



Press release

States must commit to a strong political declaration against bombing in populated areas

Ottawa, 3 September, 2020. States will gather at the online panel discussion "Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare" on 7 September to address issues, policies and practices related to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. In Yemen, Libya, Syria, daily bombing has devastating consequences for the civilians. 90% of victims of explosive violence are civilians. This major humanitarian issue must be addressed. The conference takes place before a final round of negotiations on a political declaration against bombing in populated areas expected before the end of the year. HI, as a co-founding member of International Network on Explosive Weapons ([INEW](#)) is fully engaged in the diplomatic process to urge States to support a strong political declaration to end human suffering caused by explosive weapons.

- The conference aims at **relaunching the diplomatic process towards a political declaration against bombing in populated areas**, which was temporarily postponed by the COVID pandemic. It aims at discussing about the human suffering caused to civilians by bombing and shelling in urban areas and discussing technical, legal and military aspects of urban warfare.
- **Quote of Humanity & Inclusion's (HI) Advocacy Director Anne Héry: "We really fear that due to context caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the diplomatic process for a political declaration against bombing in populated areas is being postponed for too long and that there would be no concrete results in the coming months...Bombing in populated areas is a major humanitarian issue: deaths, complex injuries, psychological trauma, destruction of vital infrastructures, displacement of population and contamination with unexploded ordnance... A political declaration against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas is urgently needed. States should sense the seriousness of the human suffering and relaunch actively the diplomatic process."**
- More than 70 States are involved in this political process, **recognizing the urgency to act** and participated to discussing the draft of a political declaration to end human suffering caused by the use of explosive weapons.
- The negotiation process for a political declaration started with a first meeting on 18 November in Geneva and should close with a Conference to be scheduled early 2021 in Dublin, when a political declaration **should open for endorsements**. HI and members of the International Network of Explosive Weapons (INEW) **continue to dialogue with**

States to convince them to fully support a strong political declaration to end the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas and support the affected people.

- **HI call for citizens' support to mobilize parliamentarians in 7 countries** (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, United Kingdom), **and ensure that governments will engage to the cause:** Citizens are invited to sign the online petition [<https://hi-canada.org/en/petition-stop-bombing-civilians>] to ask their government to commit against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.
- Armed conflicts are increasingly fought in populated areas; mainly cities. The impact of the use of explosive weapons is devastating for civilians: According to Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) more than **250,000 civilians were killed or injured by explosive weapons in 2011-2019**. When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, **90% of the victims are civilians**.
- The use of explosive weapons in populated areas also leads to the destruction of **essential infrastructure** like houses, hospitals, schools, water and electricity supply systems, leave massive contamination with unexploded ordnances and is one of **key drivers of population displacement**.
- **Quote of Amina Azimi from ALSO (Afghan Landmine Survivors Organisation), an advocate for the rights of disabled women in Afghanistan. ALSO has been an HI organization partner for years. During the conference, she testifies on the moment when she was hit by a rocket mid 90's:** "Today, I would like to ask you what you remember from your 8 years old life. I remember going to my sister's house to play and then, on the way back home, a rocket exploding very close to me. I remember seeing my leg bleeding and many people gathering around me for help. I did not know what to do. It took few hours for a private taxi driver to reach the hospital, which became my home for more than a year and a half."

About Humanity & Inclusion (HI)

HI is an independent international aid organisation. It has been working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster for 36 years. Working alongside people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions and promoting respect for their dignity and basic rights. Since it was founded in 1982, HI has set up development programmes in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergency situations. There are eight national associations within the network (Germany, Belgium, Canada, United States, France, Luxembourg, UK and Switzerland), working tirelessly to mobilise resources, co-manage projects and increase the impact of the organisation's principles and actions. HI is one of six founding organisations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize and winner of the Conrad N. Hilton Award in 2011. HI takes action and campaigns in places where "living with dignity" is no easy task.

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