

## Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas in 2010—2011

*With civilians comprising 85% of all casualties documented as occurring in populated areas, when used in this context, explosive weapons have a clearly disproportionate impact on those that international humanitarian law and the international community seek to protect.*

On Tuesday 9 November 2011, the UN Security Council (UNSC) will meet to discuss the issue of the protection of civilians from armed conflict. In recent years, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has been identified as one of the primary threats to civilian protection.<sup>1</sup> Following the UN Secretary General's (UNSG) call for action on the issue in 2010,<sup>2</sup> the international community has increasingly begun to recognize the devastating impacts of this form of armed violence. Recent statements from the UN Humanitarian Chief and other UN agencies have highlighted the significant suffering caused by the use of these weapons across conflicts including Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, and Syria.<sup>3</sup>

States should use the opportunity of this UNSC Protection of Civilians debate to:

- Acknowledge that use of explosive weapons in populated areas causes severe harm to individuals and communities and furthers suffering by damaging vital infrastructure and commit to ensuring the rights of victims.
- Support the UNSG's call for further work to better understand the impact of explosive weapons in populated areas and to develop mechanisms for improving civilian protection, including systems to measure and monitor casualties caused by explosive violence.
- When referring to situations such as Libya, Syria, Cote d'Ivoire, and Sudan, note that explosive weapons use in populated areas has been a key challenge for protection of civilians.

Action on Armed Violence's Explosive Violence Monitoring Project (EVMP) has documented the humanitarian harm reported from instances of explosive weapons use in populated areas across the world over a one-year period. The data gathered through the monitoring of English-language news sources and the experiences of affected countries show a predictable – and preventable – pattern of harm.

The EVMP provides a grim snapshot of the scale and scope of the civilian suffering caused by explosive weapons. A consistent pattern of harm emerges when explosive weapons are used in populated areas: the impacts of explosive weapons on the human body, civilian infrastructure, displacement, children, and the further risks posed by explosive remnants of war and poorly managed or unguarded stockpiles result in far-reaching and often long-term problems for civilians affected by conflict.

**From 1 October 2010 to 30 September 2011, the EVMP has documented the following:**

- **Explosive weapons<sup>4</sup> were used across 74 different countries and territories.**
- **28,841 explosive weapons casualties were reported in twelve months.<sup>5</sup>**
- **20,644 (72%) of these were civilians.<sup>6</sup>**
- **85% of all casualties in populated areas<sup>7</sup> were civilians.**
- **34% of all casualties were fatalities.**
- **An average of 1,730 civilians per month were killed or injured by explosive weapons.**

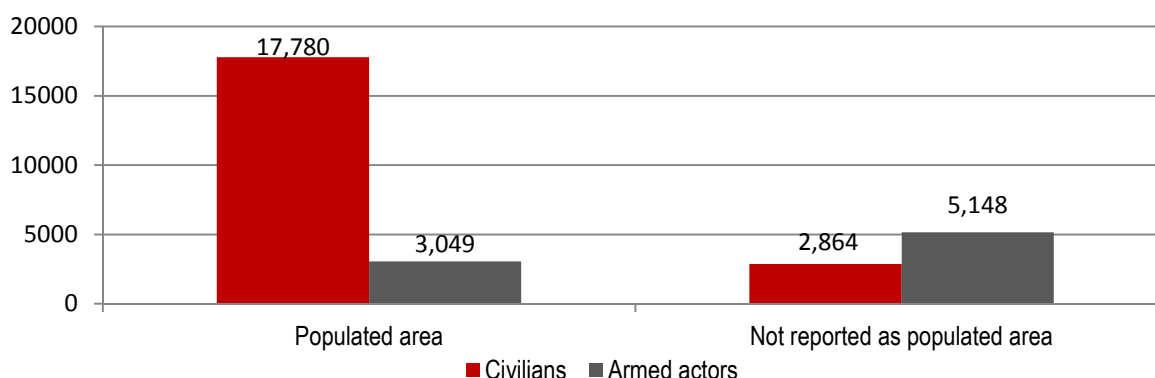
Report by Katherine Harrison, Policy and Research Manager

Data analysis by Henry Dodd and Robert Perkins, Explosive Violence Researchers

November 2011

For more information on AOA's Explosive Violence Monitoring Project, <http://www.aov.org.uk/archive/archive2/explosive-violence-monitoring-project-publications>

## Reported casualties by populated/ non-populated area (1 October 2010- 30 September 2011)



### Explosive weapons

Explosive weapons include artillery shells, multiple launch rocket systems, air-dropped bombs, grenades and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), amongst others. These weapons share common characteristics such as blast and fragmentation effects, which kill and injure men, women, and children in an area around the explosion, and can destroy vital infrastructure.

