

## World Humanitarian Summit Making IHL Work for Women and Girls

Tuesday, May 24, 2016 - Istanbul, Turkey

### Introduction

**Janet Benshoof**, President of the  
Global Justice Center

### Moderator

**Charlotte Petri Gornitzka**,  
Director-General, Swedish  
International Development  
Cooperation Agency

### Panelists

**Margot Wallström**, Minister for  
Foreign Affairs of Sweden

**Dr. Helen Durham**, Director of  
International Law & Policy,  
International Committee of the Red  
Cross

**Julienne Lusenge**, President,  
Female Solidarity for Integrated  
Peace & Development (Sofepadi)

**Janet Benshoof**, President, Global  
Justice Center

### Participants

**Kate Gilmore**, United Nations  
Deputy High Commissioner

**Jelte van Wieren**, Director for  
Stability & Humanitarian Affairs,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Netherlands

**Dick Clomén**, Head of Policy &  
Strategic Advisor to the Secretary  
General, Swedish Red Cross

### Introduction by Janet Benshoof

Welcome distinguished panelists and participants. My name is Janet Benshoof and I am the President of the Global Justice Center.

The topic of this event is one of singular importance:

What must States do to uphold women's absolute rights to equal protection of the Geneva Conventions in today's armed conflicts?

Women, whether soldiers or civilians, are rights holders under international humanitarian law, not passive recipients of charitable aid. International humanitarian law explicitly disavows a "gender blind" standard.

Under international humanitarian law, all states must accommodate the distinct needs of women and girls in order to ensure that the outcome for women and girls is no less favorable than the outcome for men and boys. Only distinctions adverse to women are prohibited. This equality standard applies to all provisions of international humanitarian law, in all circumstances, without exception. Neither national laws or restrictive donor policies are a defense to states or humanitarian aid providers breaching the rights of war victims under the Geneva Conventions.

Upholding women's rights to equal protection of the Geneva Conventions will be transformational. Although only a small proportion of humanitarian aid is governed by international

humanitarian law, upholding the rights of women in war provides the catalyst for a global humanitarian regime that transforms the future of victims of all crises.

We want to thank our co-hosts, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and SOFEPADI, and the Summit organizers for letting us host this side-event.

We are honored to have with us today our distinguished moderator, the Director-General of Sida, Charlotte Petri Gornitzka. Please join me in welcoming her.