



The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan Prohibits the Use of Anti-Personnel Mines

Geneva, Switzerland, 5 December 2007 – Geneva Call’s action in the Middle East progressed yesterday as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) has committed to a total ban on anti-personnel (AP) mines by signing Geneva Call’s *Deed of Commitment* in the City Hall of Geneva.

The PDKI was formed in 1945 during the beginning of the prolonged struggle for an autonomous Republic of Kurdistan, which was established in 1946. After 11 months, the Republic collapsed, and PDKI started its political and consequent military struggle. It has since become the historical party of the Kurds in Iran. Today, the PDKI’s main aim is “the attainment of Kurdish national rights within a democratic federal republic of Iran.” The Party has the status of an observer member of Socialist International. Since 1997, the PDKI has suspended its armed struggle while still maintaining its armed forces. It unilaterally renounced the use of AP mines. Elisabeth Decrey Warner, President of Geneva Call says, “The signing of Geneva Call’s *Deed of Commitment* by the PDKI, just on the 10th Anniversary of the Ottawa Convention, is the proof of the engagement of the PDKI to respect international humanitarian law and to protect civilians.”

Mustafa Hijri, Secretary General of the PDKI states that “The Kurdish populations have suffered the most, in life and financial losses as the consequence of the use of landmines. Our Party considers the use of AP mines, which results in killing and maiming innocent people as an inhuman act, and strongly condemns it.”

Iranian provinces bordering Iraq, including the Kurdish provinces, have been particularly affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance. The majority of landmine victims in Iran are Kurds. With PDKI’s commitment to a total mine ban, it will also point out the importance of victim assistance and conduct awareness raising programmes, thus helping to reduce the casualties in Iran. Currently, there is limited humanitarian mine action taking place in Iran despite the urgent need for it. Iran is not a State Party to the Mine Ban Treaty.

The PDKI calls on the other armed opposition groups to also ban the use of AP mines and to cooperate in mine action.

The PDKI is the 35th armed non-State actor, and the first Iranian group, to commit to the principles embodied in the *Deed of Commitment*. Geneva Call congratulates the PDKI for this important decision in contributing to build a mine free world. The organization calls upon Iran to join the Mine Ban Treaty without further delay and to increase demining programmes and projects for the assistance of mine victims.

Geneva Call is an international humanitarian organization dedicated to engaging actors which are not eligible to sign the Ottawa Convention in the fight against AP mines. It provides a mechanism, complementary to the Ottawa Convention, by which these actors can adhere to the mine ban norm through their signature of the *Deed of Commitment*. To date, 35 armed non-state actors have signed Geneva Call’s *Deed of Commitment*.

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