Statement for Session 5 on enabling access to humanitarian assistance to communities affected by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas on behalf of Insecurity Insight

The second International Conference of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

San José, Costa Rica, November 2025
Delivered by Ms. Drew East

Thank you, Chair.

My name is Drew East, and I am speaking on behalf of Insecurity Insight.

We collect and analyse data on civilian harm, with a focus on damage to vital civilian infrastructure including attacks on aid systems. Our goal is to strengthen civilian protection and support the effective delivery of aid in armed conflict. Our data informs advocacy and contributes to responsible military planning grounded in international humanitarian law.

The impact of explosive weapons unfolds over time and space, destroying the systems people rely on to live, seek support, and heal. Year on year, we have observed increasing use of explosive weapons, accompanied by deeply alarming trends: the destruction of essential infrastructure and growing constraints on humanitarian access in the areas affected by widespread damage.

Over the past seven years, we have documented more than 1,000 incidents affecting farmland and over 5,500 incidents where explosive weapons hindered access to health care. We have also recorded more than 900 incidents in markets, often the heart of community life. In these contexts, people lose their homes, livelihoods, and access to food, health care, and education.

For decades, the humanitarian sector has built the systems that assess needs and save lives in conflict. Humanitarian action is often the difference between life and death and is essential to upholding dignity. Yet in recent years, lifesaving humanitarian access has increasingly come under threat, and far too often, under attack. Since 2024, Insecurity Insight has recorded more than 600 attacks around food aid distribution. In 2025 alone, at least 103 aid workers and 180 health workers have been killed by explosive weapons, including drone-delivered explosives. On average, an aid worker has been killed every three days this year, and a health worker every two days. The real numbers, especially among volunteers, are almost certainly higher.

The more explosive weapons are used,particularly in urban areas,the more dangerous the environment becomes for everyone. More aid workers are killed, fewer people can be reached, and international agencies are often forced to suspend operations. This leaves already-struggling communities relying on small volunteer groups, a situation many describe as shifting the risk onto local populations.

Ladies and gentlemen, without greater restrictions on the use of explosive weapons, consistent with international humanitarian law, the humanitarian space will continue to shrink. When access diminishes, preventable deaths will rise. But the consequences are not inevitable. If we can document patterns of explosive-weapon use, we can predict them. And if we can predict them, we can prevent them.

Insecurity Insight calls on States to:

- Ensure respect for IHL to preserve humanitarian space, including by avoiding the use of indiscriminate weapons that prevent aid workers from reaching people in need.
- Implement commitments on humanitarian access within military policies and operations.
- Consider both the direct and cascading effects of explosive weapons in military planning, including their severe impact on humanitarian access.
- Facilitate the work of the United Nations (UN), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in health care and food security, and local civil society partners assisting civilians affected by explosive weapons.

I would like to close by underscoring that in a world where needs are rising and resources are shrinking, the only ethical response is early action, prevention, and precaution. Choosing prevention is choosing to protect dignity and life itself.

Thank you.