

INEW intervention, delivered by Mahpekay Sidiqi, on 3 March 2021
Informal consultations on a political declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas,
3-5 March 2021

On the Preamble of the January 2021 Political Declaration text

Good afternoon Ambassador, States Delegates,

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

This is probably the second or third time we meet virtually, but it's the first time I participate in the diplomatic discussions to shape a political declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

I'm conscious that over these three days, you'll look at many details in the text. Now I will share reflections more generally on what these consultations and the future political declaration needs to do.

When I was 6, the bombing of my village forced my family to leave. Bombing was happening everywhere and we had no other choice. Let me tell you: it was terrifying.

We reached Kabul but the city was not safe. I lost both my legs in an explosion. 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.

My family and I have had a long journey to safety, and through my recovery which was far from easy, both mentally and practically.

Today, I work as an orthopedic technologist and I provide physical rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. I witness on a daily basis the impact explosive weapons have on women and men, boys and girls – on civilians who have nothing to do with the war.

As if this was not enough, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas destroys homes, and infrastructures, among many other things. It forces us to live without shelter, without food, without essential services.

Bombing and shelling causes unacceptable suffering.

Today's discussion, and this text, should start from this understanding: explosive weapons do cause extensive harm to civilians. There is no 'can' about it.

This text needs to better reflect that, and do justice to the experiences of so many who have already suffered.

This declaration also needs to aim for the strongest protections to people as possible. A strong commitment against continued use of explosive weapons in towns and cities, and a title that shows that this is what we are working towards.

How many other stories like mine, those of my patients, neighbors and friends do we need to hear to recognize the risk to civilians from bombing and shelling in towns and cities, and human suffering that follows for weeks, months and years to follow?

It's time to acknowledge this. It's time to stop causing more suffering and to remediate to those already affected.

Thank you