



# THE EWIPA CAMPAIGN

The role of parliamentarians in the diplomatic process against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas

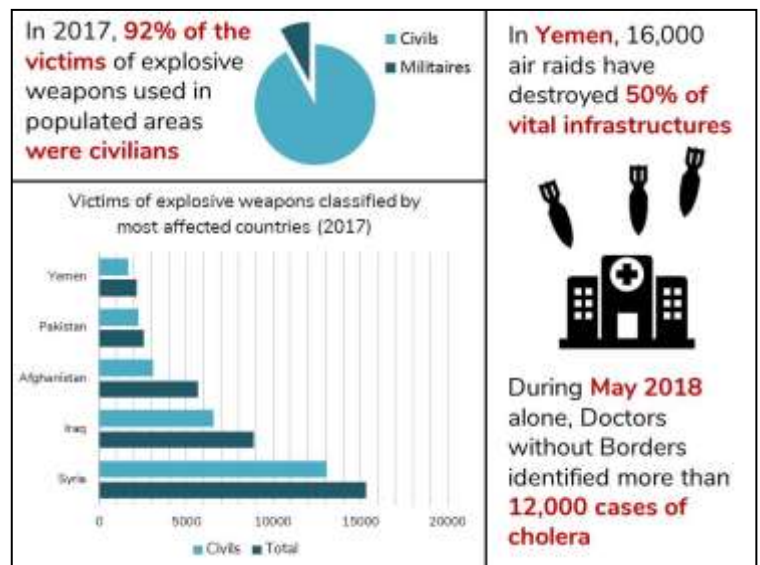
## What does “the use of explosive weapons in populated areas” mean?

Explosive weapons refer to conventional weapons that are activated by the detonation of a highly explosive substance creating a blast and fragmentation effect, such as aircraft bombs, artillery shells, mortars, missile and rocket warheads, grenades and improvised explosive devices.

These weapons generally create a zone of blast and fragmentation with the potential to kill, injure, or damage anyone or anything within that zone<sup>1</sup>. Their specific features (wide-area effect, inaccuracy, multiple munitions) make their use in populated areas particularly problematic, and often contravenes with the most basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL)<sup>2</sup>.

The effects of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas are disastrous in humanitarian terms. At the moment of impact, explosive weapons kill and injure a high number of civilians, causing both physical and psychological traumas. This military practice also carries out numerous long-term consequences:

- **Destruction of civilian goods and infrastructures** (houses, hospitals, schools, etc.);
- **Lack of access** to water, housing, medical care, food, etc.;
- **Food and sanitary insecurity**, leading to the emergence of preventable diseases, such as cholera or diphtheria;
- **Contamination** of entire regions by explosive remnants of war (ERW);
- **Forced displacement** of thousands of people fleeing bombings, ERW, disease, famine, etc.



Source : AOAV, 2017 report (<https://aoav.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Explosive-Violence-Monitor-2017-v6.pdf>)

## The ongoing process on the protection of civilians from EWIPA

A **coalition of 31 NGOs** named **INEW** (International Network on Explosive Weapons) is currently **campaigning** for better protection of civilians from EWIPA. A **core group of 12 States**<sup>3</sup>, led by Austria, is consolidating elements for a Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) to put an end to the human suffering caused by this practice.

In parallel to this process, **Germany has launched “EWIPA talks” initiative in 2018**, to bring EWIPA on the international agenda in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). This initiative is composed of two open format discussions to raise the leading questions about how States and their armed forces are adapting their policies/doctrines, military tactics and weaponry to the challenges of conducting military operations in populated areas and the vulnerability of civilians therein.

<sup>1</sup> OCHA, “Compilation of Military Policy and Practice: Reducing the humanitarian impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas” (2017), <http://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/OCHA%20Compilation%20of%20Military%20Policy%20and%20Practice%202017.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> The principle of proportionality, for example, prohibits the use of methods and means of warfare - considering the military goal that is being pursued by the attack - which are likely to cause superfluous and disproportionate harm to indirect civilian victims (“collateral damages”).

<sup>3</sup> Austria, Chile, Costa-Rica, Ireland, Lebanon, Mexico, Mozambique, New-Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Senegal, Switzerland.



## **AN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY INITIATIVE**

In order to revive the diplomatic process, and ensure that Canada plays a proactive role in it, Humanity & Inclusion is launching an **inter-parliamentary initiative**.

During the month of **September 2018**, the eight national associations of Humanity & Inclusion<sup>4</sup> will send a **joint letter** to their members of parliament to introduce them the EWIPA campaign and to ask for their support. "The dynamic initiated by this action should incite States participating to military operations to review their policies and

practices, in order to put an end to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas."

This action will also be the occasion to identify the most committed MPs to drive this fight internally and to suggest them to become **the ambassadors of the EWIPA campaign**. The role of these ambassadors will be to work jointly for the promotion of this action, through public speaking, questions to the government, open parliamentary hearings and any other means of putting the issue of EWIPA on the political agenda. Public events that will be organised post inter-parliamentary actions will engage media and raise awareness of the public on civilian casualties in conflicts.

In order to facilitate their work and give them more content to rely on, Humanity & Inclusion will share with these ambassadors **various reports and information** based on **evidence collected by our field staff**, or stemming from partner organizations, highlighting the impact of EWIPA on civilians in specific contexts such as Syria and Iraq, and suggesting concrete steps that could be taken to address the issue.

### **TO GO FURTHER...**

Since the beginning of its engagement in the EWIPA campaign, Humanity & Inclusion has published numerous reports on the humanitarian consequences of EWIPA:

- Recently, HI published a factsheet on the contamination in Mosul, 1 year after the battle for Mosul. The factsheet pointed out that the city is still polluted by 8 million tons of war debris, which are highly contaminated with improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war, constituting a permanent threat to the people returning to their homes.
- HI also published two reports named "QASEF" on forced migrations. Based on surveys conducted with Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the QASEF reports highlighted the existence of a causality link between the use of EWIPA and forced displacements.
- Furthermore, for years HI has been documenting the consequences of EWIPA in Syria, adopting each time different perspectives (contamination, type of injuries, humanitarian access, mental health, etc.).

All HI's content is available on our [blog](#). More reports and factsheets are also published on [INEW's website](#).

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<sup>4</sup> Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, United-Kingdom, United-States, Switzerland.