



Statement by the International Network on Explosive Weapons

United Nations General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security

17 October 2025

Delivered by Katherine Young, International Network on Explosive Weapons

Thank you, Chair,

It is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of INEW – the International Network on Explosive Weapons – a global network of civil society organizations that calls for strengthened action to prevent human suffering from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is a leading cause of harm to civilians in armed conflict. The bombing and shelling of towns and cities kills and injures tens of thousands of civilians each year, with children particularly vulnerable. It destroys critical civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and power and water systems, which impacts the provision of essential services and leads to long-term civilian suffering. Civilians suffer complex and life changing injuries and long-term psychological distress from the trauma of living under bombing.

In towns and cities across the world today, civilians continue to bear the brunt of bombing and shelling. This suffering is widespread and severe and has reached unprecedented levels in recent years. In 2024, civilian deaths caused by the use of explosive weapons remained staggeringly high in Gaza, while in the rest of the world they rose by more than half compared to the previous year, driven largely by conflict in Lebanon, Myanmar, Syria and Ukraine.

Meanwhile, attacks with explosive weapons on civilian infrastructure and essential services rose sharply in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan and Yemen. The use of explosive weapons in attacks on healthcare increased by 64 percent from the previous year, damaging and destroying health facilities and ambulances and killing health workers. Likewise, the use of explosive weapons in

attacks on education more than doubled, and attacks on humanitarian aid occurred nearly five times more frequently in 2024.

While these impacts on civilians are devastating, they are also foreseeable. Most importantly, they are preventable.

On 18 November 2022, 83 states endorsed the *Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences of the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas*. The culmination of almost three years of consultations – the Declaration is the first formal international recognition that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has severe humanitarian consequences that must be urgently addressed. The number of endorsers has now risen to 89.

By endorsing the Declaration, states commit to avoid civilian harm by restricting or refraining from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Endorser states are expected to act in good faith and implement their commitments. This should include reviewing existing policies and practices relevant to the protection of civilians, engaging in dialogue with key partners including civil society, and supporting and participating in interim activities.

On 19-20 November 2025, the second international follow-up conference will be held in San José, Costa Rica to review and advance implementation efforts and to set a roadmap for action leading up to the third international conference and beyond. States should come prepared to share progress towards implementing the Declaration's commitment.

INEW also calls on states to:

- Continue to publicly acknowledge and call for action to address the severe harm to individuals and communities from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, both direct and indirect;
- Endorse, if not already the case, the *Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas* and implement its commitments, including in the areas of military policy and practice, victim assistance, humanitarian access, and data collection; and
- Encourage other States to endorse the Declaration in order to promote its adoption and implementation by the greatest number of states. This includes convening or participating in discussions at the regional and sub-regional level.

Endorsing states can also take action and call on parties to conflict to stop the bombardment of cities, towns and other populated areas. To that end, states can use diplomatic means and influence to call on parties to conflict to:

- Stop the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas in recognition of the increased risk of harm when these weapons have wide area effects;
- Take into account both the direct and indirect effects on civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas;
- Facilitate rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to those in need;
- Provide, facilitate, or support assistance to victims—which includes people injured, survivors, families of people killed or injured, as well as communities affected by the armed conflict; and
- Facilitate the work of the United Nations, the ICRC, and civil society organisations aimed at protecting and assisting civilian populations from the humanitarian impacts of explosive weapon use.

INEW stands ready to support these efforts.

Thank you.