



For further information contact:  
 Richard Moyes, Coordinator, [rmoyes@inew.org](mailto:rmoyes@inew.org), m: +44 (0) 7875 509 120  
 Thomas Nash, Coordinator, [tnash@inew.org](mailto:tnash@inew.org), m: +44 (0) 7711 926 730  
 Allison Boehm, UN Liaison Officer (NY), [aboehm@inew.org](mailto:aboehm@inew.org), m: 646 982 4676

## Explosive weapons in populated areas – the challenge for protection of children in armed conflict

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW)<sup>1</sup> calls on states to use the opportunity provided by the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Children in Armed Conflict in September 2012, and other relevant fora, to address the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons in populated areas. INEW encourages states to use the debate to:

- Acknowledge the severe impact on children caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas;
- Call for the collection of data on the impact of explosive weapons on children; and for information on national and multi-lateral policies regarding use of explosive weapons;<sup>2</sup>
- Call for monitoring and reporting where explosive weapons cause a pattern of killing and maiming of children, and for establishment of national action plans to address this;
- Call for an end to the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.

### An urgent humanitarian issue

Save the Children UK has stated that: “the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has a devastating impact on children. As well as killing and injuring [they are] denying children access to healthcare and education, and ruining their futures.”<sup>3</sup> In 2011 the UN Secretary-General’s annual report on Children and Armed Conflict noted that in Afghanistan “improvised explosive devices, suicide attacks, and rocket and mortar shelling” were the main causes of death and injury to children in conflict.<sup>4</sup>

Year 2012 has already seen further stark examples. The bombardment of Homs, El-Houleh and other urban areas in Syria led to the UN Security Council calling for the Syrian government to “end the use of heavy weapons in population centres.”<sup>5</sup> Here, a particular cause for concern has been heavy explosive weapons that can have wide area effects, such as multiple launch rockets, high explosive artillery and mortars, as well as car bombs and other IEDs.

### An opportunity for new standards

Recognition of the distinct problems associated with explosive weapons has grown strongly over recent years:

- The 2010 UN Secretary-General’s Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict expressed increasing concern at this issue and urged Member States to support data collection on the humanitarian problem, and to make available information on national policies.<sup>6</sup>
- The April 2011 UN Secretary-General’s Report on Children and Armed Conflict noted with respect to Somalia that, “of particular concern was the recent increase in the number of civilians, among them many children, being killed and injured owing to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.”<sup>7</sup>
- In 2011, the International Committee of the Red Cross stated that, “due to the significant likelihood of indiscriminate effects and despite the absence of an express legal prohibition for specific types of weapons, the ICRC considers that explosive weapons with wide a wide impact area should be avoided in densely populated areas.”<sup>8</sup>

Building on this clear direction, the September 2012 Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict as well as the briefings by the Special Representative for Children and Conflict to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, present an opportunity for states to express their support for concrete steps that will curb the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and to provide stronger protection to children in the future.

<sup>1</sup> INEW is a network of NGOs established in 2011 by Action on Armed Violence, Handicap International, Human Rights Watch, IKV Pax Christi, Medact, Norwegian People’s Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children UK.

<sup>2</sup> See recommendation 51, report of the UN Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, 11 November 2010, S/2010/579.

<sup>3</sup> Devastating Impact: Explosive weapons and children, Save the Children UK, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, 23 April 2011, A/65/820-S/2011/250

<sup>5</sup> Statements by the President of the Security Council, 21 March 2012, S/PRST/2012/6 and 27 May 2012, SC/10658.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the UN Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 11 November 2010, S/2010/579

<sup>7</sup> Report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, 23 April 2011, A/65/820-S/2011/250

<sup>8</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts, October 2011, 31IC/11/5.1.2