

The Principles of **Humanitarian Aid**

Humanitarianism/ humanity

The uppermost aim is to ensure the survival of affected people in acute need and to alleviate their suffering. Correspondingly, the dignity of human beings must remain guaranteed.

Neutrality

Humanitarian aid favours no side (party) in an armed conflict or any other confrontation.

Impartiality/ non-discrimination

Humanitarian aid is based exclusively on need without discrimination of the recipients (meaning unconditionally and without discrimination based on ethnic origin, sex, religion, social status, nationality or political opinion).

Independence

Humanitarian aid is given independent of political, economic, military, or religious circumstances or the aims of the parties to the conflict.

Conclusions and Recommendations of the 6th Humanitarian Congress Vienna

*Non-
negotiable*

The
Humanitarian
Must-Haves

Conclusions and Recommendations of the 6th Humanitarian Congress Vienna

Principled humanitarian action is non-negotiable

The human being has to be the focus of political and humanitarian action. The humanitarian principles, above all the principles of humanity and impartiality, are universally valid and not negotiable. Criminalizing humanitarian aid is criminalizing humanity.

» The fulfilment of the humanitarian imperative by humanitarian organisations must be guaranteed to affected people in crises. A clear political will and continued commitment are needed to ensure equal treatment and to avoid further marginalisation of the most vulnerable.

Climate crisis and the principle of humanity

The climate crisis affects all dimensions of our lives globally. The poorest are hit hardest by food insecurity, lack of water and loss of livelihoods. Humanitarian action has to focus on climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and anticipatory actions.

» Therefore, governments and other stakeholders need to invest in locally led measures to tackle the negative impacts, particularly in countries most vulnerable to the climate crisis.

» Governments must ensure the 1.5 °C target of the Paris agreement is met, protect people most at risk from climate related disasters and reinforce humanitarian assistance obligations arising from the climate crisis.

Forgotten crises and the principle of impartiality

A multitude of crises impacts people globally, leaving hundreds of millions in distress and forcing them to leave their homes to secure their survival. Displaced populations and people on the move are often forgotten, lack access to basic services and are trapped in a vacuum without rights and adequate protection.

They remain outside of the systems of care and protection which should be provided by governments.

» On a policy level, there should be no conditionality between migration and development cooperation.

Not only because such conditionality can affect relations with partner countries negatively, but primarily because it conflicts with adherence to humanitarian principles and to other international obligations such as the upholding of human rights.

» The principle of impartiality demands that all those in need, especially the most vulnerable groups, are granted access to assistance and protection regardless of media attention and political agendas.

Starvation as a method of warfare

The deliberate and systematic starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited under the Geneva Convention and is a gross violation of the humanitarian principle of humanity.

» We urge conflict parties, governments, and the international community to increase their efforts to prevent, identify and document violations. War crimes must be prosecuted. Against this backdrop, we also invite governments and institutions to develop and implement instruments and mechanisms to safeguard food security in times of conflict, thereby also protecting populations of third-party states.

Principled political leadership

The challenges above need committed and principled political leadership. Neutral, independent, and impartial humanitarian aid must be supported by politicians who respect International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and fundamental Human Rights.

» Governments need to avoid the instrumentalization of humanitarian aid. Policy makers should be committed to sustainable, predictable, and adequate financing.