

# GENEVA CALL NEWSLETTER



GENEVA CALL  
APPEL DE GENÈVE  
LLAMAMIENTO DE GINEBRA

This Newsletter highlights Geneva Call's main activities since the one published in February. It principally describes its field activities, a pioneering conference held in June, and outlines the 2006 Annual Report.

## I. Geneva Call Activities

### 1. *Somalia Commemorates the International Mine Awareness Day*

On 4 April 2007, Isha Baidoa Human Rights Organisation, together with the Somalia Coalition to Ban Landmines (SOCBAL) and Geneva Call, co-organized an unprecedented event marking the United Nations' International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The event took place unhindered in Baidoa, the seat of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), despite the escalation of violence in Mogadishu. In all, some 80 people attended, including former faction leaders and *Deed of Commitment* signatories Sheikh Adan Mohamed Noor "Madobe" (the current TFG Speaker of Parliament) and Mohamud Sayed Adan (the current Minister at the Office of the Prime Minister), as well as members of the Parliament, representatives of regional authorities, UN agencies and NGOs, military commanders, religious and community leaders. Somalia is the last Sub-Saharan African State that has yet to join the Ottawa Convention.

### 2. *Landmine Stockpile Destruction in Western Sahara*

On 27 February 2007, the Polisario Front's mine action team destroyed 3'321 antipersonnel mines in Tifariti, Western Sahara. This was the Polisario Front's second stockpile destruction since it signed the *Deed of Commitment* in November 2005. Polisario officials, including Secretary General Mohamed Abdelaziz, President of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (as recognized by the African Union and many States), attended the ceremony. Geneva Call, the Saharawi Campaign to Ban Landmines (SCBL) and Landmine Action UK (LMA) inspected the destruction site before and after the operation. International delegates and media representatives also witnessed the event,

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among them Major General Kurt Mosgaard, Force Commander of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Since the Polisario's signing of the *Deed of Commitment*, significant progress in mine action has been made in Western Sahara: amongst which, LMA began a survey and explosive ordnance disposal project in Polisario-controlled areas, and a prosthetic workshop is expected to open soon in the Saharawi refugee camps.



**Photo:** Mine stockpile destruction by the Polisario Front, Tifariti, February 2007  
**Credit:** Geneva Call

### 3. Towards a Mine-Free South Caucasus

End of February 2007 with the financial support of Germany, Geneva Call was able to produce several publications on the landmine issue in Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, and Russian. These publications are a key instrument of Geneva Call's project in the South Caucasus, which is also funded by the European Commission and Switzerland.

A leaflet translated into Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, and Russian provides introductory information on Geneva Call's mission. The first issue of a regional newsletter in Russian contains basic information on the landmine problem in the South Caucasus region and on instruments available to solve this problem. Furthermore, a Russian version of Geneva Call's Annual Report 2005 as well as of the Report of the Zagreb workshop on humanitarian mine action in the midst of internal conflict were published. Finally, a multi-lingual educational DVD on the landmine problem in the South Caucasus was produced, which can be used for broadcasting as well as in school lectures and adult education.

With this comprehensive set of publications in hand, Geneva Call is in the position to address the target groups of the project more directly. The value of these publications was already proven in four local workshops in April and June 2007, which gathered representatives of the civil society in Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh, Georgia, and South Ossetia. Representatives of local NGOs and the media have very much welcomed the locally adapted publications and will use them in their own advocacy and awareness raising activities.



**Photo:** The landmine problem in the South Caucasus, published in Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, and Russian, February - June 2007  
**Credit:** Geneva Call

### 4. News from Burma

#### 4.1 Three More NSAs Sign Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment

On 16 April, three armed groups from Burma/Myanmar - the Lahu Democratic Front (LDF), the Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF), and the Pa-O People's Liberation Organisation (PPLO) - committed to a total ban on antipersonnel mines by signing Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment*. The signing took place in the historic Alabama Room, in the Town Hall of Geneva. The LDF, PSLF and PPLO joined three other ethnic armed groups from Burma/Myanmar in agreeing to desist from using antipersonnel mines and to promote mine action. With these latest signatories, 34 armed groups from across the world have now signed the *Deed of Commitment*.



**Photo:** Signing of the *Deed of Commitment* by a Burmese NSA, Geneva, April 2007  
**Credit:** Geneva Call

#### 4.2 Geneva Call Highlights its Work in Burma/Myanmar

On 27 April, Geneva Call hosted a side event at the Intercessional Standing Committee of the Mine Ban Convention entitled "Engaging Non-State Actors (NSAs): the Burmese Case." Katherine Kramer, the Director of Geneva Call's Asia Department, gave a presentation on the current status of Geneva Call's work on Burma/Myanmar, where a number of NSAs have been engaged on the issue of landmine use, and to date, six groups have made a commitment to ban antipersonnel mines through signing Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment*. The event was attended by delegates from a number of States as well as representatives from NGOs.



