

Who We Are

Center for Civilians in Conflict works to make warring parties more responsible to civilians before, during, and after armed conflict. We are advocates who believe no civilian caught in conflict should be ignored, and advisors who provide practical solutions to preventing and responding to civilian harm. Our work is pragmatic, collaborative, and civilian-focused, and we are careful not to duplicate others' efforts.

The organization was founded as Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC) by Marla Ruzicka, a courageous humanitarian killed by a suicide bomber in 2005 while advocating for Iraqi families. We rebranded in 2012.

Our Vision

For warring parties to recognize the imperative to prevent civilian harm, protect civilians caught on the battlefield, and make amends for the harm they nevertheless cause.

How We Work

Center for Civilians in Conflict influences warring party behavior before a conflict begins, during the conflict itself, and after harm has been caused to civilians.

Our Activities Are Four-Fold:

- **Documenting the toll of armed conflict** on civilians, through interviews with civilians themselves, humanitarians, and the warring parties.
- **Advocating with decision makers** in countries in conflict to change minds, policies, and practices in world capitals, international and regional institutions.
- **Engaging directly with warring parties** to provide them with practical solutions to minimize civilian harm.
- **Amplifying civilian's voices in the media**, highlighting both their plight and our solutions to lessen their suffering.

In 2013, we are working in and on Syria, Somalia, Mali, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. We are pressing warring parties to track, investigate, and make amends for the civilian harm they cause. We are working with the United Nations on use-of-force mandates—including for Somalia, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mali—to ensure civilian protection is prioritized. We are engaging policymakers in the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to create standing policies of amends for civilian harm. We are analyzing the civilian protection challenges of remote drone operations and the international legal concept of direct participation in hostilities. We are engaging with several military forces at a senior level to shift operations toward greater sensitivity to civilian populations.

Knitting these efforts together, the Center's ultimate goal is to create a new global mindset around robust civilian protection and harm response.

Our Impact

Center for Civilians in Conflict makes concrete progress in conflict zones through our research, advocacy, and policy work. We measure success in the short-term by the improved wellbeing of civilians caught in a conflict and we see shifts in how warring parties conduct themselves, with greater attention focused on minimizing civilian harm.

In the long term, Center for Civilians in Conflict is changing **mindsets**. High-level officials have begun using our words to describe the need for civilian protection in armed conflict. The United Nations is including our specific recommendations into force mandates, resolutions, and high-level reports, where they would not otherwise have been without our advocacy. Colleague human rights and humanitarian organizations have adopted our key concepts for minimizing civilian harm and continually request our collaboration.

Brief Highlights Of Our Work:

- Our research in Afghanistan and advocacy in Brussels directly led to NATO approving its first compensation policy for Afghan war victims.
- In Afghanistan, we created an extensive framework for tracking civilian harm for Afghan forces and conducted trainings for over 20,000 international and Afghan forces on how to respond to civilian casualties. The Karzai government has already implemented some of our recommendations, including an office dedicated to assessing civilian harm.
- We worked with the United States Congress to develop the first assistance programs for civilians harmed by combat operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In Iraq, the program is named in honor of our founder. To date, we helped secure more than \$200 million for these programs.
- We co-authored with Maj Gen. Roger Lane a civilian protection policy for African Union forces in Somalia (AMISOM), after which the rate of civilian casualties dropped. With the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, we documented civilian losses in Somalia and published the first report on the topic. Over two years, we developed a civilian casualty tracking cell for African forces—the first for an African force and only the second in the world.
- In Pakistan, we worked with local civil society to draft a groundbreaking law to enhance victims assistance programs in each of the country's provinces. It is already in effect in Balochistan and efforts are underway to get approval in other provinces.
- In Syria, our field missions are producing groundbreaking analysis on the armed opposition's civilian protection efforts and the expectations of civilians suffering losses. With senior military and legal experts, we extensively analyzed five military intervention options for Syria through a civilian protection lens. Both analyses were lauded by policymakers in the UN, US, NATO, EU, and ICRC, as they make decisions about taking action and of what sort.
- We produced the first in-depth analysis of the civilian protection limitations of weaponized drones in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Our calls for greater transparency, for operations to shift from the CIA to the Department of Defense (now under consideration by the Obama Administration), and for amends for civilian losses (a concept recently noted by CIA director John Brennan) are featured in Wired, The Christian Science Monitor, CNN, NPR, and BBC, among others. The Center served on the Council on Foreign Relations' drone advisory board.
- In Libya, we documented civilian harm on the ground within days of the start of the conflict, including for a New York Times cover story showing the world the tragedy of civilian casualties. We advised NATO on civilian harm mitigation best practices, and extensively assessed abandoned ordnance with Harvard Law School, leading to pledges from both the US and Libyan governments to do more to secure left over weapons.
- Our recommendations to the United Nations on minimizing harm to civilians have been noted in two Security Council resolutions on Somalia in 2012 and 2013. Our recommendation that peacekeeping forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo mitigate civilian harm was adopted by the Security Council—a first for a peacekeeping mandate.
- We are working with American military officers at bases across the country on new civilian protection and harm response doctrine, including writing a chapter for the first Army handbook on this topic. US forces have significantly shifted the way they understand and apply civilian harm mitigation principles, and we remain proud of our contribution over seven years.

“This is an idea whose time has come. It seems so logical and important.”

—Finnish Ambassador to the US
Pekka Lintu, upon hosting an event for the Center for Civilians in Conflict at his Embassy

“I certainly appreciate your enthusiasm for helping us educate, and train, our Soldiers. Many cannot see true 'cause and effect,' and it takes a true multi-disciplinary approach and a broader perspective to calibrate these young men and women, while we educate the leaders on the nuances required to make substantive progress [...] thank you for the incredible effort that you have made in educating all of us with respect to the dynamics of this extremely important mission.”

—General Randall Dragon, Commander, Ft. Irwin National Training Center

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