



# NEWSLETTER

## APPEL DE GENÈVE GENEVA CALL

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### Contents

- Building knowledge in International Humanitarian Law for the Polisario Front.
- 24 military commanders trained at workshop on sexual violence in armed conflict.
- The armed wing of the PKK and the protection of children.
- Ownership of Mine Risk Education by the Indigenous Population in Colombia.
- Support against the recruitment and use of children in hostilities.
- Palestinian internal camp security forces and humanitarian norms
- Protection of Humanitarian Space - new ECHO project to develop materials to support advocacy towards armed non-State actors and enhance the protection of civilians in armed conflict.
- New management structure at Geneva Call.

### Building knowledge in International Humanitarian Law for the Polisario Front

In cooperation with the Sanremo International Institute of Humanitarian Law, Geneva Call led a course on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) for senior military officers of the Polisario Front. The course addressed fundamental principles of IHL, conduct of hostilities, means and methods of warfare, protected persons (civilians and hors de combat) and IHL implementation. A session was devoted to humanitarian mine action as the Polisario Front is a signatory of Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment* banning anti-personnel mines.

This was the first such comprehensive training course on IHL for the Polisario Front, whose representatives contributed questions and comments on the application of general rules to the situation in Western Sahara. Following the success of this initial course, further training for military trainers will be held in the near future at the Polisario Front military academy. Such training follows the UN Security Council Resolution 1894 of November 2009, which stresses the need to provide IHL training to armed non-State actors (ANSAs) in order to achieve full and effective compliance.

### 24 military commanders and political officers trained at workshop on sexual violence in armed conflict.

At the request of one of the ANSAs operating in Burma / Myanmar, Geneva Call gave training on the prohibition of sexual violence and the protection of women and girls in armed conflict. In part due to the level of confidence Geneva Call enjoys, this is the first time that such training has been given on the issue of sexual violence, and to such a high-level audience. 24 military commanders and political officers spent several days last month understanding their obligations under humanitarian norms in this regard. As a result, Geneva Call expects that its consultations with the ANSA will continue in the coming months and, at a minimum, relevant humanitarian norms will be incorporated into the group's policies and thereby protection mechanisms will be reinforced.



### The armed wing of the PKK and the protection of children

As part of its humanitarian engagement work, Geneva Call presented its new *Deed of Commitment* on the protection of children in armed conflict to the highest-level operational commanders of the armed wing of the PKK, the People's Defence Forces - Hezên Parastina Gel (HPG) at a meeting in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan in May 2011. This *Deed of Commitment* was discussed in depth, and Geneva Call was asked to clarify some of the obligations contained in the document. The HPG stated that it would discuss the provisions of the *Deed of Commitment* internally and later communicate its decision on how it would continue its humanitarian collaboration on this issue. This positive indication of interest by the HPG, and the potential for considerable impact to the benefit of children, is significant also as it comes at a time of increased tension in the region.

## ■ Cuidemos la Vida en Nuestro Territorio



## || Ownership of Mine Risk Education by the Indigenous Population in Colombia

*"It is difficult that an indigenous person understands the white man/ woman (cuya bai), but this project has been a space for understanding and learning. For example, now we are more cautious where we suspect or know that there are mines."*

Representative of the Siona people

In August this year Geneva Call completed a pilot one-year Mine Risk Education (MRE) project. With funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the project is one of the first to work within the context of the *life plans* of the conflict-affected indigenous peoples in the departments of Cauca, Nariño and Putumayo, in Southwest Colombia. Six indigenous organizations took ownership of the project, representing the peoples of Nasa in Cauca, Siona and Inga in Putumayo, and Awa and Pastos in Nariño. Some one hundred MRE trainers have now begun to share their knowledge within their own affected communities. Geneva Call is finalizing lessons learnt from the project, especially from the perspective of the indigenous peoples themselves. It is hoped this document, due in late November, will benefit the indigenous organizations themselves as well as those that work or wish to work for the self-protection of the indigenous peoples.

Geneva Call is now preparing the second phase of the project together with the local indigenous peoples.

*"We have participated in the construction of the proposals; these are ours and we coordinate with Geneva Call, which provides support. Now more people know what you can and cannot pick up, but the conflict continues."*

Representative of the Awa people

## || Support against the recruitment and use of children in hostilities

In May 2011 Geneva Call presented its new *Deed of Commitment* on the protection of children in armed conflict to Iranian Kurdish opposition groups present in Iraqi Kurdistan.

30 delegates from five such groups took part in a workshop, all signatories to Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment* banning AP mines: PDKI, PDK, the Komalah - The Kurdistan Organization of the Communist Party of Iran, the Komala Party of Kurdistan, and the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan. Each organization was represented by at least three military delegates. Geneva Call always requests that the ANSA delegations it meets include women, and in this case, at least one representative of each group was a woman. The participants welcomed the new *Deed of Commitment* and expressed their willingness to work with Geneva Call on the matter. They committed to discussing this internally and hoped their respective organizations would sign the Deed.



## || **Palestinian internal camp security forces and humanitarian norms**

During the first week of October, around 60 members of al-Kifah al-Musallah, the internal security forces for all Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, were trained on basic humanitarian standards applicable in situations of armed violence. Geneva Call gave two separate workshop sessions in Ain El-Hilweh and Beddawi refugee camps.

This is a follow-up to initial training provided in Ain el-Hilweh camp in 2010 after which Geneva Call was then requested to give a training of trainers programme. The activity will further enhance ownership of international norms within the highly populated camps by the internal security forces. These forces address daily tensions within the camps, and are responsible for up to 75,000 people in Ain el-Hilweh and upwards of 10'000 in Beddawi.

Geneva Call's focus is on engagement with ANSAs towards adherence to international norms. Training in these norms and in the implementation of the *Deed of Commitment* is an important element in optimizing the impact of the advocacy work.



## || **Protection of Humanitarian Space - new ECHO project to develop materials to support advocacy towards armed non-State actors and enhance the protection of civilians in armed conflict**

With support from The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO), Geneva Call is working together with The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action ([www.fsd.ch](http://www.fsd.ch)) to enhance the protection of civilians through the dissemination of humanitarian norms amongst ANSAs. A variety of modular tools to support training of ANSAs and civil society organizations are in preparation covering gender-based violence and the protection of women in armed conflict; the protection of children; humanitarian norms; and obligations under the Mine Ban Convention regarding anti-personnel landmines and improvised explosive devices.

The tools will be piloted and rolled out in 2012 with ANSAs operating in six countries or regions, integrating also the question of humanitarian space, safe access and facilitation for humanitarian purposes.

## || **New management structure at Geneva Call**

Two new staff have joined Head of Operations Elisabeth Decrey Warner in the day-to-day management of Geneva Call. The new management structure, which strengthens the organization and guarantees to donors an effective and efficient use of public funds, comprises the Head of Operations, Head of Finance & Administration, and Head of Communications & External Relations. Sami Ben Ayed is implementing a new financial analysis, planning and internal audit capacity in accordance with new Swiss GAAP RPC guidelines. Tim Carstairs is in charge of communications, managing donor relationships and grants, and seeking new opportunities to fund the increasing demand on Geneva Call's expertise in all its thematic approaches to armed non-State actors.

## **APPEL DE GENÈVE GENEVA CALL**

P.O. Box 334  
CH-1211 Geneva 4  
Switzerland  
[info@genevacall.org](mailto:info@genevacall.org)  
[www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org)