### Countries/territories with the highest number of reported incidents (1 October 2010—30 September 2011)

Country/territory	Number of incidents	Number of casualties	Average casualties per incident	Percentage of casualties who are civilians
<b>Afghanistan</b>	590	4,448	8	57%
<b>Iraq</b>	569	7,055	12	81%
<b>Pakistan</b>	369	5,649	15	70%
<b>Libya</b>	126	2,829	22	71%
<b>Yemen</b>	102	1,441	14	49%
<b>Gaza</b>	92	376	4	72%
<b>Somalia</b>	87	1,208	14	80%
<b>Thailand</b>	77	447	6	50%
<b>India</b>	62	704	11	77%
<b>Philippines</b>	48	253	5	82%

### Explosive Violence Monitoring Project

The EVMP monitors English language media reports of explosive weapons incidents that cause at least one casualty. The project therefore is not exhaustive but provides a sample of the international pattern of explosive violence based on a transparent methodology. It also records qualitative data on the impact of incidents across varied contexts in diverse settings.

The following sections provide data and illustrative examples of incidents and impacts of explosive weapons recorded over a one year period. These examples illustrate aspects of the reality behind the figures recorded by the EVMP. For the more than 20,000 civilian victims represented by the data, cases have been selected to shed light onto where and how civilians have been harmed by these weapons. With civilians comprising 85% of all casualties documented as occurring in populated areas, explosive weapons, when used in this context, have a clearly disproportionate impact on those that international humanitarian law and the international community seek to protect.



Faraj Omran, 7-year-old injured by shrapnel, Libya, Evan Hill, Al Jazeera, 1 March 2011

### Health impacts

The nature of explosive blasts produces a specific pattern of harm on the human body, involving blast, fragmentation and crush injuries, burns, and psychological harm. The impacts of these injuries are often fatal, or severe and long-lasting. The traumatic nature of injuries often necessitates prostheses and long-term rehabilitation, along with long-term psychological care. Use in densely populated areas, such as markets, town centers, and residential complexes frequently results in elevated levels of civilian casualties.

In **Cote d'Ivoire**, on 17 March 2011, 100 civilians were killed and injured during the shelling of a market in **Abobo**,<sup>8</sup> one of the "most populated areas" of Abidjan city.<sup>9</sup> The market, located close to the town mayor's office, was hit by at least six 81mm mortar shells. At one market stall, an elderly woman lost both her legs in traumatic amputations which are characteristic of explosive weapons injuries.<sup>10</sup> A witness injured by shrapnel described the horrific injuries caused by the mortars, saying, "Some of the wounds people had were so horrible we couldn't even look at them. People had body parts that were blown off, others were completely deformed."<sup>11</sup>

Following the shelling, the UN Humanitarian Chief, Baroness Amos, noted that: "This incident...underlines the dreadful humanitarian impact of explosive weapons when used in populated areas."<sup>12</sup>

*"The launching of mortars into a market place and bus station is abhorrent and the UN should conduct a full investigation."*

(UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague, Associated Press, 18 March 2011)

### Children

Children are particularly vulnerable to explosive weapons, suffering death and injury, as their bodies are less able to withstand physical injuries, as well as harmful psychological impacts, including the distress of displacement and the loss of siblings, parents, and family members. Damage to and interruption of schools from explosive weapons use or through associated disability also negatively impacts children's education, potentially jeopardizing their future opportunities.<sup>13</sup>

From mid-March until the end of April 2011, children were repeatedly among the victims of explosive weapons during near-daily exchanges between **Israel** and **Gaza**. In Gaza, the Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights claimed that following air strikes on 21 March 2011, 11 of the injured were children, including a three-year-old who suffered critical injuries.<sup>14</sup> When two children were killed by artillery fire on 19 March 2011, those who collected the bodies found that "one of the dead bodies sustained shrapnel and its upper parts were amputated."<sup>15</sup> In Israel, a 14-year-old suffered head injuries as a result of a bomb explosion beside a bus stop in Jerusalem. Children in Israel also felt the wider impacts, when schools in the affected cities of Ashdod, Beersheba, and Ashkelon were closed in order to protect children.<sup>16</sup> Children in both Gaza and Israel were reported to suffer from severe trauma, including bed-wetting and nightmares.<sup>17</sup> Médecins Sans Frontières reported in July 2011 that more than half of their consultations since the beginning of the year for psychological distress in Gaza and the West Bank were children.<sup>18</sup>

*"Of course we are worried. My kids are wetting themselves at night when they hear the Israeli air strikes."* (Mr Abu Awema, Gaza Resident, BBC, 25 March 2011)

## Damage to infrastructure

Explosive weapons use in populated areas can have a devastating impact on civilian infrastructure and property, damaging and disrupting vital services, including health, social, and economic services, as well as humanitarian operations. Heavy and sustained use of explosive weapons serves to multiply harm, which can result in significant and long-term impediments to post-conflict recovery. Damage to infrastructure further erodes civilian protection and can result in increased civilian morbidity and vulnerability to poverty, disease, and other insecurity.

