzes; articles in online and printed media, TV and Radio shows. Over 19.000 people have already downloaded the app, including at least 3000 in NGCA. Over 500.000 people have watched the videos, including at least 150.000 in NGCA with people asking questions about the nature and attribution of violations and also highlighting their interest on the subject.

## What challenges did Geneva Call face in this context?

Engaging with ANSAs is a challenging process in both GCA and NGCA due to the polarization of the conflict and strict counter-terrorism legislation. Geneva Call uses trained veteran fighters in GCAs to access the most closed groups and units of foreign fighters. Like all local or international protection actors, Geneva Call faces challenges accessing NGCA, as *de facto* authorities are very restrictive in accrediting such work but reaches its audiences through indirect engagement.

## Expenditure

	CHF
TOTAL	276 400

# Policy and Legal Unit

During 2019, the Policy and Legal Unit (PLU) has continued to support field operations with IHL training for ANSAs and civil society organizations, legal advice on operational matters, as well as internal capacity building. It notably provided a series of induction training sessions, at HQ and country office level, on methodologies of engagement with ANSAs and IHL, including questions of conflict qualification, conduct of hostilities and Geneva Call's priority thematic issues. It also developed new training and dissemination materials to engage with ANSAs on displacement issues, the protection of health care and cultural heritage, and revised some of the older training modules on IHL.

As part of a major research project with the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights on the practice and interpretation of humanitarian norms by ANSAs, the PLU conducted field missions to interview ANSAs and other key stakeholders in Myanmar, Colombia, Mali, the Philippines and Somalia/Somaliland. Preliminary results were presented in a Research Brief and at a side-event during the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Throughout the year, the PLU continued to liaise with relevant stakeholders, build partnerships and represent Geneva Call in various expert meetings and fora. It also provided legal support to Geneva Call's directorate to address issues related to the impact of counter-terrorism policies and measures on humanitarian actors and organized a 2-days thematic workshop on engaging ANSAs for humanitarian protection in collaboration with PHAP.





## Communication

Both Geneva Calls' institutional and operational communications were enhanced with dedicated resources coordinating social media, press and web campaigns covering key organizational and field project activities. Major commitments by ANSAs, either by signed *Deeds* or other formal engagements, were regularly communicated to stakeholders, alongside the release and distribution of new tools, such as videos and booklets, covering international humanitarian norms with relevant linkages to religious principles and socio-cultural norms. The "Fighter not Killer" campaigns continued to be regularly adapted to the various contexts.

The new visual identity adopted in 2018, was further implemented in 2019 with the updating of all external visibility material and notably the launch of a newly designed website that better portrays the evolu-

tion of the organization. New videos and animations were produced using latest technologies to better engage targeted audiences e.g. a series of virtual reality clips on key international humanitarian norms.

As also mentioned in the previous section highlighting progress on strategy, a draft of Geneva Call's advocacy strategy has been produced which will be finalised and implemented during the next strategic period 2020-2023. The following key areas of focus have been defined:

- Urging key stakeholders to systematically insist on the importance to engage all armed actors, especially ANSAs, in their strategies for protection of civilians.
- Stressing that engaging with armed groups on IHL does not legitimize them.

- Urging stakeholders to facilitate access to funding for humanitarian outfits who engage ANSAs, making sure that they are protected from counter-terrorism legislation.

- Highlighting the need for parties to conflict to take ownership of IHL, including through training, public commitments (*Deeds...*) and monitoring behaviour change.

## Administration and Finance

A robust internal control system was developed and implemented in headquarters and field offices during 2019. This included process improvements in financial closing, budgeting, disbursement, outgoing contract management, asset management, record retention policies and procedures, as well as further enhancement of the anti-fraud policy implementation. Online resources, access to the policy documents, relevant templates and instructions were developed with online training also made available to staff both at field and HQ locations. In addition, a new induction training package was also rolled out for finance staff.

