



Press release: Governments commit to tackle bombing and bombardment in towns and cities

States from Latin America and the Caribbean gather in Santiago, Chile and support development of an international political declaration to protect civilians from use of explosive weapons in populated areas

Santiago, 6 December 2018: Governments met in Santiago, Chile for a two-day conference aimed at better protecting civilians from bombing and bombardment in towns and cities. The use of heavy explosive weapons such as rockets, artillery, and aircraft bombs in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and elsewhere is causing high levels of civilian deaths and casualties. Research shows that when explosive weapons have been used in populated areas more than 90% of the casualties are civilians. Organisations working in conflict zones are calling for an international commitment to protect civilians, notably by ending the use of heavy explosive weapons in towns and cities.

“Bombing and bombardment in populated areas is the major cause of civilian deaths, injuries and destruction in many current conflicts,” said Laura Boillot, Coordinator of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW). ***“Ending the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas should be the most urgent task for states concerned with the protection of civilians.”***

The former and current UN Secretary-Generals have repeatedly called on states to [“stop using heavy explosive weapons”](#). The International Committee of the Red Cross has stated that “explosive weapons with wide-area effects should not be used in densely populated areas due to the significant likelihood of indiscriminate effects.” Around 100 countries have publicly recognised this serious humanitarian problem and states in Latin American and the Caribbean are starting developing a dedicated international response.

“We welcome the commitment from states in Latin America and the Caribbean to develop an international commitment to set stronger standards against the use of weapons that cause the greatest harm, especially heavy explosive weapons” said Cesar Jaramillo, SEHLAC, an INEW member working across the Latin America region. ***“Latin American and Caribbean states can provide meaningful leadership towards developing an international response”*** he said.

INEW is calling on states to develop an international political declaration that would set out concrete actions states could take to better protect civilians, including ending the use in populated areas of heavy explosive weapons, also referred to as explosive weapons with wide area effects, assistance for survivors, their families and affected communities, and the reconstruction of towns and cities that have been destroyed.

Survivors of explosive weapons, human rights and humanitarian advocates, as well as representatives of the UN and International Committee of the Red Cross met in Santiago alongside government officials tasked with responding to the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons.

“In our work in conflict zones around the world we continue to see serious harm to civilians from explosive weapons through death, injury and psychological trauma,” said Alma Al-Osta, Advocacy Manager at Humanity & Inclusion, a founding member of INEW. ***“Damage to schools, hospitals and other vital infrastructure denies civilians and their communities access to education, medical assistance and longer-term rehabilitation and assistance.”***

Because these weapon systems have such a high explosive content, are inaccurate or scatter multiple munitions over a wide area, they have particularly devastating consequences when used in areas where civilians are concentrated.

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ABOUT:

INEW is an NGO network calling for immediate action to prevent human suffering from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. INEW was established in March 2011 and is governed by a Steering Committee of Action on Armed Violence, CIVIC, Humanity & Inclusion, Human Rights Watch, PAX, Norwegian People’s Aid, Oxfam, SEHLAC, Save the Children and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. INEW members undertake research and advocacy to promote greater understanding of the problem and the concrete steps that can be taken to address it. INEW organisations also implement field programmes to reduce the impact of explosive weapons in affected areas. www.inew.org