



UN Security Council Debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 10th May 2011

States must take immediate action to prevent human suffering from use of explosive weapons in populated areas

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) calls on States and international organisations to use the opportunity provided by the UN Security Council debate on the Protection of Civilians to:

- Acknowledge that use of explosive weapons in populated areas tends to cause severe harm to individuals and communities and furthers suffering by damaging vital infrastructure;
- Support the call of the UN Secretary-General for further work by States, UN agencies, international organisations and NGOs to better understand the impact of explosive weapons in populated areas and to develop mechanisms for improving civilian protection.

The last UN SG's report on protection of civilians in armed conflict, 11 Nov 2010, highlighted the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons when used in populated areas ([paras 48-51](#)). It urged Member States to respond by providing information on both the pattern of harm and the policies in place to limit that impact. Since then, external events have provided further evidence of the need for action on this issue:

- In March 2011, in Libya the sustained shelling and bombardment of areas populated by civilians was identified by the UN Humanitarian Chief as causing "widespread suffering";¹
- In the same month, the shelling of a market in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire highlighted the "dreadful humanitarian impact of explosive weapons when used in populated areas";²
- In the period since the last UN Protection of Civilians report, civilians have continued to be killed and injured as a result of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas of Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Gaza, Pakistan, Somalia and elsewhere. Based on media monitoring by the NGO AOV during the five months following the report, a minimum of 8,168 people have been reported killed and injured from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, with approximately 90% of these being civilians.³

Background: Explosive weapons include artillery shells, multiple launch rocket systems, air-dropped bombs, grenades and improvised explosives devices (IEDs), amongst others. The blast and fragmentation from these weapons kills and injures men, women and children in an area around the explosion, and can destroy vital infrastructure. When used within a concentration of civilians this often causes high levels of long-term harm to people who should be protected.⁴

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) calls for immediate action to prevent human suffering from explosive weapons in populated areas. Founding members include Action on Armed Violence, Handicap International, Human Rights Watch, IKV Pax Christi, Medact, Norwegian People's Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children UK.

¹ UN OCHA: <http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/USG%20Amos%20Statement%20Libya%2017March2011.pdf>

² UN OCHA: <http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/USG%20Amos%20Statement%20CDI%2018March2011.pdf>

³ AOV methodology, background and previous data: <http://www.landmineaction.org/issues/page.asp?PLID=1017&pageID=1068>

⁴ For background, see NGO reports online at: [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/assets/images/Devastating_Impact_low_res_\(3\).pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/assets/images/Devastating_Impact_low_res_(3).pdf)

<http://www.landmineaction.org/resources/Explosive%20violence.pdf>

<http://www.ikvpaxchristi.nl/files/Documenten/Veiligheid%20en%20Ontwapening/Explosive%20weapons%20policy%20brief%201%20low%20res.pdf>