In 2011, explosive weapons use has had a devastating impact on **Libya's** infrastructure, as well as the property and services which shelter and support the civilian population. Following attacks on **Zawiya** in March 2011,<sup>19</sup> shelling reportedly damaged government buildings and private homes, described by a *New York Times* reporter as:

*"...walls collapsed, shell holes everywhere, the mosque destroyed, the top of the mosque gone...a crumpled up bunch of old burned-out cars...I mean, it was devastation."<sup>20</sup>*

Vital infrastructure in **Misrata** was reported to be particularly badly damaged and disrupted by the sustained use of rockets, mortars, and RPGs in addition to air strikes early in the conflict. On 15 April, UN OCHA reported that the water from the municipal water system in Misrata had been cut off for 45 days.<sup>21</sup> The continued bombardment blocked access to humanitarian aid, and on 18 April, shelling struck the port area, the city's last available lifeline.<sup>22</sup> Shelling destroyed one of Misrata's main power stations and heavily damaged two others,<sup>23</sup> leading to closure of factories and suspension of industrial production, the city's main source of income.<sup>24</sup> By June 2011, 172 schools remained closed following ongoing insecurity<sup>25</sup> and homes and hospitals,<sup>26</sup> as well as mosques and markets had been seriously damaged.<sup>27</sup>

### EVMP data on explosive weapon casualties in Libya, March 2011—October 2011

- 2,019 civilian casualties reported from explosive weapons in Libya.
- 82% of reported casualties in populated areas are civilians.

*"I am gravely concerned at reports of the increasing use of explosive weapons in populated areas in Libya. The sustained shelling and bombardment of areas populated by civilians is causing widespread suffering. Moreover, the damage to buildings and infrastructure will lead to long term and far reaching problems for people as they try to rebuild their lives after fighting has ceased."*  
UN Humanitarian Chief, Valerie Amos,  
17 March 2011

## Cities under siege

In some of the worst incidents of prolonged bombardment in Libya, in **Misrata and Sirte**, rockets and artillery were fired into cities in which civilian populations were essentially trapped. On April 15 alone, more than a hundred rockets were fired into Misrata.<sup>28</sup> In a particularly heavy week of bombing in April 2011, a reporter from the *Independent* described the horrific situation:

*"Even by the standards of Misrata, the bombardment...was particularly brutal. Missiles landed in residential areas, on a school, and in a street on which a queue outside a bakery had formed. Some people waiting for bread escaped the initial onslaught and fled to a garage that promised protection. But the next round hit the entrance, starting a fire from which they could not escape. Among those to die was a mother aged 33 and her two daughters, both under 10."*  
Kim Sengupta, 17 April 2011, *The Independent*

After Tripoli fell to National Transitional Council (NTC) forces, **Sirte** became one of the last remaining outposts for Gaddafi loyalists. The subject of sustained shelling and bombing by NATO and NTC forces throughout August and September, up to 80% of the city's 100,000 population were forced to flee.<sup>29</sup> A *BBC* reporter described how the city had been *"blasted [...] back into the Dark Ages."*<sup>30</sup>



Damaged buildings in Misrata, *Internews*, 22 May 2011

Similarly in **Syria**, tanks have repeatedly surrounded residential areas where protests have taken place. On 10 May, a *Times* reporter in the central city of Homs witnessed over 100 tanks lining the streets.<sup>31</sup> Naval ships and tanks were deployed around the port city of Latakia on 15 August, and residents reported that civilians were trapped as buildings were destroyed in the bombardment from land and sea.<sup>32</sup> Among the residential areas shelled in Latakia was a Palestinian refugee camp, displacing between 5,000 and 10,000 people.<sup>33</sup>

### Displacement

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is often a factor associated with civilian displacement. The increased vulnerability of displaced civilians has been widely documented and is often accompanied by disease, malnutrition, and the threat of extreme poverty.<sup>34</sup> Displaced persons are also more vulnerable to explosive weapons, often living in temporary shelters with little protection.<sup>35</sup> Women and children are especially vulnerable, with gender-based discrimination and violence often exacerbated in situations of displacement and significant risks of sexual violence and exploitation and forced recruitment of children in to armed groups.<sup>36</sup>

