



## Fact Sheet – *Protection of Civilians (PoC)*



### **Rationale:**

At the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, heads of state and government endorsed a NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians. This overarching policy aims to set out a coherent, consistent, and integrated approach to the protection of civilians in NATO and NATO-led operations, missions, and other Council mandated activities. To operationalise this policy, NATO developed an Action Plan with clearly defined activities, including the development of a concept to integrate the topic into training, doctrine, education and exercises and into the planning and conduct of operations. To ensure a coherent approach, the Military Concept for the Protection of Civilians (approved by the Nations in June 2018) defines a framework that seeks to identify and understand threats to the civilian population.



Threats to civilians during conflict manifest in many forms. This concept seeks to address the threats by mitigating harm, facilitating access to basic needs and contributing to establishing a safe and secure environment. These three lenses will contribute to a better understanding of the human environment, which will inform the military planning and conduct of operations.

Addressing the threats to protect civilians requires a comprehensive and collaborative effort. NATO has worked extensively with other principal actors and, in doing so, a PoC Community of Interest was established including international organisations, non-governmental organisations, nations, Centres of Excellence, and humanitarian agencies.

### **Definition:**

The NATO Policy states that “Protection of Civilians (persons, objects and services) includes all efforts taken to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the negative effects on civilians arising from NATO and NATO-led military operations on the civilian population and, when applicable, to protect civilians from conflict-related physical violence or threats of violence by other actors, including through the establishment of a safe and secure environment.”

### **Implementation:**

Work has already begun on the integration of PoC in NATO. Future PoC activities aiming at implementing the NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians will be conducted by the two Strategic Commands, in collaboration with NATO Headquarters.

The development of tailored training on PoC for NATO and UN officers is ongoing and the first PoC pilot training was conducted in Finland, in October 2018. The training community led by HQ SACT (Finnish Defence Forces International Centre, Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute, and HQ SACT’s Joint Force Trainer Division) conducted extensive research on PoC training delivered by nations and other organisations. The pilot course also included input from other key stakeholders, such as the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

In terms of wider education on PoC, the topic is also being integrated in NATO Exercises, having now been included in planning documents for 2018, 2019, and 2020 exercises.

Another major area of work that is currently ongoing is the integration of PoC in NATO processes and NATO and NATO-led missions. Following the framework outlined in the PoC Concept, the Strategic Commands have analysed the NATO Doctrine Campaign Plan and have designed a timetable to ensure that appropriate doctrine is updated with PoC guidance.

Work has also begun for the development of a PoC Handbook to support the integration of PoC into NATO operational planning. This Handbook is aimed at NATO planners, and will take the concept to the operational level.

NATO's ambition to establish a Centre of Excellence covering all of NATO's cross-cutting topics (PoC, Children and Armed Conflict, Cultural Property Protection, Conflict Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence) will enhance the work that has already been conducted in regards to these topics and will play a critical role in improving current operational capacities while also supporting and shaping the way ahead.

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