**Photo:** Signing of the *Deed of Commitment* by three Burmese NSAs in the Alabama Room, Geneva, April 2007  
**Credit:** Geneva Call

## II. Annual Report

Geneva Call's 2006 Annual Report has been published and is available, either by post, or on our website. If you wish to receive a paper copy, please contact: [info@genevacall.org](mailto:info@genevacall.org).

For the electronic version, go to:

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-annual-report-06.pdf>

The Annual Report provides facts and figures on Geneva Call's activities, in relation to engaging armed non-State actors; readers will be able to measure how far Geneva Call's inclusive approach has progressed, with, by the end of 2006, 31 NSAs formally committing to renounce landmines, and ongoing negotiations with many others. In addition, Geneva Call helps signatories to fulfil their commitments, and with its partners, monitors implementation. The Annual Report is also the occasion for the organization to thank its donors for their unflagging support, for their advice and for their help.



#### 5. Conference on Engaging Armed Non-State Actors to Respect Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law

On 4-5 June 2007, a conference co-organized by Geneva Call, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), and the Program for the Study of International Organization(s) (PSIO) of the Graduate Institute of International Studies – Geneva (IUHEI), was held in Geneva. A wide range of participants from UN agencies, international NGOs, and academics took part in the event at which ten papers were presented. The two-day event aimed at broadening the debate on and advocating for the engagement of armed non-State actors (NSAs) to respect humanitarian law and human rights law, and to examine the criteria and conditions for such engagement.

The conference was highly successful in addressing the complexity of issues related to engaging armed non-State actors, and opened the door to new reflections and approaches. The discussions on the theoretical and practical research projects presented explored differences, similarities, and difficulties in engaging NSAs in humanitarian negotiations in different conflicts. The conference highlighted the fact that engaging NSAs is a necessary step in the process of the landmine ban use and other humanitarian norms. Concerns were expressed regarding the lack of effectiveness of recent attempts to exclude NSAs from relevant negotiations and discussions as a result of the so-called "War on Terror". It is important to take into account both State armed forces and armed opposition groups if we want to positively influence the fate of the victims. The discussions, confronting academic perspectives with practical experiences and legal ones, will provide us with a useful starting point for our future work.

A report on the conference is in preparation and will be published later this year.



**Photo:** Participants at the conference on engaging armed non-State actors to respect humanitarian law and human rights law, Geneva, June 2007  
**Credit:** Geneva Call

### III. Self-Assessment of Geneva Call's Performance Completed

Throughout 2006, Geneva Call conducted an internal assessment of its performance as part of its efforts to enhance its effectiveness and strategic planning. The study is now completed. It records the progress made in engaging NSAs on the landmine ban, reviews the implementation status of the *Deed of Commitment and* analyzes the strengths and limitations of its monitoring mechanisms. Achievements, challenges and practical recommendations are included. The main findings of the assessment, which were presented at the joint Geneva Call, PSIO and UNIDIR conference "Exploring Criteria and Conditions for Engaging Non-State Actors (NSAs) to Respect Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law" in June 2007, will be published shortly.

### IV. Latest Publications from Geneva Call

Published by Geneva Call's Caucasus Programme, between February and June 2007:

- **Bringing Humanitarian Norms to New Frontiers: Engaging Armed Non-State Actors in the Landmine Ban**, Leaflet translated into Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, and Russian;
- **Newsletter on the Landmine Problem in the South Caucasus**, in Russian;
- **Geneva Call's Annual Report 2005**, translated into Russian;
- **Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict**, Report of the Zagreb workshop translated into Russian;
- **The Landmine Problem in the South Caucasus**, Educational DVD published in Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, and Russian;

**Geneva Call 2006 Annual Report**, April 2007.

**Non-State Actors and Landmines Volume II: A Global Report of NSA Mine Action.**

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-ansal2-nov06.pdf>

By Anki Sjöberg, Geneva Call - November 2006.

**Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict**, Report of a workshop organized jointly with the ICBL Non-State Actors Working Group in November 2005, in Zagreb.

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-27nov05-zagreb.pdf>

By Geneva Call, September 2006.

**The impact of Armed Non-State Actors on the Mine Ban Treaty** (This 11-page document is only available on Geneva Call's website)

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-sep06-art7.pdf>

By Geneva Call, September 2006.

**Women in Armed Opposition Groups in Africa and the Promotion of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.**

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-23nov05-women.pdf>

Report of a workshop organized in November 2005 in Addis Ababa by Geneva Call and the Program for the Study of International Organization(s).

By Dyan Mazurana, Ph.D. - August 2006.

**For hard copies or any question, please contact: [info@genevacall.org](mailto:info@genevacall.org)**