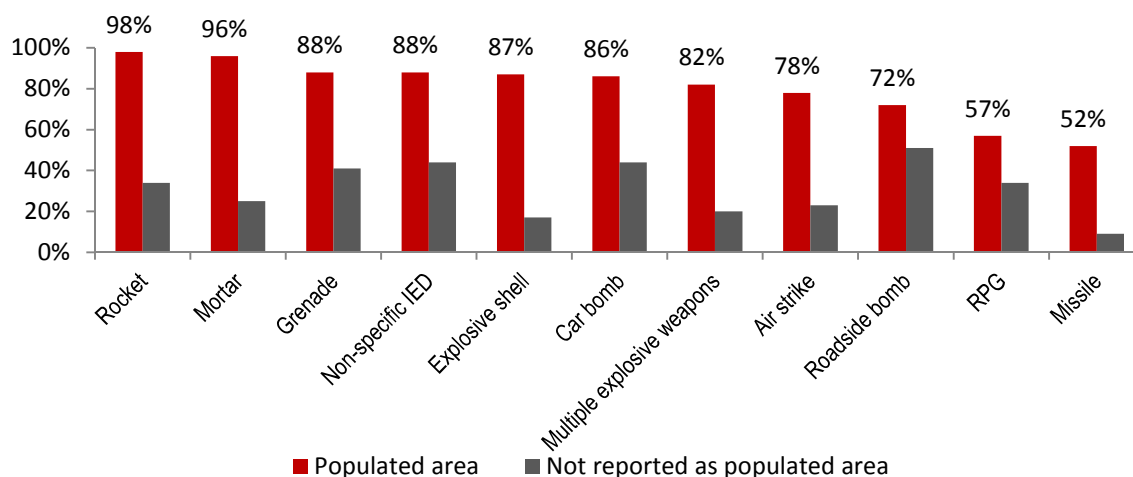
In the lead up to the independence of the **Republic of South Sudan** on 9 July 2011, explosive attacks in the contested north-south border regions caused widespread civilian harm. In late June it was estimated that between 73,000<sup>37</sup> and 75,000<sup>38</sup> people had been displaced from **South Kordofan** since the beginning of the month, after weeks of heavy bombardment of towns and villages. One source noted that “because the bombing and shelling is continuing, that number is probably going up every day.”<sup>39</sup>

The increasing use of explosive weapons in populated areas following disputed Presidential elections in **Côte d’Ivoire** was also accompanied by large-scale displacement. The use of explosive weapons received widespread condemnation from states, International Organizations, and NGOs. UN Humanitarian Chief, Valerie Amos, described it as “an alarming development in the conduct of the current hostilities and underlines the dreadful humanitarian impact of explosive weapons used in populated areas.” On 17 March 2011, 200,000 people had reportedly been displaced from **Abidjan**.<sup>40</sup> By 29 March, the UN reported that up to one million Ivoirians had fled the city following artillery bombardments.<sup>41</sup>

*“At a minimum there should be no heavy weapons in Abidjan... We’re talking about helicopters, mortars that could shoot on the population. It should be declared illegal by the international community.”*  
(Nicholas Sarkozy, French President, *Reuters*, 25 March 2011)

On 30 March 2011, the UN Security Council intervened on the issue of explosive weapons in populated areas, passing Resolution 1975. The resolution specifically mandated the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), to “...prevent the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population.”<sup>42</sup> The widespread destruction to civilian housing by shelling of residential areas meant that many had little to come back to. According to an *IRIN* report in June, “Hundreds of families have no home to return to; in some areas, houses have been flattened by shelling.”<sup>43</sup>

**Percentage of casualties who are civilians in populated/non-populated areas**



## Grad Rockets and Mortars

- 83 Incidents of rocket use causing 490 civilian casualties
- 121 incidents of mortar use causing 1,113 civilian casualties

Grad rockets were used extensively in the conflict in **Libya**, in both Sirte and Misrata, as well as in the Nafusa mountain area to devastating effect. These rockets, nearly three meters long and packed with high explosives, are fired from truck-mounted launchers containing 40 rocket pods each. This means that hundreds of rockets can be fired in the space of a few minutes, capable of saturating wide areas with blast and fragmentation effects. Peter Bouckaert, Emergencies Director at Human Rights Watch, described how *“the Soviet-made Grad in particular is one of the world’s most inaccurate rocket systems and should never be fired in areas with civilians.”*

Similarly, the use of mortars in populated areas in Libya has also been highlighted as extremely problematic for the protection of civilians in an independent inquiry on Libya established by the Human Rights Council:

*“Mortars are weapons that kill or maim whoever is within the impact zone after they explode and they are unable to distinguish between combatants and civilians. A decision to deploy them in a location where a large number of civilians is likely to be present, is a decision that the commander should*