An audit of the internal control system was carried out in December 2019 on behalf of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Its main purpose was to evaluate whether the organization has reliable and relevant systems and procedures, adequate resources and competencies to manage future contributions from Sweden/Sida. The auditors concluded that Geneva Call has an acceptable internal control environment and noted that the organization in the most recent years has worked to implement a more thorough internal control system to mitigate the risk of weak financial management in the future, including the development and implementation of several new policies and procedures in some key control processes in the recent year. Geneva Call also successfully passed the other additional audits, such as new donor attribution audits and other ongoing donor project audits, as well as continuing to implement Swiss GAAP RPC accounting norms.

The internal finance team was expanded and developed, including a redefinition of the structure, roles and responsibilities, notably with the recruitment of regional controllers to improve field operations financial management. Similarly, the roles and responsibilities between Geneva Call and the external service provider firm were strengthened.

## Human Resources

A new performance appraisal and development system was implemented in 2019 and builds upon each staff member's objectives and action plan, which is in turn aligned to team and overall organizational objectives. A staff satisfaction and feedback survey was created and tested and will be deployed for the first time in 2020. Throughout the year particular effort was placed on staff support and well-being.

Additional staff policies and processes were completed and implemented throughout the organization. These included updates to the Code of Conduct, Duty of Care and Whistleblowing policies, updated international field staff policies as well as various elements of communication policies and guidelines. These were supported by specific HR training for the field offices, creating an HR team network across the organization. There is ongoing and regular contact between headquarters and field offices on human resource issues, enabling an improved information flow.

Staff training based on an established training policy was enhanced during 2019 with systematic induction and field skills training using, where appropriate, e-learning tools and common project management and planning training was also implemented.

More standardized recruitment processes have been put into place across the organization and are now better coordinated and regulated across both field offices and headquarters.

Work was completed to finalize social insurance and contracting processes as well as the establishment of a formal absence tracking system. Staff salary grids are applied across the organization and salary payments are executed. All insurance contracts have been reviewed and revised according to needs and norms. A review of HR systems was carried out in 2019 and the selected system will be implemented during 2020.



# Financial Report

Geneva Call's full financial statements, including the auditors' report, can be found on [www.genevacall.org/documents/](http://www.genevacall.org/documents/).

## Expenditure (CHF)

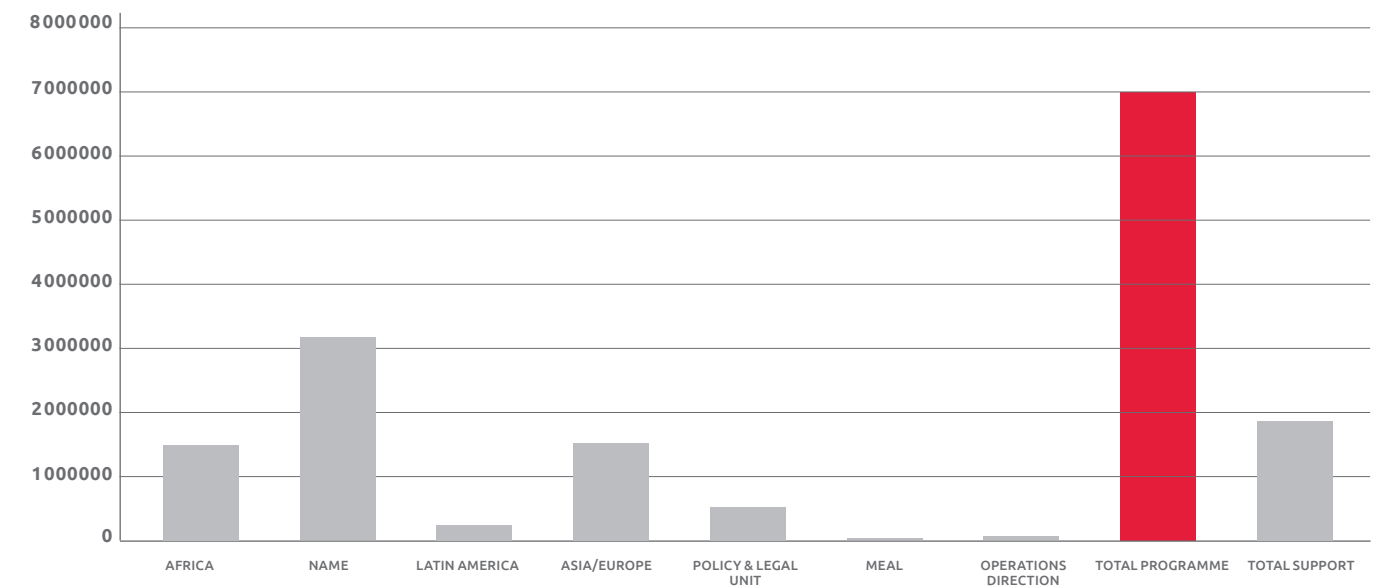
Annual Report		2019
Africa	DRC	446 197
	Libya	367 404
	Mali	413 413
	South Sudan	106 085
	Africa regional	152 975
	<b>TOTAL AFRICA</b>	<b>1 486 074</b>
NAME	Iraq	449 057
	Lebanon	141 328
	Syria	765 772
	Yemen	977 830
	NAME regional	820 216
	<b>TOTAL NAME</b>	<b>3 154 203</b>
Latin America	Colombia	231 682
Asia/Europe	Afghanistan	387 748
	Eurasia regional	77 368
	Myanmar	462 471
	Other contexts Asia	58 841
	Philippines	266 717
	Ukraine	276 400
<b>TOTAL ASIA/EUROPE</b>	<b>1 529 545</b>	
Programme Support	Policy & Legal Unit	515 319
	MEAL	20 837
	Operations Direction	50 836
	<b>TOTAL PROGRAMME SUPPORT</b>	<b>586 992</b>
<b>PROGRAMME EXPENDITURES</b>		<b>6 988 496</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATION/SUPPORT EXPENDITURES</b>		<b>1 838 335</b>
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>		<b>8 826 831</b>

