



2026 Emergency Watchlist

NEW WORLD DISORDER

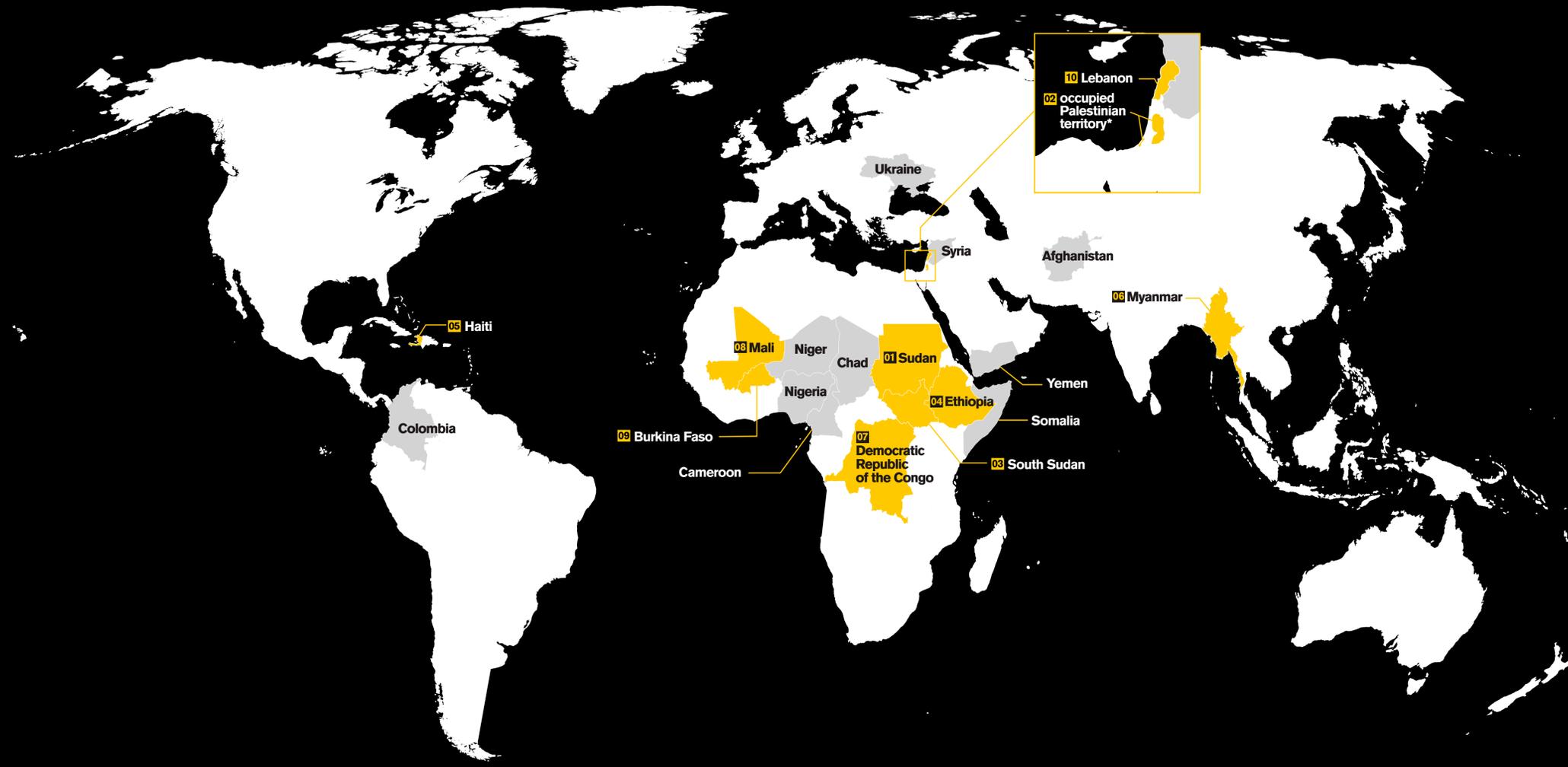
**In 2026, these crises will
shape millions of lives.**

Europe's response matters.