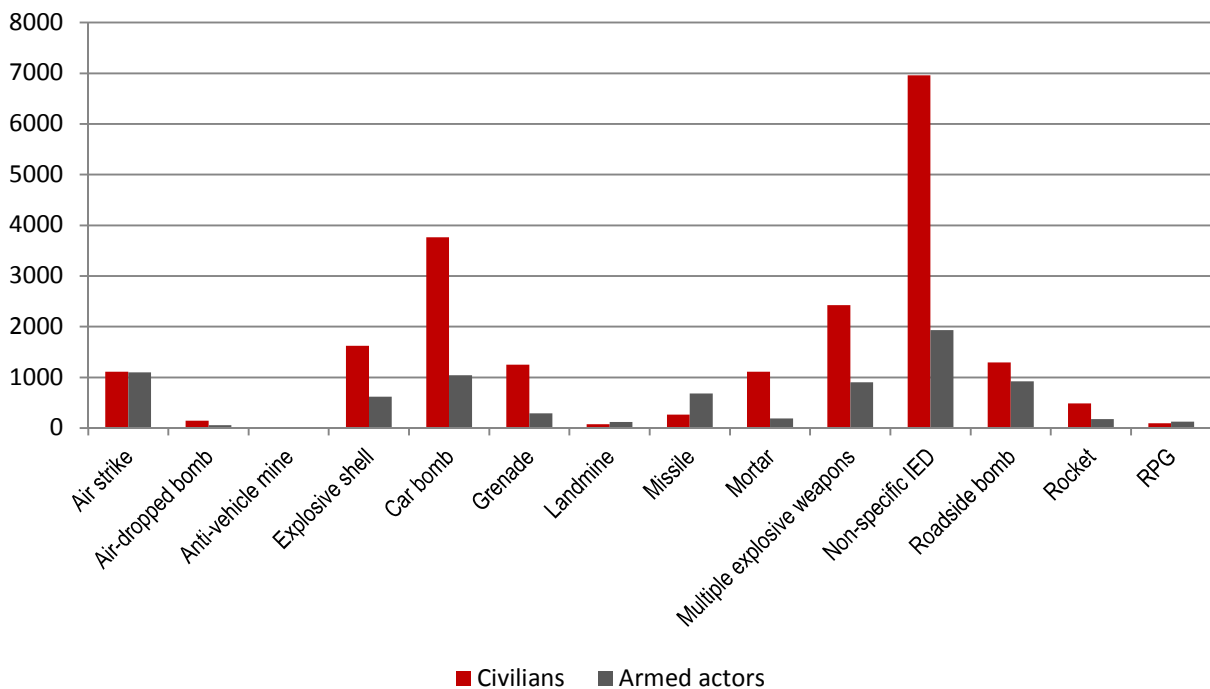
*know will result in the death and/or injuries of some of those civilians.”<sup>44</sup>*

Despite this warning, the use of both mortars and other explosive weapons continued in Misrata and Tripoli, and increased in frequency and severity in the western Nafusa Mountain region, near the Tunisian border. Human Rights Watch reported the use of mortars and Grad rockets in “repeated indiscriminate attacks” in populated areas throughout this western region, by forces loyal to Colonel Gaddafi.<sup>45</sup>

## IEDs

The humanitarian harm caused to civilians from the use of IEDs in populated areas is particularly severe and widespread. The EVMP documented the use of IEDs in 52 countries and territories over the one-year data collection period. Many incidents occurred in **Iraq and Afghanistan**, two states where periods of lack of state control over explosive weapons and massive quantities of poorly stockpiled and or abandoned weapons have resulted in the creation of large-scale use of formerly state-owned explosives to manufacture IEDs. IEDs are often deliberately used in densely populated areas, designed to inflict maximum civilian casualties, and due to the communicative nature of IED attacks, can lead to further insecurity and destabilization.

## Casualties by reported explosive weapon type (1 October 2010- 30 September 2011)



## Iraq

Iraq frequently experienced coordinated IED attacks causing extremely high levels of civilian casualties; the EVMP recorded 26 incidents with at least 50 civilian casualties over the period from 1 October 2010 to 30 September 2011.

Over the last 12 months, Iraq had a higher number of reported casualties from explosive weapons than any other country.

- 509 (89%) of all explosive violence incidents involved IEDs
- IEDs in Iraq caused 4,509 reported civilian casualties (79%)

In one of the worst recorded incidents by the EVMP, a series of car bombs were used to attack pilgrims on the road to Karbala on 20 January. Fifty-two people were killed and 150 wounded by three car bombs at police checkpoints. Four children and 20 women were amongst the dead. In another incident, on 15 August, two IEDs in a crowded market in Kut killed 37 people and injured 68 others.<sup>46</sup> The *Associated Press* reported that “human flesh was scattered on the ground and bloodstained walls were punctured by shrapnel.”<sup>47</sup>

## Stockpiles

Though excluded from EVMP data in this report which focuses on the harm caused at the time of use, stockpiles of explosive weapons also can pose a significant danger to civilians, especially when located in populated areas. Poorly managed, unsecured, or abandoned stockpiles present risks of unintended explosions, as well as the future threat of IEDs. The likelihood of accident or diversion increases in post-conflict environments, due to a lack of implementation of safety standards and security measures.

