

Project presentation – EWIPA

Towards the implementation of the Political Declaration

A political commitment to protect civilians

On November 18, 2022, in Dublin, a Political Declaration was endorsed by 83 States (now 87¹), committing to actions to strengthen the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA). This Declaration marks the first international recognition of the civilian harm and suffering stemming from the use of explosive weapons in cities, towns and other populated areas. It provides the first policy framework for implementing decisive action on civilian protection and humanitarian aid delivery in EWIPA contexts. Moreover, it is the first formal international recognition of the immediate and long-term consequences of the use of EWIPA on affected individuals and communities, which must be urgently addressed.

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW)² played a pivotal role in advocating to shape and adopt the Declaration.

A multi-stakeholder project to foster the implementation of the commitments outlined in the Political Declaration

Since its endorsement nearly two years ago, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has escalated alarming levels, inflicting staggering short- and long-term consequences on civilians and humanitarian actors. In 2023, civilian casualties from explosive weapons dramatically increased, alongside increased use of explosive weapons in attacks on healthcare, education and humanitarian aid³. This trend has unique and unprecedented impacts on civilians, especially women, children, persons with disabilities, older people, or other groups facing disproportionate risk from explosive weapons, as well as those relentlessly trying to assist them.

In response, [Humanity & Inclusion - Handicap International \(HI\)](#), [Article 36](#) and [Insecurity Insight](#), members of INEW, have joined forces in a two-years project, launched in December 2023. The project is funded by the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Affairs (ECHO) and co-funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to support the effective implementation of the Declaration. Its principal objective is to deepen understanding of the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons, and to promote actions to strengthen the protection of civilians and prevent humanitarian consequences in such settings, through progressive changes in policies and practices. With the adoption of the Political Declaration in November 2022, this initiative is critical to setting the agenda for the Declaration's future and to realising its protection goals.

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 or improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These weapons kill and injure people and damage buildings and other infrastructure in the area where they explode. The use of explosive weapons is particularly devastating for civilians in a populated area when these weapons have “**a wide area effect**” because of: large destructive radius; large fragmentation or blast range; spreading of multiple munitions over a wide area; lack of precision of their launcher system.

¹ <https://ewipa.org/endorsement>

² The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), co-founded in 2011 by Handicap International and Article 36, among others, gathers 37 international NGOs calling for concrete actions to prevent the human suffering caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

³ [Explosive Weapons Monitor - 2023 Annual Report](#)

The multi-stakeholder project's specific objectives

- **Data Collection, Research and Analysis:** Understanding the humanitarian impacts of explosive weapons remains paramount for developing strategies for stronger protection strategies and maintaining focused discussions under the Declaration. This includes regular publication of evidence-based advocacy and research on relevant EWIPA topics and affected areas. Additionally, the [Explosive Weapons Monitor](#), an innovative new project to collect, analyse, and share data on the direct and indirect impacts of explosive weapon use on civilians and civilian infrastructure, globally and across a range of humanitarian and military themes.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Process for Guidance Production:** The process will engage states and armed forces, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations bodies, humanitarian operators, survivors associations and other civil society organisations through a series of six collaborative workshops. These workshops will generate key policy materials and recommendations for stakeholders on :
 - the implementation of the commitments on humanitarian access, assistance and cooperation in EWIPA settings, with four focus areas: Humanitarian access and safety (May 2024); Healthcare access for affected populations (November 2024); Explosive ordnance risk education and conflict preparedness and protection (April 2025); Vulnerable groups and specific needs (September 2025).
 - the implementation of military and operational commitments on refraining and restricting from the use of explosive weapons and limiting humanitarian consequences, such as damage to and destruction of critical infrastructure and essential services to civilians (April 2024; 2025).
- **Monitoring of the Implementation and Universalization of the Declaration:** The development of military and humanitarian policies and practices by states to strengthen the protection of civilians will be observed. Monitoring progress made in these areas can help to identify useful approaches, progressive examples, challenges and lessons learned, which, in turn, sets a culture for implementation.

A critical project to address the heavy toll inflicted on civilians by EWIPA

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas, in particular those with wide area effect, poses a serious threat for the civilian population, both in the short and the long term:

Impact on people - Explosive weapons often inflict fatal injuries (blast trauma, burns, etc.) or permanent impairments and disabilities, caused by fragmentation, explosives and the release of thermal heat. Survivors of such bombardments frequently experience severe psychological trauma. Furthermore the use of explosive weapons in populated areas often forces the population to flee affected areas, making them even more vulnerable during times of conflict.

Direct and reverberating effects on civilian infrastructures - The use of explosive weapons in populated areas results not only in the destruction of people's homes but also of critical infrastructure and essential services. This includes hospitals, schools, water and sanitation systems, power plants, etc. The resulting destruction, coupled with a lack of access to basic services, often forces civilians to leave their home and communities for long periods of time. Humanitarian aid delivery is further complicated due to the lack of safe access to affected population, the presence of unexploded ordnances, the destruction of roads. Infrastructure such as roads are rendered inaccessible, compromising access to basic goods and services, delaying reconstruction and posing additional threat to people that want to return.

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