

NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

# CIVIL-MILITARY POLICY



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## 1. OBJECTIVE

NRC's overall objective with this policy is to **ensure the safety and security of NRC beneficiaries and staff and secure NRC access to vulnerable populations.**

By operating as neutral, impartial and independent actor, NRC seeks to ensure that activities are accepted by the parties to the conflict, beneficiaries, authorities and other stakeholders. The NRC Civil-Military policy is based on recognized international guidelines for civil-military coordination and aims at maintaining NRC neutrality, impartiality and independence as a humanitarian actor that does not take sides in conflicts or is involved in political, ideological or religious controversies by:

- Clearly separating NRC staff and programs from military actors and agendas.
- Providing NRC staff with clear guidance on how NRC will seek to uphold a separate identity when interacting with military forces and on how staff shall behave in order to ensure that a clearly separate identity is maintained at all times.

## 2. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR NRC

As a signatory to the Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, **NRC has agreed to deliver humanitarian assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles.** NRC will endeavour to:

1. address human suffering wherever it is found;
2. provide aid regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind;
3. not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint;

4. not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.

These principles are the foundation for NRC and will guide how NRC interacts with all other actors.

## 3. NRC POSITION ON MILITARY ACTORS INVOLVEMENT IN RELIEF OPERATIONS

- **NRC recognises that there is a role for military actors to engage in support of life-saving humanitarian operations only as a last resort** (when there is no civilian alternative).
- Interaction between military and humanitarian actors in these last resort cases should happen according to international guidelines – including liaison, information sharing, and the use of armed escorts and military assets.
- NRC sees no role for international military forces as a relief provider (apart from in the extreme case mentioned above) as military forces do not provide assistance according to humanitarian principles, and their involvement in relief type activities can jeopardize the safety of beneficiaries and civilian relief personnel.

## 4. APPLICATION

The policy applies to **all NRC staff** (except personnel seconded to other organizations by NRC). and regulates the interaction between NRC and organized military forces. The policy does not regulate how NRC interacts with organized armed groups or national military forces in militarized regimes.

## 5. NRC AND LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

- **NRC will only participate in Civil Military Coordination for humanitarian purposes (CMCoord)**, not UN or NATO Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) or military stabilization initiatives.
- NRC's liaison with military actors shall take place when there is a **specific purpose** for the engagement. Purposes of liaison shall be limited to:
  1. Security: NRC will liaise with military actors whenever needed to ensure safety and security for NRC activities and staff.
  2. Advocacy: NRC will advocate with military forces in order to seek adherence to Civil-Military guidelines, respect of international humanitarian, human rights and Refugee laws, the humanitarian principles and the Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement.
  3. Raising awareness: of military forces' understanding of NRC's activities and why the security of NRC beneficiaries and staff requires a clear distance from military actors.
  4. Information analysis: related to ongoing military operations, possible humanitarian effects of operations and security implications for NRC activities.
- NRC will not liaise with the military with the purpose of coordinating activities unless the military is providing support to a humanitarian operation as a last resort, meaning there are no civilian alternatives to provide life saving activities or in case of evacuation of staff.
- As a principle, liaison will only occur when it proves to have a critical added value to NRC's activities whilst evaluating the risk.

## HOW DOES NRC LIAISE?

- **NRC will only participate in civilian led liaison and coordination mechanisms.**
- Coordination meetings shall take place outside military compounds in a non-military venue. Authorization from the NRC Country Director is necessary if NRC staff wish to participate in liaison that takes place in military compounds (including UN military compounds).
- Participation in coordination mechanisms shall be explicitly authorized by the NRC Country Director and shall take place as far away from areas of program implementation as possible.
- NRC will not co-chair clusters if military actors have been granted regular participation and shall advocate that (1) military personnel do not attend cluster meetings; and (2) any interaction between humanitarian actors and military personnel happens through appropriate channels for civil-military coordination (civilian UN peacekeeping staff are not considered military staff).
- Liaison will be carried out by NRC staff when explicitly authorized by the NRC Country Director.

## 6. INFORMATION SHARING

- **NRC will not share information gathered through programs or presence that might endanger human lives or compromise the impartiality and neutrality of humanitarian organizations.**
- NRC will only share information with the purpose of improving humanitarian action. Information that may be appropriate to share with the military may be aimed at:
  1. Maintaining NRC's operational space: coordinates of NRC offices, plans and intentions, including routes and timing of humanitarian convoys and

airlifts may be shared in order to coordinate planned operations, to secure security of humanitarian operations or to warn of any conflicting activities, where appropriate.

2. Protection of Civilians: it may be opportune in some cases to share information on the coordinates of camps, schools and large scale displacements in order to alert military actors to avoid accidental strikes on civilians.
- NRC will not share information related to the movement of armed groups or systematically track or record such information.
  - NRC will not share information with military led information gathering mechanisms unless specifically authorized by NRC HO.

## 7. CONDUCT OF STAFF

- NRC staff must ensure that they conduct themselves in a manner that **ensures a clear and visible separation between NRC and military forces**.
- Weapons are not allowed on NRC premises or in NRC vehicles;
- NRC staff will not travel in military vehicles and shall only use military aircraft for essential professional missions when there are no civilian alternatives;
- NRC staff will not wear military-uniform-like clothing or symbols associated with the military;
- NRC staff shall keep any interaction with military actors to a minimum both in official and private functions – this includes social events.

## 8. USE OF MILITARY ASSETS FOR HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

- **NRC will only use military assets in support of life-saving humanitarian operations on an exceptional basis and only as a**

### **last resort.**

- Military and civil defence assets, including military aircraft, will be requested by the NRC Country Director through the Humanitarian Coordinator only where:
  1. there is no comparable civilian alternative;
  2. the use of military assets will save lives that would otherwise be lost;
  3. the operation as a whole remain under civilian control;
  4. the use of military assets is time-bound;
  5. and never from military forces engaged directly or in support of combat operations.
- In the abovementioned cases, NRC will limit its use of military support to infrastructure support (i.e. road repair and air space control) and only in extreme cases use military forces to carry out indirect assistance (such as transport of relief goods and NRC staff).
- NRC materials shall not be distributed or services provided directly to the affected population by military personnel (i.e. direct assistance).
- NRC will not undertake joint assessments or joint operations with military actors. If military actors insist on accompanying assessment teams during an assessment, NRC will not participate in such missions.

## 9. USE OF MILITARY GUARDS AND ESCORTS

- NRC will as a general rule **not use military armed guards or military escorts** to protect NRC offices, staff houses or humanitarian convoys.
- NRC can advocate for military forces to secure roads and undertake regular patrols to facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance.

- Armed military personnel will not be allowed in NRC offices, private accommodations or to travel in NRC vehicles under any circumstances.

#### **EXCEPTIONS**

- In extreme cases and as a last resort, NRC may consider using military escorts to accompany humanitarian convoys to provide life-saving assistance.
- Evacuation of staff is necessary and cannot be undertaken safely without military escorts.

#### **10. NRC AND MILITARIZATION OF AID**

- NRC will **not request or receive funding from a military actor**

(including state armies, ministries of defence or hybrid civil-military entities such as Provincial Reconstruction Teams).

- NRC will not implement projects that require collaboration with military forces (this includes any form of coordination of activities, information sharing or clauses requiring NRC to provide assistance in the aftermath of certain military operations).
- NRC will not implement programs or projects linked to a military agenda or strategy.
- NRC will only accept funding from donors that will ensure that NRC can implement activities in accordance with humanitarian principles.

