Statement from Action on Armed Violence
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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Action on Armed Violence - AOAV - where each day we document the jagged, accumulating toll that explosive weapons inflict on civilians.

What follows is not only a comment on the human cost of these weapons, but on the wider ecosystem that enables such harm to flourish.

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is never an aberration. It is the predictable outcome of a global arms economy that is, today, running at full tilt. Global military expenditure reached a record $2.7 trillion in 2024.

Alongside this arms bonanza, we also recorded that - between 2022 and 2025 - over 150,000 civilians killed or injured from explosive weapons used in populated areas.

Each was a life altered or ended. But these numbers do not just measure violence. They measure political choices.

The world's most devastating users of explosive weapons may not be signatories to this declaration, yet some remain clients of those who are.

This contradiction sits at the heart of today's discussion.

When AOAV observes Shahed and Iskander systems deployed across Ukraine, or GBU-series bombs levelling civilian infrastructure in Gaza, a single question cuts through: who has profited from this destruction?

It was Hannah Arendt who warned that violence, when routinised through systems and institutions, becomes banal. The banality of today's global arms market lies in its capacity to distance the supplier from the shattered street.

Contracts are signed in boardrooms; consequences are borne in hospitals and morgues. The market expands. The oversight contracts. The civilian suffers.

We must confront this uncomfortable truth. Explosive violence in populated areas reflects both a breakdown in military rules of engagement and a resurgent military industrial complex that refuses to witness the civilian impact of its output.

This failure is not abstract. It is traceable in audit trails, export licences, supply chains, and political alliances.

If this declaration is to mean anything, we must recognise that the devastation we catalogue is woven into globalisation's military and economic fabric.

To prevent civilian harm, we must do more than regulate the moment of detonation.

We must scrutinise the conditions that make such detonations inevitable.

Only then can we hope to stem the tide of civilian casualties and build a world in which explosive weapons no longer define the lives of those who never chose to be part of this war economy.

Thank you.