The International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Emergency Watchlist shines a light on the countries at greatest risk of new or worsening humanitarian crises over the coming year.

The Watchlist draws on 74 different indicators, as well as insights from the IRC's experience of working in more than 40 countries. Each year, this approach allows the IRC to accurately identify 85–95% of the countries that see the worst humanitarian deterioration over the next year.





Top 10 Watchlist Ranked Countries

- 01 Sudan
- 02 occupied Palestinian territory
- 03 South Sudan
- 04 Ethiopia
- 05 Haiti
- 06 Myanmar
- 07 Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 08 Mali
- 09 Burkina Faso
- 10 Lebanon

Other Watchlist Countries*

- Afghanistan
- Cameroon
- Chad
- Colombia
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Somalia
- Syria
- Ukraine
- Yemen

These countries account for:



of the global population live in the 20 Watchlist countries, yet they account for...



of people in extreme poverty



of people who have been forced to flee their homes to find safety



of people in humanitarian need



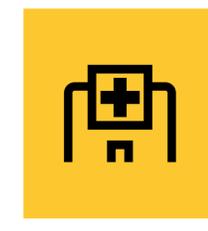
239 million
people are in humanitarian need



50,000
people—mostly civilians—were killed in conflict in 2024, a 40% surge



117.3 million
people have been uprooted by conflict, violence or persecution



1,000
people were killed while seeking medical care in the first six months of 2025, almost 60 times more than during the same period in 2024



83%
of USAID programs were cancelled, including most funding for health programs between January and March 2025



\$31.1B
fall in aid projected in 2025 from the 17 largest Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members (mostly due to U.S. and German cuts, although others, including France and the UK, have cut aid as well)



Just 25% of aid goes to the fragile and conflict-affected countries that are home to 50% of people living in extreme poverty

New World Disorder

Why are crisis deepening?

Humanitarian crises are surging, but global support to address them is collapsing.

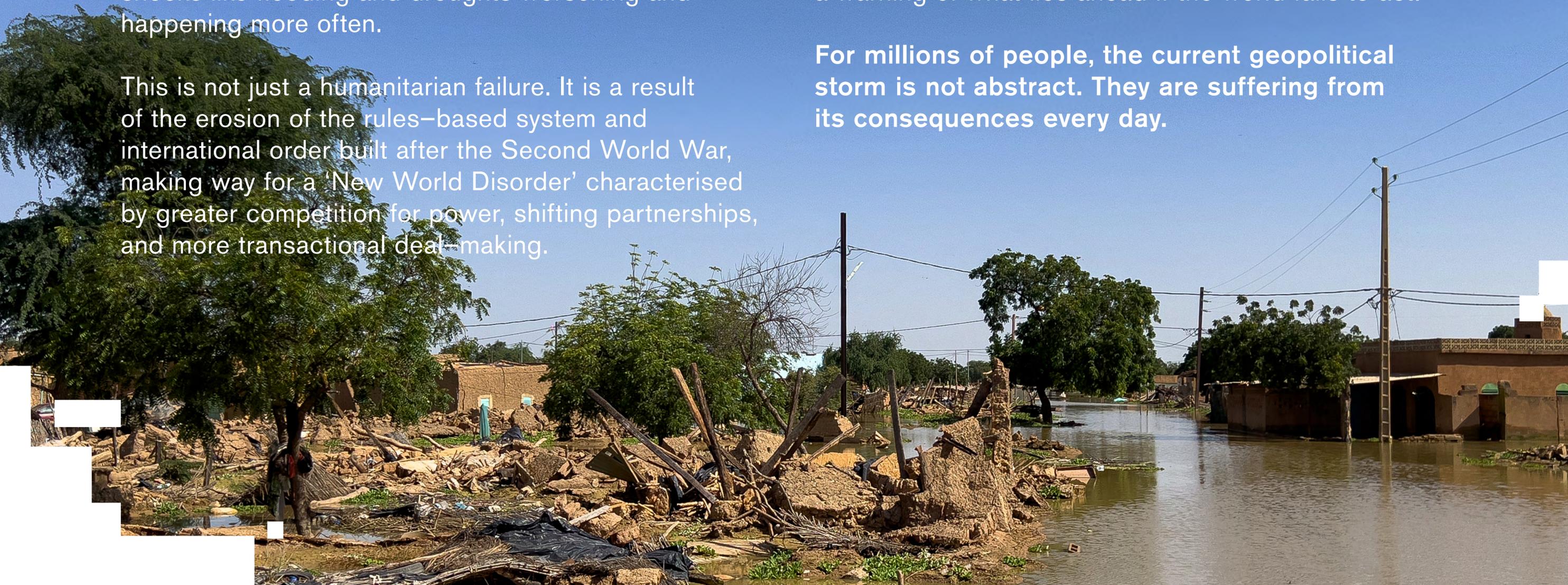
Armed conflicts are at record highs, and becoming harder to resolve. People in crisis-affected countries are finding it more difficult than ever to feed their families. And climate change is resulting in natural shocks like flooding and droughts worsening and happening more often.

