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PRESS RELEASE:

States set to adopt first ever international agreement to protect civilians from explosive weapons in populated areas

- Over 70 states including Canada are expected to sign on to the first international explosive weapons declaration to protect civilians in populated areas, at Dublin Castle, Friday 18 November 2022.
- Campaigners gathered from across the world after a decade-long campaign - a Civil Society Forum on Thursday, 17 November 2022, will plan how the Declaration can help make civilians safer in conflict.
- The Declaration commits states to impose restrictions on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas to reduce civilian harm, and also to assist victims and affected communities.
- When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 90% of victims are civilians.

Dublin, 17 November 2022 – States, including Canada and many allies, will meet at Dublin Castle this Friday, to sign the [“Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas”](#). The landmark agreement addresses the widespread civilian suffering and devastation resulting from the bombing and shelling of cities, towns, and other populated areas. Mines Action Canada, Project Ploughshares and Humanity & Inclusion Canada, the Canadian members of International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), welcome the declaration and call on all states to sign and implement it.

“States are sending a clear message that using explosive weapons in populated areas causes unacceptable civilian suffering and devastation and must stop. Now Canada has to implement the Declaration to help civilians and their communities during and after conflict”, said Cesar Jaramillo, Executive Director of Project Ploughshares

The Declaration requires states to impose limits on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which is the leading cause of harm to civilians in conflicts today.

It also requires states to assist victims and affected communities both during and after conflict and to address the long-term suffering that stems from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Civilians suffer physical and psychological injury. Damage to and destruction of critical civilian infrastructure interferes with health care, education, and other services. People are forced to flee the towns and cities in which they live and work.

“Nobody thinks about people like me, with no place to hide. This leads to psychological trauma. I was 12, in a wheelchair and terrified, but there was nothing anyone could do. When civilians are bombed it’s not only lives, cities and homes that are lost but also their future. I hope that signing the declaration will not be just a piece of paper – but the beginning of a real change. People suffering in wars around the world need it”, said Nujeen Mustafa, who fled from Aleppo, Syria to Germany.

On Friday, the morning of the conference, participating campaigners and states will unveil a ‘Memorial to the Unknown Civilian’, in recognition of the heavy toll on civilians of bombing and shelling in towns and cities across the world, in the garden of Dublin Castle. Participants will also be able to visit a uniquely constructed replica of a ‘Bombed out School’ in the Castle.

“There is a widespread pattern of harm: when towns and cities are bombed, it is civilians that suffer the most. By joining this political declaration, Canada is standing with civilians around the world and building on the legacy of its leadership for the Ottawa Treaty.”, said Anne Delorme from Humanity & Inclusion Canada.

Ethiopia, Iraq, Palestine (Gaza), Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen are recent examples of affected countries.

Before the conference, campaigners and survivors of armed conflict also gathered at a Global Civil Society Forum in Dublin on Thursday, 17 November, to look at the civilian and humanitarian problems caused by explosive weapons and to ensure the international declaration makes a meaningful impact.

"Although Canada has not seen bombing and shelling of our cities and towns, the reverberating effects of EWIPA have shaped countless Canadians. Many Canadians are Canadians strictly because they or their parents sought safety from bombing and shelling - whether it is was from Vietnam in the 1970s, Lebanon in the 1980s, the Balkans in the 1990s, Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s, Syria in the 2010s or the Ukrainians who are arriving today. The use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas has impacted hundreds of thousands of people who now call Canada home," said Paul Hannon, Executive Director of Mines Action Canada.

Explosive weapons were designed for use in open battlefields, and are often deadly choices when used in towns, cities and other areas in which civilians are concentrated.

“Heavy explosive weapons, which are inaccurate, have a wide blast or fragmentation radius, or are delivered in groups, are a deadly choice for civilians”, said Steve Goose from Human Rights Watch. “Use of explosive weapons with such wide area effects should always be avoided in populated areas.”

The text of the Declaration was finalised at the United Nations in Geneva on 17 June 2022, through a diplomatic process led by the government of Ireland.

States that sign the declaration must move quickly to begin the process of implementation. This includes developing policies and practices which limit the use of explosive weapons in

populated areas and ensure that the protection of civilians is prioritized in the planning and conduct of military operations.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION BELOW & MORE IN [BACKGROUND DOCUMENT](#)

UN / ICRC PRESS RELEASE - <https://press.un.org/en/2022/dc3854.doc.htm>

About INEW - <https://www.inew.org> @explosiveweapon

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. Canadian members of INEW include Mines Action Canada, Project Ploughshares and Humanity & Inclusion Canada.

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, at a conference in Dublin, 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 commits states that 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 was finalised by states on 17 June 2022 at a meeting at the UN 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 from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and commits states that endorse it, to take action to implement it with 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.

Why strengthen the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas?

As the world urbanises, so does conflict. Civilians face bombing and shelling where they live and work. How wars are fought also changed: fighting and bombing often takes place in busy populated centres, with weapons designed for use in open battlefields.

A century ago, civilians made up 10–15% of casualties in armed conflict. By World War II, this rose to nearly 50%. By the 1990s civilians accounted for 80- 85% of armed conflict casualties, a rising trend which continued/ intensified, into the 21st century (Kaldor, 2013, cited in ODI).

Today, when explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 90% of victims are civilians - a trend consistently documented for over a decade (AOAV). In the last decade, over 511,000 civilians were reportedly directly killed and / or injured by explosive weapons (AOAV).

The UN Secretary-General described the use of explosive weapons in populated areas as the “primary killer of civilians in conflict. Attacks and the loss of housing and essential services - combined with leftover contamination from unexploded ordnance - triggers many civilians to flee or leave their homes (see more ICRC). ENDS