

UN: Action needed to tackle explosive weapons in populated areas

AOAV update, 23 November 2010

The [2010 Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict](#) (para 48-51) expresses growing concerns about the “highly problematic” effects of explosive weapon use in populated areas. Noting the “substantial and ongoing civilian suffering” documented by organisations monitoring this violence, the report provides a concrete framework for action.

The Secretary-General’s report calls for action from States, United Nations agencies, international and non-governmental organisations on this issue, recommending three crucial steps towards enhancing civilian protection:

1. All groups are urged to “support systematic data collection and analysis of the human costs” of using explosive weapons in populated areas.
2. States are called on to cooperate in “collecting and making available... information on civilian harm resulting from the use of explosive weapons”.
3. The report encourages greater transparency from states, urging them to “issue policy statements outlining the conditions under which explosive weapons might be used in populated areas.”

In the open Security Council debate that followed the release of this report a number of States emphasised their support for these particular recommendations, including in the statement on behalf of the European Union.

The 2010 report is part of a growing consensus around the problematic nature of explosive weapons in populated areas. [Recent remarks](#) on explosive weapons by the Deputy Secretary-General at the *First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions* highlighted the “profound suffering to civilians” caused by this violence and also urged further action.

Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) welcomes both the recognition of this serious humanitarian problem and the concrete recommendations laid out in the Secretary-General’s report. These recommendations emphasise the fundamental importance of accountably documenting civilian harm and make it clear that States need to do much more in order to justify any use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Starting to count the cost

The impact of explosive weapons on civilians continues to be a pressing concern. New research¹ by AOAV has shown that during a seven week period beginning on 1 October 2010, there have been at least 2,374 civilian casualties caused by explosive violence. Of these casualties, 89% occurred in populated areas.

¹ The Explosive Violence Monitoring Project monitors English language media reports on incidents of explosive violence around the world, producing [weekly updates and statistical overviews](#).