This is not just a humanitarian failure. It is a result of the erosion of the rules-based system and international order built after the Second World War, making way for a 'New World Disorder' characterised by greater competition for power, shifting partnerships, and more transactional deal-making.

This shift undermines the pursuit of shared goals, like fighting the climate crisis, working together to tackle poverty, preventing or stopping deadly conflicts, and protecting civilians from violence.

The 20 countries on this year's Watchlist illustrate the human cost of this disorder – but they are also a warning of what lies ahead if the world fails to act.

For millions of people, the current geopolitical storm is not abstract. They are suffering from its consequences every day.





In Watchlist countries, people served by the IRC and its partners face the daily realities of conflict, disaster and displacement. This exhibit shares powerful testimonies from the IRC's staff and clients – individuals who embody resilience and hope in the face of adversity. Their stories both reflect the human cost of crises, and show how access to the right support can change lives.

Muhammad Sadiq, aged 25, lives in a remote district of Badghis province in Afghanistan, with his wife and three young daughters. The area suffers from extreme drought in the winter, and he needs to walk long distances to collect water. There are no health facilities nearby, nor infrastructure to connect the community to the city. This lack of access to the most basic needs resulted in Sadiq's 2-year-old daughter, Samia, suffering from malnutrition. She has since been treated by the IRC's EU-supported mobile medical clinics in the region, and made a full recovery.



Al-Garri, Blue Nile Region

8 May 2025



01 WATCHLIST
RANKING

Sudan

Shama and Anwar

After being forced from their home in the Blue Nile region where ongoing conflict is driving up levels of poverty and malnutrition, Shama and her family embarked on an arduous four-day journey in search of safety. Hunger and stress left Shama unable to produce enough milk for her three-month-old son, Anwar. With no alternatives available, by the time they reached their destination in the region of Al-Garri, he was gravely ill and needed urgent care.

At the IRC's clinic, supported by the European Union, Anwar was diagnosed with severe malnutrition and given a nutrient-dense peanut paste that is proven to significantly improve survival rates. Shama also received guidance on how to support his recovery at home. Since then, Anwar has returned to the clinic for regular check-ups, and he is gradually getting back to his normal self.



After being diagnosed with severe malnutrition, staff at the IRC clinic take all the necessary measurements as part of Anwar's treatment process.

“ He was very skinny. He was not able to sit or to move his body, but now his condition is slowly improving... I wish to see him walking, playing with his siblings, and running around. That's what I hope for. These are my wishes for him.

– Shama

Occupied Palestinian Territory

| Ruba

Originally from Rafah in southern Gaza, 10-year-old Ruba lost her father and home during the military offensive and has been displaced multiple times. By August 2025, her family was living in a displacement camp where they lacked the most basic necessities such as food and water. One day, while making accessories outside her tent, Ruba was shot in the leg by a drone attack. All this violence and upheaval took a profound toll on her mental health, and she withdrew from the community around her.

Through the IRC's child protection activities, supported by the EU, Ruba has had the chance to play, make new friends, and – for some brief moments – feel like a child again. She has also been receiving vital psycho-social support to help her cope with the devastating situation in Gaza. Since attending these sessions, she has reconnected with her community, and now hopes to devote her life to helping others who have lived through similar hardships.



