



For Immediate Release

Press Release

Humanity & Inclusion (HI) calls on States to endorse the international agreement against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas

Montreal, October 24, 2022 - On 18 November, States will be gathering at the Dublin Conference to endorse an international agreement to strengthen the protection of civilians from explosive weapons in populated areas.



On March 22, a missile hit a residential area of Kiev, Ukraine, injuring 23 people and killing one child.
/ © V. de Viguerie, HI

Today's conflicts are increasingly fought in urban environments. As a result, 90% of the victims are civilian. In World War II, civilians represented 50% of war victims and, a century

ago, only 15%. This escalation in the number of civilian casualties is unacceptable. The Dublin Conference concludes a three-year diplomatic process. It gives States a unique opportunity to halt the trend and address the humanitarian harm caused by the bombing and shelling of towns and cities.

Weapons such as 500-kg bombs, designed for use in open battlefields and with an impact radius of several hundred meters, are dropped from planes on crowded cities. Such weapons show no mercy for civilians. These most destructive weapons should be banned from cities and towns. The international agreement against urban bombing is a major step towards better protection for civilians in armed conflict areas. But our fight is far from over. At HI, we will continue to denounce the harm caused to civilians by urban bombing, to track those responsible and to fight for a zero civilian casualty policy.” – Anne Héry, Director of Advocacy and Institutional Relations at Humanity & Inclusion (HI) Federation.

On 18 November, Ireland is gathering States at a conference in Dublin to address the harm caused to civilians by urban bombing and improve the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. **This is the first-ever international agreement on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.** States will have the opportunity to **consign urban bombing to the dustbin of history.** **25 states already sent their official confirmation of the endorsement of the political declaration.**

Dozens of states are expected to attend the conference to adopt the agreement. Many, including Austria, Australia, **Belgium**, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, **France**, **Germany**, Japan, Norway, **Switzerland**, South Korea, Senegal, Sweden, **the Netherlands**, the **United Kingdom**, the **United States** and Uruguay, have already expressed their intention to endorse it.

After the conference, and with the help of its partners, HI will continue discussions with other States to persuade them to sign the agreement. With the [Explosive Weapons Monitor](#) that our organisation helped to create in 2022, we will also be closely monitoring the measures and policies implemented by signatory States to ensure their respect of the humanitarian commitments made and guarantee greater protection of civilians from explosive weapons.

A victory for civil society

The Dublin Conference is a historical moment for civil society. 25 years ago, with the adoption of the **Ottawa Treaty (1997)**, HI and the International Campaign to Ban Landmine (ICBL) achieved a ban on landmines. 14 years ago, with the adoption of the **Oslo Treaty (2008)**, our organisation and the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) succeeded in prohibiting the use of cluster munitions. Today – this time with the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) – Humanity & Inclusion (HI) has another opportunity **to write history by bringing about significant improvements to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.** HI's fight remains constant: **to protect civilians in armed conflicts.**

HI, co-founder of the International Network of Explosive Weapons (INEW), has been campaigning to protect civilians from bombing and shelling for ten years. Today's victory has been made possible by the **scale of the public mobilisation and the pressure brought to bear on governments** in countries such as Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States. The international petition launched by HI in 2017 gathered over 500,000 signatures.

The diplomatic process received strong support, with an unprecedented parliamentary mobilisation in Europe urging European governments to commit to a strong political declaration. In March 2021, **210 French and German parliamentarians** launched a joint appeal calling on their governments to commit to the diplomatic process. This appeal led to an inter-parliamentary conference in May and resulted in a joint declaration signed **by 274 parliamentarians from eight countries and the European parliament.**

Widespread use of explosive weapons

Armed conflicts are increasingly fought in populated areas, mainly cities. The use of explosive weapons has devastating effects on civilians. According to aggregated data from Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) and the United Nations, **over 290 000 civilians were killed or injured by explosive weapons between 2011 and 2022.**

When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, **90% of the victims are civilians.** The use of explosive weapons in populated areas causes a systematic pattern of harm to civilians: people are killed and injured; vital infrastructures, such as housing, hospitals and schools, power and water supplies and sanitation systems, are destroyed, affecting the provision of essential services to the civilian population. Also, millions of families are forced to flee their homes and the unexploded ordnance left behind poses a threat for decades.

About Humanity & Inclusion

Humanity & Inclusion (formerly Handicap International) is an international solidarity organization that has been working for 40 years with people with disabilities and vulnerable people facing situations of poverty and exclusion, conflicts and disasters. It responds to their essential needs, improves their living conditions and promotes respect for their dignity and fundamental rights. In 40 years, Humanity & Inclusion (HI) has intervened in 86 countries and 23 million people have benefited from inclusive education, rehabilitation, armed violence reduction programs and much more. Recognized for its advocacy work, HI is one of the six founding organizations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), co-winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize and winner of the 2011 Conrad N. Hilton Award. Based in Montreal and Ottawa, Humanity & Inclusion Canada is part of a network of national associations in Europe and North America (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States) whose mandate is to mobilize resources, manage joint projects and promote the organization's values and actions.

Contact :

Fatou Thiam
Communications Officer
Humanity & Inclusion Canada
(514) 908-2813, poste 2
f.thiam@hi.org