## Expenditure

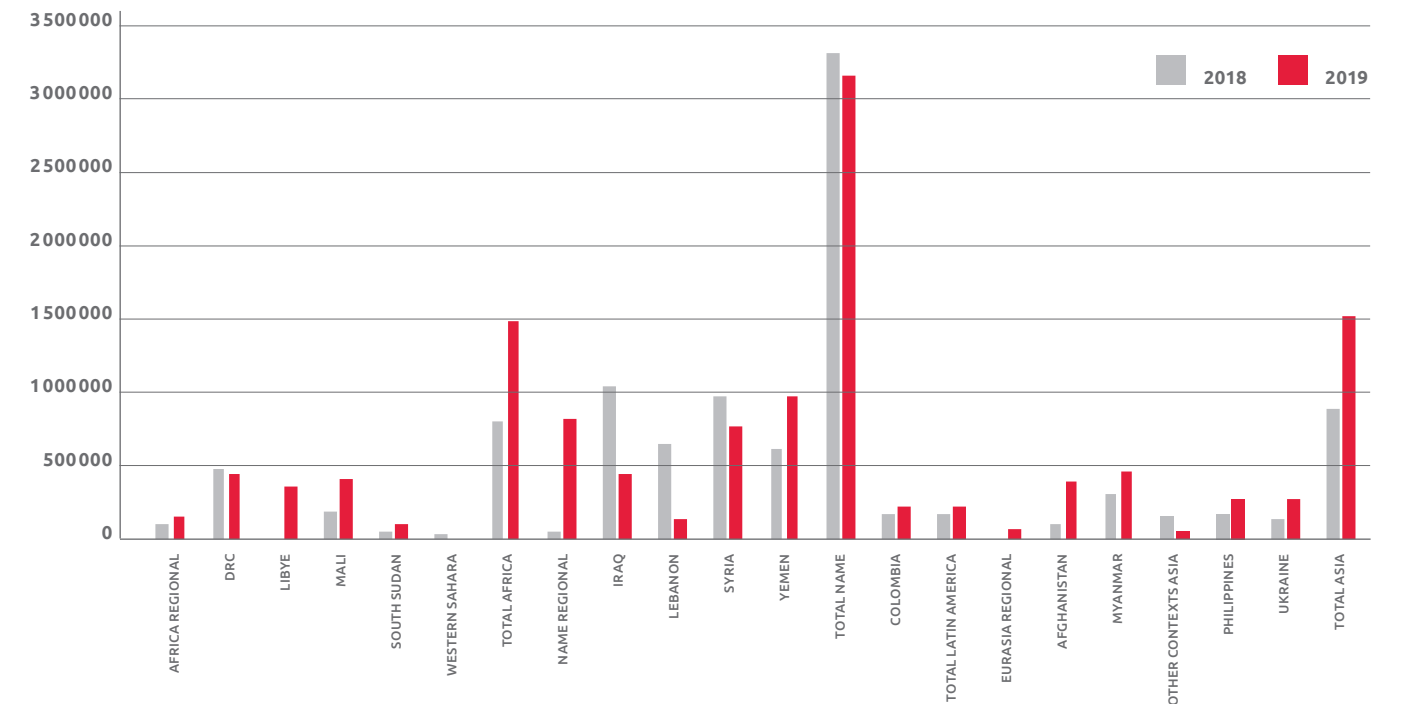


■ PROGRAMME EXPENDITURES  
■ SUPPORT EXPENDITURES

## Operating Expenditures



## Programme Comparison 2018/2019

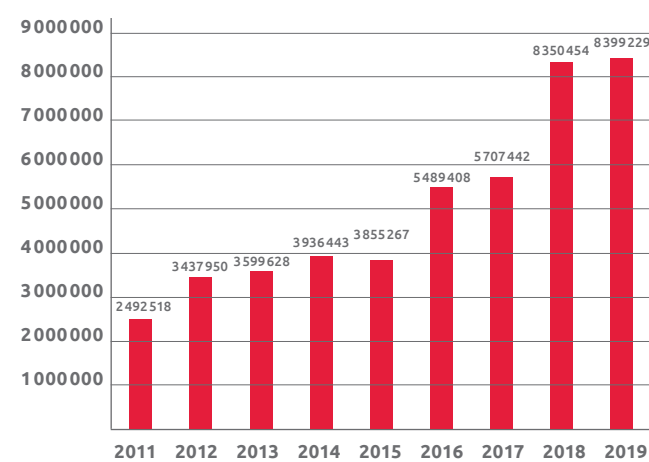




## Balance sheet (CHF)

	2019	2018
Cash and cash equivalent	941 726	1 504 235
Current accounts	–	–
Receivables from donors	1 050 863	363 866
Other receivables	372 704	204 592
Prepayments and accrued income	74 112	106 501
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>2 439 405</b>	<b>2 179 194</b>
Fixed assets	22 193	49 378
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>22 193</b>	<b>49 378</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>2 461 598</b>	<b>2 228 572</b>