Ruba takes part in a colouring activity organised by the IRC inside a tent which has been converted into a shelter for displaced families. This aims to provide psychosocial relief and to support children in coping with the traumatic situation caused by the military offensive in Gaza.



“ When I grow up I want to be a doctor, so I can treat the wounded and injured. I want to stay in Gaza, because we were born here and I love Gaza. I wish the whole world would know that we are living in danger. We just want to live in safety.

– Ruba

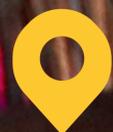
06 WATCHLIST
RANKING

Myanmar

I Daw Khin

Daw Khin, aged 52, is from a village on Inle Lake. She used to run a beauty salon from her home, while her husband owned a weaving workshop producing traditional bags, scarves and fabrics. That all changed in March 2025, when a devastating 7.7 magnitude earthquake ripped through their home, destroying everything. Now living in a bamboo tent, the couple has returned to hand-weaving to try and sustain their income.

Through embroidery classes at the Women and Girls' Safe Space, run by the IRC and its partner, and supported by the EU, Daw Khin is building new skills while also receiving psychosocial support. While immense challenges remain, she is learning how to earn an income from home and hopes to restore her family's livelihood, step by step.



Inle Lake, Southern Shan State
13 November 2025



“ After the earthquake, we were extremely stressed and uncertain about the future... Women come to the center and learn something new every time. Unemployed women can join classes on food preparation, soap making, and embroidery—skills they can use to earn a living. I’m truly grateful for all the support. It has given us strength.

– Daw Khin

Daw Khin and other women whose lives have been impacted by the earthquake take part in a psychosocial group discussion at a Women and Girls’ Safe Space, run by the IRC and partners.



South Sudan

■ Mahal, Halima, Hamina, Roda, Halima and Anusa

Having fled the conflict in Sudan, these women are among the 47,500 people living in the Ajuong Thok displacement camp in neighbouring South Sudan. While life in the camp has never been easy, cuts in global aid funding have left families with even less food and support than before.

In response to the food shortages, the women are building the skills to grow vegetables year-round in their kitchen gardens, using seeds made available through the IRC's Economic Recovery and Development programme which is supported by UNHCR. This will help to ensure they have access to nutritious food, even in the dry season, and enable them to build more secure and sustainable livelihoods for the future.

Ajuong Thok Displacement Camp,
Ruweng Administrative Area

5 December 2024





Women water the seeds they have planted through the IRC's training programme. These will soon become vegetables, which they hope to be able to continue growing throughout the year.



Roundé Village, Mopti
30 September 2025

08 WATCHLIST
RANKING

Mali

| Mody and Fatoumata

Mody and Fatoumata are nurses with the IRC's mobile health team, supported by EU Humanitarian Aid. They travel directly to hard-to-reach communities, where conflict or climate shocks have cut people off from basic health services. During the rainy season, some villages can only be accessed by river. In order to reach these communities, Mody and Fatoumata's team travels by pinasse - a traditional, long wooden boat - to respond to urgent health needs.

On arrival in the village of Roundé, the mobile team provides essential medical care free of charge. They also support local community health workers to recognise the early signs of malnutrition and act fast - helping ensure people receive care before their condition becomes life-threatening.





Mody examines **Aly**, 64, who is living with Parkinson's syndrome and other health concerns. He checks Aly's blood pressure, and tests for malaria which is common in the area.

The Watchlist raises the alarm.

Europe's response is a choice.

