



The Treaty on the Protection of Persons in Disasters: Addressing the Facilitation of Fast, Effective, and Coordinated External Assistance

The Treaty on the Protection of Persons in Disasters

In 2024, States agreed through United Nations General Assembly resolution [A/RES/79/128](#) to 'elaborate and conclude a legally binding instrument on the protection of persons in the event of disasters' (PPED) based on the International Law Commission's [Draft Articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters](#) by the end of 2027.

The General Assembly resolution calls on Governments to submit to the Secretary-General, no later than 31 December 2025, proposals for amendments to the Draft Articles, with a view to preparing the consolidated text that will form the basis of the treaty.

In 2025, IFRC developed detailed [proposals for amendments on the Draft Articles for the consideration of States](#), aimed at strengthening the Draft Articles ahead of the upcoming negotiations on a global treaty on the PPED based on extensive research, experience and IFRC tools such as the [Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance](#) and the [Disaster Risk Governance Guidelines](#).

The Issue

Despite significant progress in international law over the past two decades, regulatory barriers continue to delay and complicate external disaster assistance. When a major disaster strikes, time is critical — yet relief efforts are often slowed down by legal and administrative obstacles.

In many international disaster response operations, relief goods have been held up for days or weeks at customs, rescue teams have waited for visas or special permits before being allowed to deploy, and life-saving equipment such as radios have been blocked due to import restrictions or certification requirements. Even once assistance is accepted, the lack of clear coordination procedures can create confusion and duplication.

At the same time, the quality and appropriateness of external assistance are not always guaranteed. Assistance is sometimes delivered without adequate needs assessments or without the consent and coordination of national authorities, leading to inappropriate aid, inefficiencies, or strain on national systems.

In many cases, these challenges stem from domestic legal and regulatory barriers and the absence of a coherent international framework to govern when and how external assistance should be requested, facilitated, and brought to an end. As a result, affected communities can face unnecessary delays in receiving help precisely when they need it most.

How the Treaty on the Protection of Persons in Disasters can Help

The Draft Articles lay a strong foundation for addressing these barriers. If developed into a binding treaty and strengthened as **proposed** by the IFRC, it could:

- Set clear rules for requesting, accepting, coordinating and terminating external disaster assistance, reducing uncertainty for both affected and assisting States as well as other assisting actors;
- Ensure that external assistance is based on needs assessments and provided with the consent of the affected State, thereby improving the quality, coordination, and effectiveness of aid;
- Facilitate the rapid entry of goods, equipment, and personnel by establishing detailed customs, visa, and import facilities during emergencies; and
- Balance the need to facilitate external assistance to protect persons affected by disasters with the recognition of the key importance of State sovereignty in external disaster assistance operations.

By setting clear rules for external disaster assistance, a global treaty on the protection of persons in disasters would help governments and humanitarian actors cut through the red tape and act faster — ensuring that assistance reaches people faster and saving lives.

IFRC's Key Messages: The Treaty on the Protection of Persons in Disasters

Objective 1: The treaty must prioritize disaster risk reduction across all sectors before, during and after disasters.

Objective 2: The treaty must ensure all people are protected in disasters, especially those in vulnerable situations.

Objective 3: The treaty must address the facilitation of fast, effective and coordinated humanitarian assistance to save lives after a disaster.

Objective 4: The treaty should recognize National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field.

Objective 5: The treaty should provide a role for IFRC in accordance with its mandate on disaster risk governance /disaster law received from States.

