

GENEVA CALL NEWSLETTER



GENEVA CALL
APPEL DE GENÈVE
LLAMAMIENTO DE GINEBRA

This Newsletter highlights activities conducted between March and June, including the publication of the 2007 Annual Report, current research, advocacy campaigns and fieldwork by Geneva Call, as well as AP mine stockpile destruction by three signatories of the *Deed of Commitment*.

I. 2007 Annual Report

Geneva Call's 2007 Annual Report presents the activities and achievements on engaging armed non-State actors (NSAs), in particular:

- the signing, by four more NSAs of the *Deed of Commitment*, bringing the total to 35;
- the completion of a landmark research project on NSAs and landmines;
- the publication of the Geneva Call *Progress Report* looking back on its first seven years of work.

For 2008, Geneva Call has decided to launch three new programmes on: a) Gender Issues; b) Children and NSAs, c) Indigenous Peoples and Minorities. These programmes are all in relation to NSAs and non-international armed conflict.

The Annual Report is available, either by post, or on our website at:

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-annual-report-07.pdf>

To receive a hard copy, please contact: info@genevacall.org



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II. Public Advocacy

1. New Convention banning cluster munitions sets high standard for victim assistance, but fails to provide an inclusive approach towards NSAs

Geneva Call, as a member of the Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC), attended the Dublin Conference on Cluster Munitions, 19-30 May 2008, which was successfully crowned with the adoption of a definitive text for a treaty. Geneva Call congratulates

all actors that have worked for its realization - notably the CMC, the ICBL, the ICRC, the United Nations and the 'core group' of States. With this treaty, the vast majority of cluster munitions will be banned. It is a ban without transition periods. The provision on victim assistance sets a new standard that goes beyond those in the Convention banning AP mines and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Geneva Call is satisfied that the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and UN Security Council Resolution 1612 on children in armed conflict are highlighted in the treaty as well as the need to provide age and gender sensitive assistance to cluster munitions victims.

Geneva Call had participated in the Vienna and Dublin conferences, to advocate for a text which was compatible with the inclusive approach adopted by the organization, when advocating for humanitarian norms with NSAs or internationally non-recognized States. Although this approach was not specifically addressed by the treaty, Geneva Call welcomes the mention of the NSA issue in the preamble, and guided by its mandate that humanitarian standards should be respected by all parties of a conflict, will advocate for NSAs and/or non-recognized States to respect this new international norm.

2. Geneva Call at the OAS General Assembly

Geneva Call, during its latest mission to Colombia, participated as a special guest in the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Medellin, 1-3 June 2008. The General Assembly adopted the resolution *The Americas as an Antipersonnel-Land-Mine-Free Zone* encouraging member States to continue their effort in order to free their territories of AP mines and calling those States that have not yet ratified the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) to do so. The resolution firmly condemns the use of AP mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by NSAs, notably in Colombia. Geneva Call advocated for the inclusion in the future resolutions of a call to these actors to respect the norms embodied in the MBT by signing the *Deed of Commitment* under Geneva Call or equivalent unilateral declarations. It was the first time that Geneva Call approached this forum and was the opportunity to continue sensitizing central and southern American States on the importance of engaging NSAs to commit to adhere to international humanitarian law, starting with the AP mine ban.



Photo: Mass lie-in at the O'Connell Street in Dublin, May 2008. Campaigners from more than 70 countries laid down for a comprehensive ban on cluster munitions
Credit: Sasko Lazarov/Photocall Ireland

III. Geneva Call News from the Field

1. Geneva Call Assessment Mission to Lebanon

Invited to Lebanon in May by al-Jarha, the Charitable Society for Assistance for Wounded and Disabled People During the War, a Geneva Call delegation aimed to get a better understanding and knowledge of the conflict in Lebanon, in particular the mine/UXO contamination and mine action; as well as to assess the feasibility of engaging Lebanese NSAs.

In South Lebanon, Geneva Call met representatives of the Lebanese Army, UNMAS, international NGOs and local NGOs such as the Islamic Health Society. It visited rehabilitation centres for landmine survivors and victims of war, run by al-Jarha, and had a joint meeting with landmine and cluster munitions survivors with the participation of other NGOs there.

In Beirut, the delegation met with Lebanese Mine Action Center, but due to the escalating armed conflict between the governing parties and the opposition, a scheduled meeting with a Hezbollah member of Parliament had to be postponed.

2. Deed of Commitment signatories in Africa move forward with AP mine stockpile destruction

On 21 May, the Polisario Front destroyed 2'000 AP mines - mainly VS 50 and PMD 6M - in Tifariti, Western Sahara. This was the third such stockpile destruction, totally 8'642 AP mines since the Polisario signed the *Deed of Commitment* in November 2005. Geneva Call, the Saharawi Campaign to Ban Landmines and Landmine Action UK, which provided technical assistance, observed the destruction site before and after the operation.

Moreover, two signatories to the *Deed of Commitment*, which have since become part of their national governments, recently completed the destruction of their stocks. In southern Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), now part of the Government of National Unity, destroyed 6'078 AP mines on 31 March, thereby completing Sudan's obligation to destroy its stockpiles by 1 April under Article 4 of the MBT. In Burundi, the *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (CNDD-FDD) - led government destroyed 664 AP mines on 17 March, just before its 1 April 2008 deadline. Of the mines destroyed, some POMZ-2M were originally part of the stock of the CNDD-FDD. They were merged with those of the government's armed forces and all mines were destroyed together. The President of the Republic and former President of the CNDD-FDD, Pierre Nkurunziza, attended the destruction operation and praised the advocacy role Geneva Call played in this process.