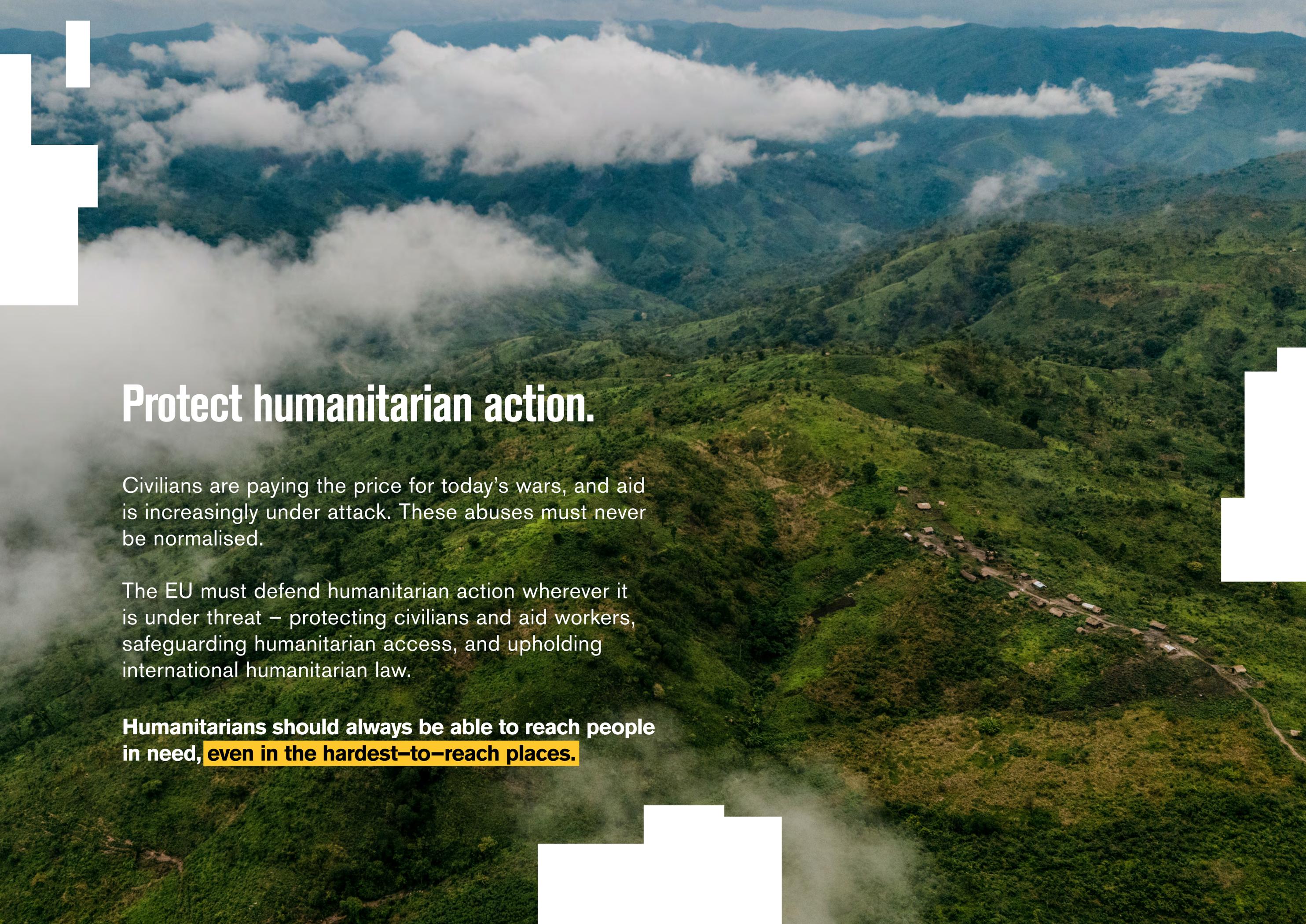
This journey through some of the top Watchlist countries shows what is at stake. At a time when needs are soaring and global support is shrinking, Europe's continued engagement matters more than ever.

As a global humanitarian and development leader, the European Union has the power to chart a different course. By sustaining – and strengthening – its support, the EU can help protect people from the worst impacts of this new era, and shape a future in which crisis-affected communities can survive, recover and regain control over their lives.

These recommendations offer a practical path forward. They are grounded in evidence of what works, and in what people served by the IRC tell us will make the greatest difference.



Déguélé, 44, lives in northern Cameroon with her eight children. Due to escalating conflict, she was forced to leave her village near the Nigerian border. Even in her new home, she fears being attacked by armed groups and worries about the safety of her family. With support from the IRC and the EU, Déguélé receives cash assistance and training in entrepreneurship and how to manage household finances. This has enabled her to start a small business trading seeds, and she is using the income to send her children to school in the hope they will be able to secure a brighter future.