These risks continue to be apparent in **Libya**, where the new governing regime is faced with the task of securing large stockpiles of explosive weapons. In March 2011, Human Rights Watch reported the discovery of two unsecured stockpiles near **Sirte** containing a large number of munitions as well as thousands of guided and unguided aerial weapons. In July, it was reported that large quantities of landmines were found in stockpiles on the outskirts of Benghazi.<sup>49</sup> One Reuters report described visiting one stockpile in eastern Libya where “thousands of rockets, mines, tank shells and even two Italian naval torpedoes lay in neat stacks ready for transport- with not a guard in sight.”<sup>50</sup> The availability of surface-to-air missiles has

Many of the 68 people wounded had severe burns and the city’s main hospital struggled to treat the large number of casualties.

## Afghanistan

On 28 July, three IED attacks in an Uruzgan market killed 22 people and injured 40 more. Eyewitness Mohammad Dadu, a butcher at the market, described how “I saw two dead bodies and four injured people with blood on their clothes. It feels like doomsday. Everyday people came to the market to shop. But today people are here collecting the dead and injured bodies of their relatives. There is blood, smoke from explosive and everyone has fled the area.”<sup>48</sup>

The highest number of incidents of explosive violence over the last 12 months recorded occurred in Afghanistan.

- 403 IED incidents (68%)
- IEDs caused 1853 civilian casualties (73%)
- IEDs caused 1083 armed actor casualties (56%)

been highlighted as a particular concern as weapons which “can take down civilian aircraft, [...] can be converted easily into the car bombs and IEDs that have killed thousands in Iraq and Afghanistan.”<sup>51</sup>

On 31 October, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2017 which calls upon the Libyan authorities “to take all necessary steps to prevent the proliferation of all arms and related materiel [sic] of all types, in particular man-portable surface-to-air missiles, to ensure their proper custody, as well as to meet Libya’s arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation obligations under international law.”<sup>52</sup>

The EVMP has recorded casualties from three separate incidents of stockpile explosions in Libya. A medical official dealing with the aftermath of the stockpile explosion outside Benghazi described the difficulty of counting the casualties, as the bodies were so degraded: “We’ve got pieces, arms and legs, so we don’t know how many people were killed.”<sup>53</sup> Unsecured stockpiles and the legacy of the widespread use of explosive weapons continue to be a threat to local residents, as well as a danger to regional security.

### Explosive remnants of war

Also excluded from the EVMP data focusing on harm caused at the time of use, explosive weapons can continue to cause harm to civilians long after conflicts have ended in the form of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and explosive remnants of war (ERW).<sup>54</sup> ERW can result in land-denial, loss of livelihood, impeded access to services and assistance, displacement, and significantly hinder post-conflict recovery. Children are often at particular risk as the odd shapes and colors of UXO can arouse their curiosity.

This has been seen across **Libya**, where ERW from the conflict continues to pose a significant threat to the lives and livelihoods of civilians. In densely populated areas such as Misrata and Ajdabiya, children have been particularly vulnerable. On 4 June, a three-year-old girl was killed when she brought an unexploded grenade into her family home in Ajdabiya. The explosion also killed the girl's father and five-year-old brother, and injured three other children.<sup>55</sup> In Misrata, two children, Ayman and Mahmud, aged 14 and nine, were seriously injured by an unexploded bomb that they discovered while playing.<sup>56</sup>



A UXO in central Sirte in an area that saw extremely heavy fighting, the street is littered with various ERW, UNMAS, 24 October 2011

### Victim assistance

The resulting harm inflicted on civilians from the use of explosive weapons can be life-long, with severe health and socio-economic consequences. Comprehensive, age- and gender-sensitive, and often long-term assistance is needed to ensure the recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration of victims and the full enjoyment of their rights. States bear a fundamental responsibility to recognize these rights and ensure the provision of timely and adequate assistance.