Photo: AP mines awaiting destruction by the Polisario Front, Tifariti, 21 May 2008
Credit: Geneva Call

3. Mobilising Community Based Organizations in Mine Action in Burma

The role of community-based organisations (CBOs) is of specific importance to Geneva Call, which often works in areas where there is little or no I/NGO involvement. Raising awareness and involvement of CBOs in the landmine issue helps to ensure the sustainability of the mine ban and mine action, and to build information networks that are vital for monitoring NSA commitments. Geneva Call has supported and encouraged the launch of CBO mine action coordination networks and campaigns to ban landmines in various countries, such as Somalia, Burundi and Western Sahara.

In Burma/Myanmar, where mine use and production continues unabated by both the government and some NSAs, especially in remote areas where access is extremely limited, involving local CBOs is key to ensuring long-term sustainability of any mine action that would benefit the population and contribute to the quest for a mine-free future for the country. So far, Geneva Call has supported three meetings of Karen and Karenni CBOs. The two most recent meetings, in May, were organised by the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) and the Karenni Social Welfare and Development Committee (KSWDC) respectively.



Photo: Karenni landmines consultation meeting
Credit: Geneva Call

They provided a forum in which to explain mine action, identify actors involved in mine action efforts, and explore additional mine action activities that CBOs might be able to participate in or undertake. The participation of the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army and the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army in these meetings respectively, shows a distinct willingness of the NSAs to support and encourage CBO involvement on the issue. Subsequent meetings are already planned with these, and other, ethnic groups. These meetings should evolve into mine action coordination networks among and between each of the different ethnic groups and the international mine action community.

4. Visit to Morocco and Western Sahara

From 9 to 14 June, Geneva Call travelled to Morocco and Moroccan-controlled areas of the Western Sahara at the invitation of the government. The delegation visited mine-affected areas, hospitals and rehabilitation centres, and met with high-level officials from the Royal Moroccan Army, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Health, representatives of MINURSO and NGOs as well as mine survivors. The visit enabled Geneva Call to get a sense of the landmine problem and current efforts to address it and to make concrete proposals on how Morocco could move forward to enhance mine action and meet the MBT's objectives.

IV. Research

1. Pilot Research Project on Women Associated with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/A)

In March, Geneva Call and the Small Arms Survey's Human Baseline Security Assessment (HBSA) initiated a pilot research project with women and girls in the SPLM/A in Juba, South Sudan. The aim was to reach a better understanding of their roles and duties during the conflict and their experiences after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The research aimed at directly engaging female SPLM/A members to solicit first hand their views about their vulnerabilities, capabilities and future. Geneva Call's privileged relationship with the SPLM/A's leadership since 2000 was a critical entry point for this work. The research findings will be published in a forthcoming HBSA issue brief.

The preliminary findings of the research indicate that despite the signing of the CPA three years ago, many female combatants and women associated with the SPLM/A have been neither demobilized nor integrated into safe communities through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Their capabilities are not realized and their vulnerabilities not addressed by UN or government programmes. Many of these women are not paid any salary, or paid regularly for their employment. Women interviewed expressed their wish to demobilize by engaging in non-military activities. They expressed fears about stigmatization within their communities. Although many of these women experienced sexual gender based violence (SGBV) during the conflict, knowledge of HIV/AIDS is low and services are not readily accessible at the community level.

Geneva Call's gender programme aims to help it and the international community better understand the roles and experiences of women within NSAs. The programme will also contribute to enabling these women to be aware of their own rights and those of other women. In light of the tragic prevalence of SGBV in armed conflict, the gender programme will also seek to address this threat with an advocacy strategy targeting NSAs.

"When in uniform, I am not a woman! We are the same as men! We are combatants! You grab your gun and you go!"

Female SPLM/A combatant, Juba

V. Swiss Campaign Report on Gender and Landmines¹

In 2007, Geneva Call collaborated with the Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines in research on gender and mine action, when it refers to NSAs. In May 2008, the Swiss Campaign launched its report, *Gender and Landmines - From Concept to Practice*, which studies the significance of gender in the impact and the effectiveness of mine action. The study is a result of field research in the countries of Colombia, Lebanon, Mozambique, Sri Lanka and Sudan, and the gathering of good practices from the field where gender mainstreaming has been successful. It discusses gender in each of the four selected pillars within mine action and provides suggested recommendations for the various stakeholders.

The publication shows that when a gender perspective is applied on mine action, all actors generally benefit and that gender is not only about equality but also about quality.

The report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.scbl-gender.ch>

Hard copies can be obtained by writing to:

info@scbl-gender.ch

¹ Gender, as a cross-cutting issue, has a crucial role to play in mine action, a concern shared by Geneva Call's sister organization the Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines (SCBL). SCBL is an umbrella organization composed of about 50 Swiss NGOs (including Geneva Call) gathered around the common objective of banning AP landmines and similar indiscriminate weapons.

VI. Latest Publications from Geneva Call

"Geneva Call Annual Report 2007".

Published in June 2008. Available at:

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-annual-report-07.pdf>

"Kurdish Landmine Plight Across and Along the Borders". *Journal of Mine Action* 11.2 (2008). By

Armin Köhli, Geneva Call. Available at:

<http://maic.jmu.edu/journal/11.2/focus/kohli/kohli.htm>

"Engaging non-state armed groups or listing terrorists? Implications for the arms control community". *Disarmament Forum*, n°1, May 2008. By

Nicolas Florquin & Elisabeth Decrey Warner, Geneva Call. Available at:

www.unidir.org/html/en/disarmament_forum.php

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