An aerial photograph of a vast, lush green mountain range. The hills are covered in dense vegetation, and a small village with several buildings is visible in the valley. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, creating a misty atmosphere. The overall scene is serene and beautiful, highlighting the natural beauty of the region.

Protect humanitarian action.

Civilians are paying the price for today's wars, and aid is increasingly under attack. These abuses must never be normalised.

The EU must defend humanitarian action wherever it is under threat – protecting civilians and aid workers, safeguarding humanitarian access, and upholding international humanitarian law.

Humanitarians should always be able to reach people in need, even in the hardest-to-reach places.

I How the EU can make a difference:



Scale up humanitarian diplomacy to guarantee safe humanitarian access and protect civilians and aid workers



Support and empower NGOs and frontline responders who are best placed to negotiate access to communities in need



Restore respect for international humanitarian law by ensuring those who violate it are held accountable



Alaa, having been displaced herself now works with the IRC to distribute clothing and other basic necessities to children as part of the IRC's emergency response in Gaza, supported by the EU. This winter, as heavy rains and freezing temperatures compounded an already dire humanitarian crisis, more than 800 boys and girls benefited from these warm clothes. Although Alaa finds satisfaction in her work, this is tinged with a deep sadness as she supports people experiencing such grave dangers and difficulties.

Invest in solutions that work.

At a time of shrinking humanitarian and development aid budgets, every euro must deliver maximum impact.

The EU needs to invest in scaling up cost-effective solutions that are proven to work. These exist and – in many cases – are ready and waiting.

A photograph showing a man in a white lab coat and a woman carrying a child wading through floodwaters in a rural village. The man is wearing a blue face mask and holding a clipboard. The woman is wearing a black and white striped dress. In the background, there is a traditional thatched-roof hut partially submerged in water, surrounded by trees and a cloudy sky.

From treating malnutrition more efficiently to anticipating disasters before they strike, the IRC and partners have proven that smarter aid saves more lives with fewer resources.

| How the EU can make a difference:



Invest in proven, high-impact solutions – including those that protect against the spread of diseases, prevent and treat malnutrition, and build resilience to climate shocks



Scale up partnerships with NGOs and local responders, including women-led organisations, to better deliver aid and support communities over the longer-term



Direct at least 60% of the EU's official development assistance budget to fragile and conflict-affected states, prioritising those where needs are greatest



Mebrhatu, 38, is a vaccinator at Semamoket Hospital in Ethiopia's Addiet district. He travels to remote communities to ensure that children in hard-to-reach areas can receive life-saving vaccinations. When fuel and reliable transport are not available, he sometimes travels by foot or by mule for up to six hours to reach communities in need. His devoted efforts are part of the IRC's REACH project, funded by Gavi, which now delivers nearly 1.5 million vaccine doses every month across six countries in Africa. As the programme has scaled, delivery costs have dropped, making immunisation increasingly affordable and impactful – even in the most fragile environments.



Lead on prevention and diplomacy.

There are more active conflicts in the world than at any time since the Second World War, and too few are ending.

The EU must put its diplomatic weight and funding into prevention and peacemaking, working to de-escalate conflicts and protect civilians before crises spiral out of control.

It must support broader and more inclusive coalitions for peace, including by ensuring women's voices are front and center.



Altuma, aged 45, owned a restaurant and lived a happy life in Khartoum with her nine children. When war broke out, her children hid from the trauma or airstrikes under their beds. However, they were eventually forced to leave their home, and have since been displaced multiple times. Now in Gedaref, they are living in a shelter without a roof which cannot protect them from the scorching heat. The IRC's mobile clinic, with support from EU Humanitarian Aid, is supporting the family to ensure they remain in as good health as possible.

| How the EU can make a difference:



Address the economic drivers of conflict, ending profits from war and strengthening incentives for peace



Drive collective European efforts towards building “consortiums for peace” with newly-prominent powers in order to resolve crises



Press for women to have a full, equal and meaningful seat at the table in all peace processes

The EU must stand with communities in crisis.



For more analysis and recommendations, explore the full 2026 Emergency Watchlist