For example, in **Nigeria** in 2010 and 2011, the government has publicly acknowledged its responsibility to explosive weapons victims on a number of occasions,<sup>57</sup> including the responsibility to provide healthcare and monetary assistance, as well as other relief assistance and food.<sup>58</sup> Following the 29 May bombings in the town of Zuba, near Abuja, the government recognized the need for rehabilitation, and stated that it was taking recommendations from the hospital on the best way to assist survivors to “*get re-integrated back into the society after their treatment.*”<sup>59</sup>

While statements made by the government relating to specific incidents have been very positive in committing to provide healthcare assistance and monetary compensation, there remain some areas of concern. In the area of healthcare infrastructure, the government acknowledged that it did not yet have the capacity to meet the needs of some explosive weapons victims. Following the 31 December bombings in Abuja, which killed and injured over 30 people, the government said that it would fly some of the victims to South Africa for artificial limb fitting and rehabilitation,<sup>60</sup> stating that “*the cases being taken overseas were complicated and beyond the scope of the hospitals.*”<sup>61</sup> However, six months later, some victims said that promised assistance had not arrived.

The challenge for individual countries to meet the needs of victims can require assistance from the international community. Such assistance has already been legislated for specific types of explosive weapons, notably antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions, under the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster munitions. The rights of all victims of explosive weapons however should be recognized and international cooperation made available to assist countries to ensure the full realization of these rights.

*“They have been trying, but in the last three months we have not received any treatment. The initial arrangement was that they would fly us out for further treatment but nothing has been done in this respect; we are still waiting to hear from the government.”*  
(Miss Esther Mbalisi, victim of 31 December bombing in Abuja, *AllAfrica* 8 June 2011)

### State accountability to citizens

While states claim a monopoly over the use of explosive weapons, these weapons are virtually universally excluded from policing operations, as well as from civilian ownership. Explosive weapons are broadly regarded by the international community as legitimate ‘weapons of war’ but are likely to be condemned when used by a state against its own citizens. The use of explosive weapons by a state on its own can indicate political crisis and may indicate a decline into a situation of armed conflict.

Following the disputed elections in November 2010, the deteriorating situation in **Côte d’Ivoire** reached a crisis point in March 2011. After four months of fighting and decreasing stability, the widespread use of explosive weapons such as mortars, artillery, and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) in populated areas triggered international condemnation and a UN Security Council resolution mandating intervention to protect civilians.<sup>62</sup> The decisive international response to the shelling of civilian areas, most notably Abobo market in Abidjan,<sup>63</sup> is evidence that the use of explosive weapons in civilian areas is broadly considered unacceptable and that the use of explosive violence by a state against its own citizens has particular implications for the international community’s responsibility to protect civilians, as it demonstrates a breakdown in the relationship of accountability between the national government and its citizens.

#### EVMP casualties in Côte d’Ivoire (1 October 2010 to 30 September 2011)

- 151 civilian casualties
- 94% civilian casualties in populated areas

### Conclusion

In **Syria**, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas can also be seen as a clear indicator of a crisis in the relationship of accountability between the Syrian government and its citizens. The widespread use of explosive weapons in towns and cities by Syrian security forces in response to anti-government protests has caused civilian casualties across the country. The EVMP recorded 578 civilians reported as killed or injured by explosive weapons up to 1 October 2011.

#### EVMP data on explosive weapons casualties in Syria (1 October 2010- 30 September 2011)

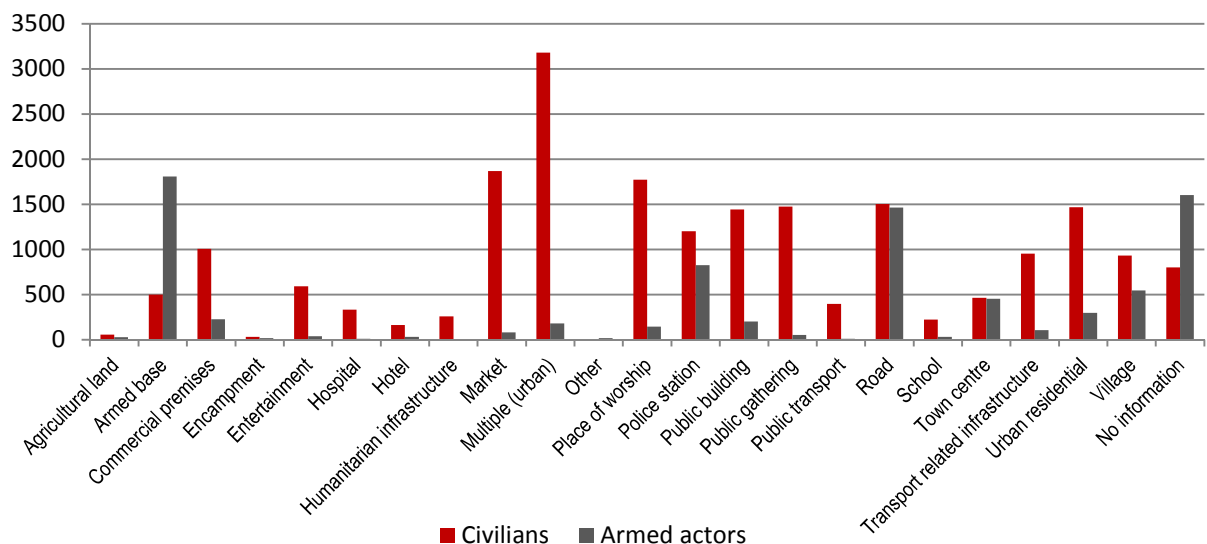
- 93% of casualties were civilians.
- 393 of reported casualties (63%) were civilian fatalities