Payables from goods and services	419 475	304 136
Other liabilities	448 390	266 998
Accrued expenses	40 536	38 990
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>908 401</b>	<b>610 124</b>
<b>OPERATING FUNDS</b>	<b>1 788 005</b>	<b>2 355 178</b>
Organization's capital		
– Initial capital	50 000	50 000
– Free capital	700 000	200 000
– Accumulated benefit/deficit (beginning of the year)	-986 730	-31 972
– Result of the Year	1 922	-954 758
<b>TOTAL ORGANIZATION'S CAPITAL</b>	<b>-234 808</b>	<b>-736 730</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND ORGANIZATION'S CAPITAL</b>	<b>2 461 598</b>	<b>2 228 572</b>

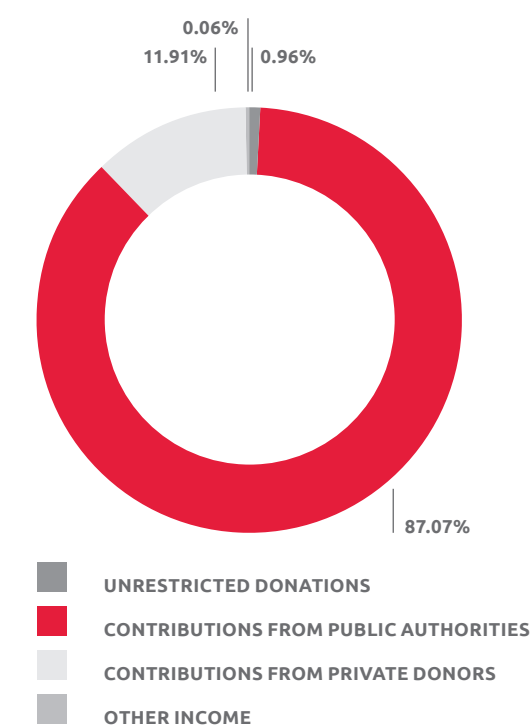
## Evolution of income since 2011 (CHF)



