

UN Security Council Protection of Civilians Debate, 22 Nov 2010:

Call for stronger protection from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas

Recent conflicts in Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza and Sri Lanka have again highlighted the threat civilians face when explosive weapons are used in populated areas.



Last year, the **UN Secretary-General** in his report on the Protection of Civilians expressed growing concern at the “indiscriminate and severe humanitarian impact” from explosive weapons, in particular when used in densely populated areas.

Earlier this year **The Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs** highlighted that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas “repeatedly causes unacceptably high levels of civilian harm.”

The **ICRC President** has raised concern at the “potentially devastating humanitarian consequences” when heavy or highly explosive weapons are used in densely populated areas.

This year’s UN Security Council debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict provides a critical opportunity for States to urge further work to understand and address this problem. We appeal to States to:

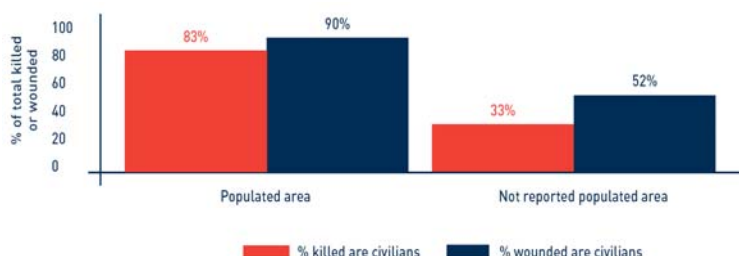
- **Support recognition that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas causes serious humanitarian harm;**
- **Support commitment to further work by States, UN agencies, international organisations and NGOs to better understand this problem and to develop mechanisms for improving civilian protection.**



Explosive weapons include artillery shells, air-dropped bombs, rockets, 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 destroys vital infrastructure. When used within a concentration of civilians this repeatedly causes high levels of harm to people who must be protected.

All users of explosive weapons should review their policies, gather data on harm caused, and work for stronger prevention mechanisms.



A pattern of harm

Data on 1,836 explosive violence incidents from a 6-month period in 2006 saw 18,000 reported casualties.

Where incidents occurred in populated areas, civilian harm was greatly increased.

(Source: Landmine Action, *Explosive violence: the problem of explosive weapons*, London 2009.)