During some of the most severe shelling, the city of Hama was bombarded on 31 July. Residents reported that houses were “flattened to the ground”<sup>64</sup> as tank shells fell across the city at a rate of four per minute. The EVMP recorded 196 civilian casualties from the shelling in Hama between 31 July and 5 August 2011. Bassma Kodmani, Head of the Arab Reform Initiative, stated in regard to the Syrian government that “*The assault on Hama is an indication of loss of control. They crossed the threshold.*”<sup>65</sup>

*“The indiscriminate use of heavy artillery against demonstrators cannot be justified; no State is allowed to use its military force against an unarmed civilian population regardless of the situation prevailing on the ground.”*

UN Special Rapporteur, Christof Heyns, 5 August 2011

### Explosive weapon casualties by location (1 October 2010- 30 September 2011)



## **Conclusion: Recognition of the problem of explosive weapons in populated areas**

In response to the demonstrated pattern of harm of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, eight civil society organizations, Action on Armed Violence, Handicap International, Human Rights Watch, IKV Pax Christi, Medact, Norwegian People's Aid, Oxfam, and Save the Children, came together in 2011 to establish the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW). INEW calls for immediate action to prevent human suffering from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, based on the following four points:

*States and other actors should:*

- *Acknowledge that use of explosive weapons in populated areas tends to cause severe harm to individuals and communities and furthers suffering by damaging vital infrastructure;*
- *Strive to avoid such harm and suffering in any situation, review and strengthen national policies and practices on use of explosive weapons and gather and make available relevant data;*
- *Work for full realization of the rights of victims and survivors;*
- *Develop stronger international standards, including certain prohibitions and restrictions on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.*

Over the past year, as the pattern of harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has continued, there has been growing attention paid to the issue by states and humanitarian actors. During the last two UNSC Protection of Civilian debates Australia, Austria, Gabon, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the EU have highlighted the impact of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The UN Humanitarian Chief has expressed her concern at the risk to civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Syria.<sup>66</sup>

The UNSG's report on Children in Armed Conflict noted concern about explosive weapons use in populated areas in Somalia and Thailand.<sup>67</sup>

In its report 'Healthcare in Danger', the ICRC noted that explosive weapons were the primary cause of damage and disruption to the provision of healthcare in armed conflict and other situations of armed violence.<sup>68</sup>

The ICRC recently highlighted the use of explosive weapons in populated areas as one of the key challenges for international humanitarian law in a report issued in advance of the International Conference of the ICRC to be held in November 2011. The ICRC noted: "due to the significant likelihood of indiscriminate effects and despite the absence of an express legal prohibition for specific types of weapons, the ICRC considers that explosive weapons with a wide impact area should be avoided in densely populated areas."<sup>69</sup>

Human Rights Watch issued a report on explosive weapons in populated areas to coincide with the 9 November 2011 UNSC Protection of Civilians debate. HRW noted: "Use of explosive weapons in populated areas, regardless of the user, munition type, or intent, causes frequent and foreseeable harm to civilians [...] Now the international community should evaluate what can be done to reduce the suffering caused by other types of explosive weapons that are used in populated areas"<sup>70</sup>

This growing recognition of the pattern of harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas strengthens the basis for concrete actions by states to enhance humanitarian protection. As a founding member of INEW, AOA calls on states to begin discussions on the problem of explosive weapons in populated areas with a view to preventing this predictable pattern of humanitarian harm.

The UNSC Protection of Civilians debate affords concerned states with the opportunity to acknowledge this humanitarian problem and to take further action to strengthen the protection of civilians framework to mitigate and eliminate this harm.

- <sup>1</sup> "Statement by John Holmes Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator," Security Council Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 7 July 2010, <http://explosiveweapons.info/resources/other-explosive-violence-resources/>, (accessed 7 November 2011).
- <sup>2</sup> "Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict," United Nations Security Council, 11 November 2010, <http://www.inew.org/site/wp-content/uploads/SG-PoC-report-2010.pdf>, (accessed 4 November 2011).
- <sup>3</sup> Baroness Amos, "Statement on Côte d'Ivoire," 18 March 2011; "Statement on the situation in Libya," 17 March 2011; "Statement on Syria," 10 May 2011, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York, <http://www.unocha.org/node/853>, (accessed 08 November 2011).
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