



ESIL Interest Group on International Health Law

Pre-conference Workshop, 3 September 2026, 9:00-12:00 CEST

Health Protection and Armed Conflicts in a Fragmented Legal Landscape: Emergencies, Security, and Governance

The past years have been marked by a series of health crises in the context of armed conflicts with significant implications for fundamental human rights. Just this week, the WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean [warned](#) that “a health crisis is unfolding in real time” in Iran and neighbouring countries following the United States and Israel’s attack in February. Since October 2023, Gaza’s already fragile health system has been [overwhelmed](#) by airstrikes and critical shortages of medical supplies. Despite their protected status under international humanitarian law, healthcare facilities have been repeatedly targeted, often justified by unproven claims of military use. In March 2026, the WHO called on all parties to protect civilians and health workers, ensure unhindered humanitarian access, and establish corridors for evacuations and medical aid delivery. Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine, ongoing since 2022, has had [severe consequences](#) for the health of the population, including disruptions to routine healthcare services, an increase in mental health issues, and damage to energy infrastructure that has compromised the delivery of essential health services.

Aligned with the theme of the 2026 ESIL Conference “International Law and Conflict: An Enduring Tension?”, the Pre-conference Workshop aims to offer a platform for discussing the protection of health in armed conflicts as well as the interplay between health crises and conflicts. Legal analyses can explore relevant legal and governance frameworks at the intersection of international health law, international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law, international disaster law, and the UN collective security system.

ESIL Members are hereby invited to submit abstracts touching upon a range of subjects:

1. Health protection in armed conflict, including but not limited to issues such as:

- Humanitarian assistance and humanitarian corridors;
- Obligations to provide food, medical supplies and aid;
- Relevance of the International Law Commission’s work on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts from the perspective of the One Health approach;
- Effects of economic sanctions on health and access to water and a healthy environment;
- State and individual responsibility for the commission of gross violations and war crimes having a direct and serious impact on health (e.g. starvation, destruction of civilian livelihoods and agricultural land, poisoning of water, prohibited weapons);
- Evidentiary role of WHO findings in international criminal proceedings.

2. Health and the collective security system, adopting the perspective that health is a fundamental condition for the maintenance of international peace and security, as articulated in the WHO Constitution, notably including:

- The role of the United Nations in health emergencies;
- The Security Council's (limited) role in health crises;
- Provisional measures urging ceasefires and humanitarian corridors;
- Health considerations in peacekeeping operations.

3. Global health governance and disaster response in conflict, assessing the role of international health law and international disaster law in responding to large-scale environmental and health emergencies in such contexts, including:

- Relevance of the International Health Regulations and pandemic instruments in conflict-related crises;
- Preparedness and response to large-scale environmental and health emergencies in armed conflicts.

Interested persons should submit abstracts which are no longer than **500 words**. A short biography of maximum **200 words**, including the name and affiliation of the author(s), should be added.

Early-career scholars (PhD students, postdocs)¹ are particularly encouraged to answer this call.

Abstracts can be submitted to the following e-mail: esil.igihl@gmail.com.

The **deadline for the submission of abstracts** is **Friday, 24 April**. The results of the selection process will be notified by 15 May.

Authors should then submit a **draft paper** of maximum **3.000 words** by **30 June**.

The Interest Group is unable to provide funding for travel and accommodation. Selected speakers will be expected to bear the costs of their own travel and accommodation. Some [ESIL Travel Grants](#) and [ESIL Carers' Grants](#) will be available to offer partial financial support to speakers who have exhausted other potential sources of funding.

Please visit the [ESIL Annual Conference website](#) for all relevant information about the event.

All participants, including speakers and chairs, at ESIL Interest Group workshops are required to register and are warmly invited to attend the whole Annual Conference.

Detailed information will follow on the registration options, including information on preferential fees for ESIL Members and the option to register to attend the pre-ESIL Annual Conference workshops only.

Selected speakers should indicate their interest in being considered for the ESIL Early-Career Scholar Prize, if they meet the [eligibility conditions](#) as stated on the ESIL website. **The ESIL Secretariat must be informed of all selected speakers who wish to be considered for the Prize before 30 April.**

¹ In accordance with the definition adopted by the ESIL, "Early-career scholars are (i) candidates for a postgraduate degree in law; (ii) PhD candidates or those who have had their oral defence no longer than 3 years prior to the submission of an abstract; or (iii) those who are within the first 5 years of their career following the award of their last academic degree and who can provide evidence of their contribution to legal scholarship through academic publication".

Steering Committee

Prof. Gian Luca Burci, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland.

Prof. Stefania Negri, School of law, University of Salerno, Italy.

Ashwinee Kumar, Free University of Brussels, Belgium.

Dr. Carlotta Manz, Institute for European Global Studies, University of Basel, Switzerland.

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