



## Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity

Briefing paper by the International Network on Explosive Weapons ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul, 23-24 May 2016

Strong normative frameworks are vital to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The Core Commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit are an opportunity for states to renew their commitment to the protection of civilians, in particular from the severe ongoing harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and especially explosive weapons with wide area effects.

Whether from a bomb in a market place, a multiple launch rocket strike, or the use of barrel bombs, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas is a key cause of harm to civilians and one that requires urgent international attention. In 2015, more than 33,000 civilians were reported killed or injured by explosive weapons, according to [Action on Armed Violence \(AOAV\)](#). When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 92% of the casualties are civilian. The bombing and bombardment of towns and cities causes widespread **civilian death and injury**, and **destruction of infrastructure**, and is a **root cause of displacement**.

*“Commit to promote and enhance the protection of civilians and civilian objects, especially in the conduct of hostilities, for instance by working to prevent civilian harm resulting from the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas, and by sparing civilian infrastructure from military use in the conduct of military operations.”*

CC2: Uphold the Norms that Safeguard Humanity

The UN Secretary-General has highlighted this severe humanitarian impact. The report for the Summit [“One humanity: shared responsibility” \(A/70/709\)](#) describes the use of explosive weapons in populated areas as the **“primary killer of civilians in conflict”**.

Reflecting the urgent nature of this humanitarian problem, the **UN Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross last year issued an [unprecedented warning, calling on states to stop the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas](#)**. Against this background, discussions among states are now starting towards developing a political instrument to address this humanitarian

problem.

### Actions for states to take at the World Humanitarian Summit:

- **Endorse all of the [Core Commitments to “uphold the norms that safeguard humanity”](#) as recommended by the UN Secretary-General.**  
Core Commitment 2 recommends that states work to prevent civilian harm from the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas. More than 50 states have now recognised the severe humanitarian impact from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Support for Core Commitment 2 should be a building block for enhancing the protection of civilians in the future.
- **In general statements and interventions, express concern about the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, as a key cause of widespread civilian death and injury, and destruction of infrastructure, and is a root cause of displacement.**
- **Register interest in participating in the High Level Roundtable on “Upholding the norms that safeguard humanity”.**
- **Attend the side event on “Explosive weapons in populated areas and the need to better protect civilians”** on Monday, 23 May, at 15:00-16:30. Location: Hisar (330 - Theater) in the Lüfti Kirdar Convention and Exhibition Center (LKCC).