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**Towards Attending the Vienna Conference:
The Japanese Government Must Take the Initiative to
Prevent the Human Sacrifice caused by Use of Explosive Weapons**

Human Rights Now, a Tokyo-based international human rights NGO, calls on the Japanese government to attend the Vienna Conference which is to be held in October 1st and 2nd.¹

The purpose of this conference is to protect citizens from the impact of wars in cities, especially by discussing the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) in the context of international law and the military. The Red Cross International Committee and the Secretary-General of the United Nations have each continuously responded to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

HRN has been a member of an international NGO network called the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) trying to prevent the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and we are asking the Japanese government to attend the Vienna Conference which is going to be held this October.

The dangers of the use of EWIPA

For the use of explosive weapons, both national militaries and non-state armed groups are involved.

Both actors have been responsible for ignoring international laws and using explosive weapons, causing civilian casualties directly and indiscriminately. EWIPA has especially caused severe long-term damage to a great number of civilians, homes, hospitals, schools and infrastructure such as water service and electricity. Moreover, indirect damages have been inflicted. Families have been separated and lost, producing hundreds of orphans, and many have fled their hometown afraid of bombings, becoming refugees or asylum seekers. These people have been experiencing secondary damages with some being raped during their flight, and children have experienced severe trauma, destroying their opportunity to study.

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<https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/disarmament/conventional-arms/explosive-weapons-in-populated-areas/protecting-civilians-in-urban-warfare/protecting-civilians-in-urban-warfare/>

The International Flow

In order to address these problems seriously, INEW was launched in Geneva in March, 2011.²

We have created a network to prevent damage to civilians from the use of explosive weapons, and we have asked the world to take action, as these damages are so severe that we can think of them as a humanitarian issue.

As a result of International disputes, the Secretary-General of the United Nations asked member states to have a constructive discussion towards a political declaration on enforcement in May 2017.³

Later on in May 2018, the Secretary-General chose the issue of use of explosive weapons in populated areas for discussion as his new topic within military disarmament.⁴ In response to this, the following October, as suggested by the Secretary-General, 50 states led by the permanent representative of Ireland to the UN announced a joint statement in which they agreed to actively participate in the political declaration.⁵ Unfortunately, Japan did not join the joint statement.

At the Vienna Conference to be held in October, it is expected that nations will have an International common understanding about explosive weapons, and that they will discuss its use in a legal context as well as its limitations. Also, it is expected that states' views and questions on the political declaration which the Secretary-General has suggested will be an issue.

Saving lives during conflicts

In 2016, the use of explosive weapons in Syria and Yemen destroyed the water services in Aleppo and Damascus, damaging millions of civilians' lives. Explosive weapons have taken residents' lives, caused severe physical injuries and have had a direct impact on humans and infrastructure. According to a survey of a private organization, civilian casualties from the use of EWIPA in 2018 were 20,384 people, and 90% of the casualties were civilians.⁶

² <http://www.inew.org/>

³ United Nations Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. 10 May 2017. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/132/65/pdf/N1713265.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴ <http://hrn.or.jp/eng/news/2019/01/04/the-73rd-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly-summary-of-the-first-committee-resolutions/>

⁵ <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/ourrolepolicies/peaceandsecurity/Joint-Statement-on-EWIPA-delivered-by-Amb-Byrne-Nason.pdf>

⁶ <https://aoav.org.uk/2019/monitoring-explosive-violence-in-2018/>

As conflicts have become more global and more casualties have been created as their consequence, it has become necessary not only to remove the causes of conflicts and for international society to make efforts to resolve the conflicts peacefully in a long-term view, but also to establish rules and ensure that international human rights and humanitarian law are being complied with during conflicts.

HRN calls on the Japanese government to attend this conference and to take the initiative in establishing effective international rules in order to prevent human casualties caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.