



February 9, 2020

Civilians deserve a strong political declaration against bombing in populated areas

Montreal, Canada — On Monday, February 10, States' delegations, militaries, United Nations agencies and civil society gather at the United Nations in Geneva to discuss on a political declaration against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Humanity & Inclusion and members of the International Network of Explosive Weapons (INEW) are working with States to convince them to create a strong political declaration to end human suffering caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and support victims.

Armed conflicts are increasingly fought in populated areas; mainly cities. The impact of the use of explosive weapons is devastating for civilians: In 2019, [Action on Armed Violence \(AOAV\) recorded 29,500 deaths and injuries from the use of explosive weapons around the world](#). Civilians continued to bear the burden of harm, accounting for 66% (or 19,400) of total casualties (killed and injured). When explosive weapons were used in populated areas, over 90% of those killed and injured were civilians.

More than 80 States are participating to the talks to refine a political declaration against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Elements of the political declaration are now circulating between State delegations and experts, showing a clear recognition of the harm caused by explosive weapons used in populated areas, and suggesting a commitment with particular focus on explosive weapons with wide area effect.

“We are now definitely embarked towards a political declaration with the right focus,” says Alma Taslidžan Al-Osta, Humanity & Inclusion’s Disarmament and Protection of Civilians Advocacy Manager. “There is also a clear signal that there will be significant commitment for assistance to victims and humanitarian aid for affected populations, which is of serious importance to Humanity & Inclusion.”

Humanity & Inclusion’s delegation is working to secure three points:

1. to ensure that the declaration will call on states to ‘stop’ using explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas
2. to include obligations for states to assist victims and their communities

3. to require militaries to share good policies and practice for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

“We must remain vigilant,” says Jerome Bobin, Canadian Executive Director of Humanity & Inclusion in Canada. “The final version will have to include a strong and unequivocal commitment regarding explosive weapons with wide area effect, relevant and adequate obligations on victim assistance, and a proper monitoring process to ensure concrete change.”

When used in populated areas, explosive weapons, especially those with wide area effects, destroy essential infrastructures like houses, hospitals, and schools, and leave massive contamination with unexploded ordnance. Such explosive weapons are one of the key drivers of forced displacement.

This second round of negotiations on February 10, after a first meeting in Geneva in November 2019, will be followed by another round of consultations late March. The culmination is a conference scheduled this May in Dublin, where the political declaration will be opened to States for endorsements.

Americans are urged to sign the Stop Bombing Civilians petition <https://hi-canada.org/en/petition-stop-bombing-civilians> to support campaign association against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The Vienna Conference, October 2019

The three rounds of negotiations for a political declaration against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas were launched in October at the [Vienna Conference “Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare.”](#) The event attracted 133 States, with a majority announcing their willingness to work on a political declaration to end human suffering caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

About Humanity & Inclusion

Co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for its work banning landmines, Humanity & Inclusion (the new name of handicap international), is an independent international aid organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster for 38 years. Working alongside people with disabilities and 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, Humanity & Inclusion has set up development programs in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergency situations. Humanity & Inclusion is one of six founding organizations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, and winner of the 2011 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize. Humanity & Inclusion takes action and campaigns in places where “living with dignity” is no easy task. In 2018, Humanity & Inclusion’s projects directly benefitted 2.1 million people.