



MEDIA STATEMENT - For Immediate Release

CAMPAIGN CALLS ON MIDDLE EAST NATIONS TO BAN CLUSTER BOMBS NOW

Regional Conference Opens in Beirut, Lebanon

(Beirut, Lebanon: 11 November 2008) Governments of the Middle East and North Africa region should sign the new international treaty banning cluster munitions when it opens for signature in Oslo on 3 December 2008, the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) said today. The campaign issued its call at the opening of a two-day regional meeting on cluster munitions in Beirut, Lebanon.

“Our region has experienced too often the devastating impacts of cluster munitions, from the cities of Iraq to the countryside of South Lebanon and elsewhere,” said CMC spokesperson Mr. Ayman Sorour of Protection. *“In the last fifteen years, no Arab state has used cluster munitions, which is a clear indication that they should be able to give them up now.”*

In addition to comprehensively prohibiting cluster munitions, the Convention on Cluster Munitions requires clearance of cluster munition remnants and assistance to people affected by the weapon. The diplomatic “Oslo Process” initiative that created the Convention was launched after Israel’s massive use of cluster munitions in South Lebanon in July-August 2006 creating a humanitarian emergency that has caused more than 200 civilian casualties, killed or injured more than two dozen deminers, and disrupted essential economic activity.

“As with landmines, the best way to respect the memory of those killed by cluster munitions in Lebanon and elsewhere is to stop this weapon from ever being used again,” said Ms. Habbouba Aoun of the Landmine Resource Center, a CMC member. *“To better support cluster munition survivors, governments should sign this Convention in Oslo on 3 December 2008, which is the international day for persons with disabilities.”*

The 107 states that adopted the agreement in May 2008, and which are expected to sign, include Bahrain, Lebanon, Morocco, and Qatar. Lebanon played a highly influential role during the negotiations of the treaty. Other states from the region participated in the Oslo Process meetings that led to the creation of the Convention, but it is not known if they will sign on 3 December: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

“All states are invited to sign this Convention in Oslo,” said Mr. Per Nergaard of Norwegian People’s Aid, a founding CMC member that is currently clearing cluster munitions in southern Lebanon. *“This Convention is a crucial means to enhance the protection of civilians both during and after armed conflict.”*

In the Middle East and North Africa, cluster munitions have been used in Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the Western Sahara. Globally at least 77 countries have stockpiled cluster munitions, including all states in the Middle East and North Africa except for Lebanon and Tunisia.

A CMC delegation is attending the Beirut Conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions from 11-12 November 2008 and hosted by the governments of Lebanon in cooperation with Norway. Six other governments from the region have registered to attend: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The conference is aimed at sharing experiences amongst countries in the region with particular experience dealing with the effects of cluster munitions, landmines and other explosive remnants. It is the final in a series of meetings held to promote signature of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

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See also: CMC Fact Sheet on Cluster Munitions in the Middle East and North Africa

www.stopclustermunitions.org