



EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS DEVASTATE CIVILIANS IN POPULATED AREAS WORLDWIDE GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY EVENT IN DUBLIN MAPS OUT HOW TO LIMIT SUFFERING

- **Irish Civil Servants Honoured with the first ever International ‘Protection of Civilians’ Award for their Leading Role in Getting Agreement on Global Explosive Weapons Declaration - to be endorsed by countries the following day at Dublin Castle.**
- **Delegates hear from civilian armed conflict survivors and see replica bombed out school classroom**
- **Activists gather from across the world after a decade-long successful campaign for a new international agreement to impose limits on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.**

Dublin, Thursday 17th November – Today activists and survivors of armed conflict gather at a Global Civil Society Forum in Dublin hosted by the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) and Dóchas to map out civilian and humanitarian problems caused by explosive weapons. The aim is to ensure that the international declaration on explosive weapons to be signed the next day, keeps civilians safer in armed conflict, and limits the use of explosive weapons in cities, towns, and other populated areas.

INEW member organisation, Humanity and Inclusion, will award the first ever **‘Protection of Civilians Award’ medal to Irish civil servants** at the civil society forum for their extensive contributions to protect civilians in armed conflict worldwide. Michael Gaffey (now Head of Irish Aid and former Ambassador to the UN in Geneva) and Jamie Walsh (Deputy Ambassador to the UN in Geneva) who led the diplomatic process in Geneva to develop the new international Declaration on the Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas over the past three years, on behalf of the government of Ireland.

Speaking at the civil society forum at the Richmond Education and Event Centre in the Dublin’s city centre INEW spokesperson Laura Boillot *said: “Using explosive weapons in cities and towns is now the leading cause of civilian casualties in armed conflicts. It is high time for states to endorse the declaration to limit the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and to help civilians and their communities during and after conflict.”*

A uniquely constructed replica of a ‘Bombed out School’ installation by Save the Children and INEW will take centre stage at the forum.

Speakers at the forum include Nujeen Mustafa a Syrian survivor of armed conflict and activist who fled her homeland aged 16 (author of the book “A girl from Aleppo”) and Dr Hamza Al-Kateab a

doctor who ran one of the last functioning hospitals in Aleppo and who features in award-winning film “For Sama”. States, international NGOs, civil society representatives including people who have lived through bombing and shelling in conflict affected areas such as Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Ethiopia, and Pakistan will all contribute to the forum.

Led by the Irish Government, the *Declaration on the Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas* will be signed tomorrow, November 18th, by representatives from over 60 countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Brazil, Japan and affected country Palestine. A key aim is to ensure that the political declaration is the beginning of a long-term, committed and effective process of work to keep civilians safer in armed conflict.

- **Civilians account for vast majority of casualties in contemporary armed conflicts:** A century ago, civilians represented around 10%–15% of total casualties in armed conflict. By World War II this had risen to nearly 50%, and by the 1990s civilians accounted for between 80% and 85% of casualties in armed conflict, a trend that continued and intensified into the twenty-first century ([see ODI](#)).
- **Use of explosive weapons in populated areas primary killer of civilians in conflict:** When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 90% of victims are civilians; every year tens of thousands of civilians are killed and injured by bombing and shelling in towns, cities and other populated areas ([see Action on Armed Violence](#)).
- **In the last decade, over 511,000 civilians were reportedly directly killed and injured by the use of explosive weapons in over 130 countries.** Some of the most affected countries include: Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Ukraine, Nigeria, Somalia, Palestine (Gaza) and Libya ([see Action on Armed Violence](#)).

ENDS

ABOUT INEW

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) is an NGO partnership calling for immediate action to prevent human suffering from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. It comprises more than 40 organisations from across 25 countries. The steering committee includes Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), Article 36, Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), Humanity and Inclusion (HI), Human Rights Watch, PAX, Norwegian People’s Aid, Oxfam, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Save the Children and SEHLAC. www.inew.org | @explosiveweapon

About Dóchas

Dóchas is the Irish network for international development and humanitarian organisations. It is a meeting place and a leading voice for organisations that want Ireland to be a world leader in efforts to bring about global justice. Our vision is of a world where poverty and marginalisation are unacceptable, and where every person has the right to live a life in dignity. Dóchas is gratefully supported by Irish Aid.

About the Dublin Adoption Conference, Dublin Castle on Friday 18 November 2022

A new international *Declaration on the Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas* opens for states to endorse it at a conference in Dublin on Friday 18 November 2022.

Foreign Minister Simon Coveney will open the meeting, along with other high-level representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations and the International Network on Explosive Weapons, and Syrian armed conflict survivor and activist Nujeen Mustafa.

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is the leading cause of civilian casualties in contemporary armed conflicts, and the Declaration is the first formal international recognition that this must be addressed urgently and directly.

The Declaration was finalised by states on 17 June 2022 at a meeting at the United Nations in Geneva. It **is the culmination of almost three years of diplomatic negotiations led by Ireland involving States, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and civil-society organisations, including the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW).**

The declaration promotes stronger standards to protect civilians and commits states which endorse it, to take action to implement it by making changes to their national policy and practice, including military policies and operational rules of engagement.

The declaration should be seen as a starting point—not an end point. A key area will be changing military practice away from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. There is much more that needs to be done to strengthen the protection of civilians and building stronger standards and driving forward significant changes takes time.