

United Nations Nations Unies

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Dear Excellency,

We are writing following the important call that you and other humanitarian leaders made to all parties to the conflict in Syria to commit to prevent the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. More than two years later we still see death, injury, psychological trauma, displacement and destruction of schools, hospitals and other vital infrastructure as a result of this appalling practice. This devastation is not limited to Syria – the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects is causing similar destruction in Iraq, Ukraine, Yemen and elsewhere.

Against this backdrop, we are encouraged that discussions are underway towards a political response to this pressing humanitarian concern. In his June 2015 Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, the United Nations Secretary-General recommended that Member States commit to refrain from the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. The Secretary-General reiterated this call in his recent report for the World Humanitarian Summit and his Agenda for Humanity. In September 2015 the Government of Austria and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) hosted a meeting where several States expressed support for the development of a political declaration. Such a commitment would seek to stigmatise this practice and encourage a change of practice towards strengthened protection of civilians. It is one concrete step that concerned States can and should take to respond to the harm caused by bombing and shelling in towns and cities.

As momentum continues to build towards such a commitment, and as homes, schools and communities continue to be destroyed by the widespread use of explosive weapons in conflicts around the world, we encourage you to contribute to this work by:

- Reaffirming your call, in line with the United Nations Secretary-General's recommendation as well as the recent appeal by the Secretary-General and the President of the ICRC, for parties to conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas
- Encouraging all States to join the growing group of governments who have spoken out publicly about this urgent humanitarian issue, and calling on them to play a proactive role towards the development of a political commitment as recommended by the United Nations Secretary-General
- Continue to highlight the devastating humanitarian and development impacts of this practice through your work and in official statements

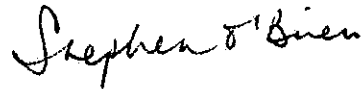
OCHA and the United Nations more broadly, as well as civil society under the banner of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), will continue to speak out

about the harm caused by this practice and will work to respond to the humanitarian needs of civilians impacted around the world. Strengthening the protection of civilians in armed conflict will also be a key theme at the World Humanitarian Summit in May, in which you are encourage to participate. In line with the Secretary-General's recommendation, we are supporting the development by States of a political commitment to ensure that civilians are better protected in conflicts and we look forward to working with you on this vital humanitarian concern.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Moyes
Coordinator, International Network
on Explosive Weapons



Stephen O' Brien
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
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His Excellency
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