## Statement of operations (CHF)

	2019	2018
<b>OPERATING INCOME</b>		
Unrestricted donations	80 327	32 545
Restricted contributions from public authorities	7 313 517	8 063 608
Restricted contributions from private donors	1 000 000	252 700
Other income	5 385	1 601
<b>TOTAL OPERATING INCOME</b>	<b>8 399 229</b>	<b>8 350 454</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>		
Direct expenditures	6 988 496	6 233 966
Support expenditures	1 838 335	1 738 002
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>8 826 831</b>	<b>7 971 968</b>
<b>CHANGE IN OPERATING FUNDS</b>	<b>567 173</b>	<b>-967 778</b>
<b>OPERATING RESULT</b>	<b>139 571</b>	<b>-589 292</b>
<b>FINANCIAL RESULT</b>		
Financial charges	-22 315	-20 489
Exchange loss	-103 840	-225 978
Exchange gain	21 120	130 769
Interest earned	6	564
<b>EXCEPTIONAL RESULT</b>	<b>-32 620</b>	<b>-250 332</b>
Previous years expenses	-32 620	-250 332
<b>RESULT OF THE YEAR</b>	<b>1 922</b>	<b>-954 758</b>

## Sources of funding





# Geneva Call is thankful to its donors and supporters

Geneva Call receives a combination of core funding (which enables the overall functioning of the organization and specifically the support and management functions highlighted in the previous sections) and targeted project funding covering the thematic and geographical operations. Both these types of funding are fundamental to its operations. Geneva Call expresses its particular gratitude for the support it receives from its donors and partners, including:

- The governments of Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), Belgium, Finland, France, Germany (Federal Foreign Office: Division S03 – Crisis Prevention, Division S08 – Humanitarian Assistance – Policy, International Organizations, Multilateral Coordination, Stabilization, Peacebuilding, and through its embassy in DRC), Italy (through the GICHD), Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden (Swedish

International Development Cooperation Agency), Switzerland (Human Security Division and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and through its embassy in Myanmar), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Department for International Development) through its embassy in Myanmar and New Zealand through its embassy in Philippines and Thailand.

- The European Commission (Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department, including through Danish Church Aid, Save the Children Norway, Norwegian Refugee Council and Danish Refugee Council), the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the European Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), Danish Refugee Council, Joint Peace Fund, Save the children, Search for Common Ground, Truth Hounds Ukraine, UNMAS and York University.

- The Commune of Chêne-Bougeries, the City of Geneva and the Republic and Canton of Geneva.

- A reputable Geneva-based undisclosed Foundation, Fondation de bienfaisance du Groupe Pictet, Patrick and Cynthia Odier, Igor Leuchter and Elisa Ha-Vinh Leuc, France Majoie – Lelou, Jerome SA Vernier

- The Aviron Universitaire de Genève rowing club and the rowers Thomas Romailier, Vittorio Monti, Arthur Waltz, Amanda Zou, Cyprien Fluzin and Emilie Yakoubian for their exceptional fundraising effort rowing more than 1100km across France to reach the Atlantic Ocean from Geneva in one month.

## Support us

Finding new financial resources represents a continuous challenge for Geneva Call. To address this, Geneva Call particularly seeks guaranteed multi-year funding, as this is a significant aid to overall planning and human resources commitments. It also reduces administrative costs, thereby allowing more resources to be dedicated to field activities.

