



# NEWSLETTER

## APPEL DE GENÈVE GENEVA CALL

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### || Niger: The Government and the former rebels join forces against landmines

*"Bringing together so many members of the Government armed forces and the former rebels around the issue of mine clearance has never been done before, and is a symbol of confidence in the future".  
Former rebel commander, Agadez, Niger, 23 October 2011*

In October, Geneva Call organized a technical workshop on humanitarian demining in Agadez in collaboration with the National Commission for the Control and Collection of Illegal Weapons (CNCCAI). Funded by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the workshop brought together Government authorities, former rebel fronts and international humanitarian organizations working in mine action in Niger to consider the current mine action situation in the country.

Anti-vehicle mines were frequently used during the 2007-2009 conflict between Government forces and the Niger Justice Movement (Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice), and its splinter factions, and caused more than 300 casualties, including many civilians. In response, Geneva Call started a project in 2008 to raise awareness with the MNJ on international norms related to anti-vehicle and antipersonnel mines.

Since the cessation of hostilities in 2009, mine clearance has been taking place. However many of the former rebel combatants who know of suspected mined areas had not been involved. Through its extensive contacts and the trust built up with both the Government and the MNJ, Geneva Call has now succeeded in bringing together the former enemies to discuss a way forward. As a result, the workshop saw former rebels and the Niger armed forces begin sharing information on mined areas and ideas about how best to locate and remove the mines.

The workshop concluded with a series of recommendations including the setting up of a joint committee to follow up with field surveys; the integration and training of ex-combatants in the CNCCAI demining programme, and training on information gathering to improve the mapping of mined areas. Some days before, Geneva Call had organized a technical visit to the CNCCAI by an adviser seconded by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to advise on international mine action standards and assess needs in technical support, notably in mine information management.

Further information including a report with recommendations will be available shortly on [www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org)

### Invitation to Mine Action in Casamance – A Way Forward Wednesday 30 November 2011 at 12:00 – 14:00 Rumduol Hall, 1st Floor, Peace Palace, Phnom Penh

Casamance has suffered from nearly 30 years of armed conflict between the Government of Senegal and the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). More than 20,000 people have been displaced, hundreds of villages abandoned and 750 people killed or injured by mines. Casamance is also a fertile land but plagued by mines and a rebellion that has yet to be convinced to give up landmines and allow demining.

The Senegalese National Mine Action Centre (CNAMS), Geneva Call and the Senegal Campaign to Ban Landmines wish to give this complex humanitarian situation wider international attention; and cordially invite you to take stock of the considerable efforts that have already been undertaken, as well as the challenges that remain. In conclusion, a short film, "Casamance against the tide of history", presenting mine action in Senegal, will also be shown.

### || South Sudan: from the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment to the Ottawa Convention

Geneva Call congratulates the new Government of South Sudan for becoming party to the Mine Ban Convention, just five months after declaring independence. This decision is in continuity with the signing of the Geneva Call *Deed of Commitment* by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in 2001, while it was involved in armed opposition. The SPLM/A was one of the first armed non-State actors to sign the *Deed of Commitment*. Today, it is the ruling party in South Sudan.



Niger - Geneva Call

## Armed non-State actors and Cluster Munitions

In mid-September, Lebanon hosted the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). The CCM bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions and places obligations on States to clear affected areas, assist victims and destroy stockpiles. To date, 111 countries have joined the Convention and 66 have already ratified it. Very few ANSAs have been users or stockpilers of cluster munitions; and though the Convention does not specifically create obligations for ANSAs as such, its preamble resolves that “armed groups distinct from the armed forces of a State shall not, under any circumstances, be permitted to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party to this Convention.”

While Geneva Call does not plan to develop a *Deed of Commitment* on cluster munitions, it recognizes the importance of sensitizing ANSAs to prevent potential use of these weapons and thereby further impact on civilians. Most importantly, Geneva Call will also advocate towards ANSAs that they facilitate clearance activities, as many ANSAs control or operate in areas where cluster munitions have been used and where their remnants continue to affect civilians. In this way, Geneva Call will also contribute to achieving its overall objective of protecting civilians from the effects of armed conflict

*Cluster munitions are air-dropped or ground-launched explosive weapons that break open to eject smaller sub-munitions over their targets. The sub-munitions are designed to explode on contact; nevertheless thousands of unexploded sub-munitions remain on battlefields and in civilian areas after use. These devices are often highly unstable and can explode at the slightest touch or movement.*



Cluster Bombs In The Olive Grove - Simon Conway

## Exploring the non-State actor angle in the CCW

During the experts' meeting of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) earlier in the year, Geneva Call was invited to informally discuss the issue of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used by ANSAs. As most of the world's armed conflicts today are non-international, involve one or more ANSAs, and affect civilians as well as military personnel, a discussion on preventive measures regarding IEDs is important.

For Geneva Call this is particularly so where IEDs are used in violation of International Humanitarian Law to target the civilian population. Under Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment* banning anti-personnel mines, an IED triggered by its victim is an AP mine and thus use by a signatory ANSA would be considered a violation of its obligations. In its humanitarian advocacy work, Geneva Call always clarifies this point with ANSAs. The issue of widely available ERW and poorly secured stockpiles are also areas of concern in regions where ANSAs are operating. In order to increase assistance in these instances, Geneva Call recommended more support for



Cuidemos la Vida en  
Nuestro Territorio



## Geneva Call completes Phase I of the MRE project with Indigenous Populations in Colombia

*“The messages we are using to reduce the risk from AP mines, UXO and IEDs on the ancestral lands of the indigenous peoples are helping to put self-protection and resilience at the heart of both the individual and the community.”*

Carlos Guarín, Geneva Call project facilitator in Putumayo

August 2011 saw Geneva Call's pilot Mine Risk Education (MRE) project completed in Southwest Colombia. Geneva Call's focus for MRE work is in conflict-affected areas where ANSAs operate and where it is difficult for others to work. With funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the project worked with six indigenous organizations in highly conflict-affected areas, and trained 86 MRE providers of whom one third are women.

The trainers were recruited according to their community leadership and mobilization skills from amongst the indigenous organizations representing the Nasa (Cauca); Siona and Inga (Putumayo); and Awa and Pastos (Nariño) indigenous peoples.

Despite constraints imposed on the organizing of meetings in the areas of intervention, general security risks linked to the armed conflict, and increased violence caused by pre-election insecurity, Phase I reached 80% (or 4'560 persons) of targeted at-risk populations. An external evaluation of the project is underway, and lessons learnt will be presented in Bogotá and later published on [www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org).

Geneva Call is now preparing Phase II of the project. Geneva Call will also consider implementing similar projects in other conflict-affected areas of the country in 2012.

mine action carried out during conflict, including in areas of ANSA operation. Geneva Call insisted that civilians in such zones have the same rights to assistance and security as civilians who are living in other regions.

A report on the presentation will be available on [www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org)

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