



**International
Network on
Explosive Weapons**

Governments meet in Vienna to tackle bombing and bombardment in towns and cities

(Vienna, 20 September 2015) Governments will meet in Vienna tomorrow for a two-day meeting aimed at better protecting civilians from bombing and bombardment in towns and cities. The use of rockets, artillery, aircraft bombs, and other explosive weapons in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere is causing a predictable pattern of deaths, injuries and destruction. When explosive weapons were used in populated areas over 90% of the casualties were civilians. Organisations working in conflict zones are calling for an international commitment to help protect civilians, notably by ending the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.

“Bombing and bombardment in populated areas is the major cause of civilian deaths, injuries and displacement in many current conflicts,” said Richard Moyes, Coordinator of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW). *“States must set stronger standards against the use of weapons that cause the greatest harm, especially explosive weapons with wide area effects.”*

In June the UN Secretary-General [called on states](#) to “refrain from the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas”. 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.” [Over 40 countries](#) have publicly recognised this serious humanitarian problem and the Austrian government has invited around 20 of them to Vienna to start developing a dedicated international response.

Survivors of explosive weapons, human rights and humanitarian advocates, as well as representatives of the UN and Red Cross will meet in Vienna alongside government officials tasked with responding to the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons. INEW is calling on states to develop an international commitment that would set out concrete actions states could take to reduce harm, including ending the use in populated areas of explosive weapons with wide area effects, support to programmes that reduce risk, and assistance for survivors, their families and affected communities.

“In our work in conflict zones around the world we continue to see harm to children from explosive weapons through death, injury and psychological damage,” said Kimberly Brown, Humanitarian Policy Advisor at Save the Children, a founding member of INEW. *“Damage to schools, hospitals and other vital infrastructure denies children and their communities access to education, medical assistance and longer-term rehabilitation.”*

Because they are inaccurate or contain massive quantities of explosives, wide area effect weapons have particularly grave consequences when used where civilians are concentrated. Ending the use of these weapons in populated areas should be the most urgent task for states concerned with the protection of civilians. [Human Rights Watch has described this](#) as the single most significant act states could take to protect civilians in armed conflict.

The UN Special Representative on children and armed conflict, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, the International Committee of the Red Cross, civil society organisations and, most recently, the Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry on Gaza have all called on parties to conflict to take measures to prevent civilian harm from the use explosive weapons in populated areas. The [latest data from INEW member organisation Action on Armed Violence](#) recorded at least 41,847 people killed or injured by explosive weapons in 2014. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Gaza, Ukraine, Syria, and Yemen were the worst places in 2014 for the impact on civilians from explosive weapons.

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