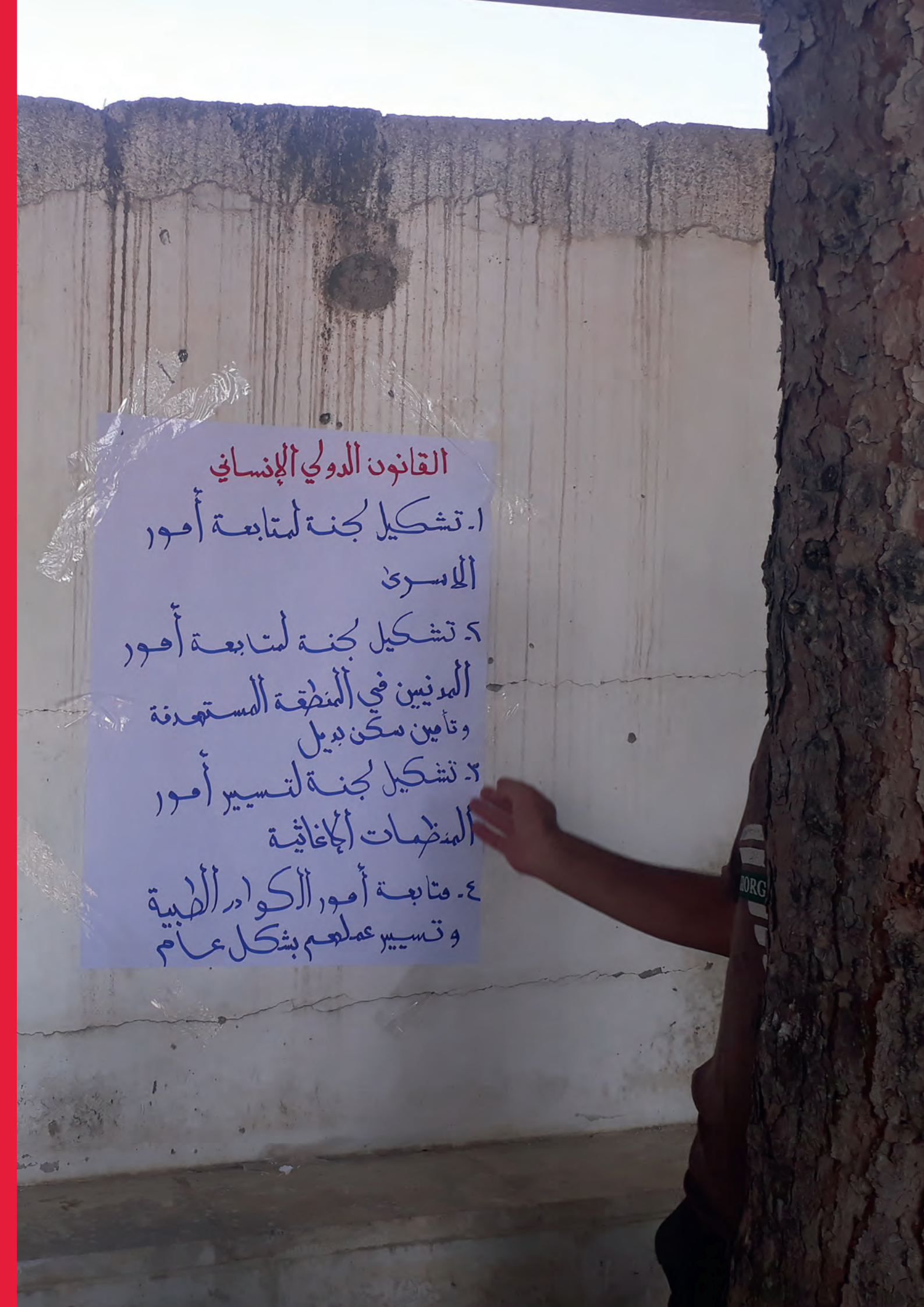
Geneva Call is greatly appreciative of its donors and particularly those who give an element of core funding; this allows the organization greater flexibility and responsiveness to emerging needs. Geneva Call wishes to thank its current donors for continuing to fund it in this manner and hopes that new donors will consider doing so over the coming years.

For further details, please contact:

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