



**Statement by the International Network on Explosive Weapons to the
UN General Assembly's First Committee on International Security and
Disarmament, New York**

Delivered by Ms. Mahpekay Sidiqi, 13 October 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to address the First Committee today on behalf of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW).

I am speaking from Kabul to share my own experience of how the bombing and shelling of cities and towns like mine, impacts people like me.

It has devastating impacts on our bodies, to our minds, it destroys our family homes, and it forces us to flee for fear of our lives and that of our loved ones.

The terrifying sounds of explosions, of buildings collapsing, of people screaming and the trembling earth are vivid memories from being as young as 6 years old.

It was terrifying. The bombing of my village forced my family to leave. Bombing and shelling was happening everywhere: from the air and on the ground.

Even though the city is several kilometers away from our village we walked to Kabul. It was me, my two sisters and my two brothers. It took us a full day to get to a safe place in Kabul. While we were walking to the city, airplanes above our heads dropped bombs. Our hair and our eyes were full of dust and with every explosion we thought we might lose each other. Luckily, on this day that did not happen and we all reached the city safe and sound. My family never returned to our villages again because our home was destroyed.

In Kabul however, I lost both of my legs in an explosion near the airport. After that, going to school became difficult as it was not accessible. I felt excluded because I was not able to walk like the others and I was depressed. At that time life didn't feel like it had any meaning.

Sadly, I am not the only one impacted by explosive weapons in Afghanistan. There are thousands of people like me, including many children who lost their limbs or their life from the use of these weapons in my city, where we lived.

Today, I work as an orthopedic technologist and I provide physical rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. Every month, every day, I help to treat and heal patients in our center and let me tell you - explosive weapons are still amongst the key causes of impairments. Just last month, I treated three patients that had lost legs, family members and their homes due to accidents from explosive remnants of war. One of them is a young woman who lost her leg and six family members. Her mental health and wellbeing has been heavily shaken.

Bombing and shelling damages and destroys civilians lives and livelihoods. But explosive weapons do not only affect individuals. They can ruin towns and cities, impact entire communities, destroy our homes, schools, hospitals, roads and bridges.

You have the power to help stop this. States in this room can stop harming civilians by agreeing not to use heavy explosive weapons in towns and cities.

I urge all of you to finalise the political declaration on explosive weapons as soon as it becomes possible, and approach this with the aim of developing stronger humanitarian standards that will protect people from harm.

Thank you.