



Statement on World Humanitarian Day by Legal Action Worldwide (LAW)

### **Impunity for attacks on national humanitarian workers must end**

**19 August 2023, Geneva:** Today the number of people needing humanitarian aid has reached a record high. Hundreds of thousands of humanitarian aid workers globally, particularly national staff, are on the front lines trying to deliver life-saving aid. They are the unsung heroes of the international aid delivery system. They also provide a critical link to victims, survivors and communities.

But today, national staff are overwhelmingly the victims and survivors of humanitarian attacks. According to the Aid Worker Security Report in 2021, 98% of the aid workers who lost their lives in the ten most violent contexts, were national staff. More than half of them are from national civil societies benefiting from very little support or access to national courts, let alone regional and international justice mechanisms.

And yet, there is almost total impunity in relation to attacks on aid workers. There are so few people who have been held to account that no official recorded number exists. This is despite the fact that attacks on humanitarian aid workers and the facilities in which they work not only constitute grave breaches of humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law but frequently also amount to war crimes under international criminal law.

“We need to take legal cases because the inevitable truth here, as with all human rights violations and abuses, is that reluctance to pursue accountability for attacks only serves the attacker, leading to increased instability and attacks not only on humanitarian aid workers, but also on the civilian communities that they work in” says Antonia Mulvey, Executive Director of LAW. “Rarely is hostility targeted only to humanitarian organisations and not to those in the community as well. If we want to secure peace and stability then we must address this issue now” Mulvey added.

This year, LAW has committed to support the humanitarian organisations and national aid workers to obtain justice for violence committed against them. LAW works to provide free legal information, advice and representation, to hold the perpetrators accountable and contribute towards ending the cycle of impunity.

For further information: [info@legalactionworldwide.org](mailto:info@legalactionworldwide.org)