

UN relief chief decries ‘bullets and bombs’ against aid workers

22 Nov 2024

2024 is now humanitarianists’ deadliest year on record, driven by the war in Gaza

(New York/Geneva, 22 November 2024) The year 2024 has become the deadliest on record for humanitarian personnel, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said today, citing data from the [Aid Worker Security Database](#).

This grim milestone was reached with the recorded death of 281 aid workers globally, surpassing previous records.

“Humanitarian workers are being killed at an unprecedented rate, their courage and humanity being met with bullets and bombs,” said Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. “This violence is unconscionable and devastating to aid operations. States and parties to conflict must protect humanitarianists, uphold international law, prosecute those responsible, and call time on this era of impunity.”

The year 2023 also saw record fatalities compared to previous years, with 280 aid workers killed across 33 countries. The war in Gaza is driving up the numbers, with more than 320 humanitarian personnel killed since 7 October 2023. Many were killed in the line of duty while providing humanitarian assistance. Most were staff members of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Threats to aid workers extend beyond Gaza, with high levels of violence, kidnappings, injuries, harassment, and arbitrary detention reported in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen, among other countries.

The majority of fatalities involve local staff working with non-governmental organizations, UN agencies and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. Violence against humanitarian personnel is part of a broader trend of harm to civilians in conflict zones. Last year, more than 33,000 civilian deaths were recorded in 14 armed conflicts – a staggering 72 per cent increase from 2022.

Despite the dangers, humanitarian organizations continue to deliver vital assistance, reaching nearly 144 million people in need last year. As of November 2024, they have supported more than 116 million people [worldwide](#).

On 24 May 2024, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2730 in response to the growing violence and threats against humanitarian workers. The resolution mandates the Secretary-General to recommend measures to prevent and respond to such incidents, enhance accountability, and improve protection for humanitarian personnel and assets. These recommendations will be presented at a Security Council meeting on 26 November.