

# NEWSLETTER

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## New signatories to the *Deed of Commitment*: The Kurdistan Democratic Party - Iran and the Free Life Party of Kurdistan/Liberation Forces of Eastern Kurdistan commit to banning Anti-Personnel Mines

In April, both the Kurdistan Democratic Party - Iran and the Free Life Party of Kurdistan/Liberation Forces of Eastern Kurdistan prohibited the use of anti-personnel mines (AP) by signing the *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* in their respective headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan. Elisabeth Decrey Warner, President of Geneva Call, congratulated the two organizations for taking a decision to give up a weapon that mainly affects civilians.

With the two new commitments, all Iranian Kurdish armed non-State actors (NSAs) have now banned these weapons. All Iranian provinces bordering Iraq, including the Kurdish ones, are particularly affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance. Iran is not a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

These signatures bring to 41 the armed non-State actors having adhered to the *Deed of Commitment* banning AP mines.



Signing ceremony, Iraqi Kurdistan 2010.  
Photo Credit: Geneva Call

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## IN THE FIELD

### Philippines: Geneva Call disseminates obligations of the Landmine Ban

As part of its continuing efforts to ensure the implementation of the ban on AP mines, Geneva Call conducted a workshop in February with 22 members of the Revolutionary Workers Party/Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayo Brigade (RPM-P/RPA-ABB). Although the RPM-P/RPA-ABB is a long-time signatory to the *Deed of Commitment*, such a training had not previously been conducted, and this was the first opportunity for Geneva Call to interface directly with middle ranking cadres of the organisation from various parts of the Philippines.

The workshop raised awareness on international standards regarding the issue of landmines and their impact on civilians, with a particular focus on the RPM-P/RPA-ABB's obligations under the *Deed of Commitment*.

Some more very concrete challenges were raised: for example, participants reflected on how to gather information about the possible presence of mines laid during an earlier phase in the conflict. Moreover the difficulties caused by the presence of another NSA, operating in the vicinity and believed to be capable of utilizing landmines, were explored.

## Burma/Myanmar: Raising awareness of the country's landmine crisis

In an event organised by the Burma Campaign (UK), on 16 March Geneva Call presented an overview of the general landmine situation in Burma/Myanmar to the UK All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). Some twenty people attended, including Members of Parliament and Lord Steel, former leader of the Liberal Party.

The presentation stressed the necessity - irrespective of the political situation - of using the humanitarian space available to address the landmine issue facing the population. This is particularly important as landmine contamination will be a problem for years to come. Thus, despite the fact that the Burma/Myanmar government has not signed the AP Mine Ban Convention, Geneva Call continues its mine ban advocacy and promotion of humanitarian mine action work with NSAs and encourages other actors to undertake similar engagement with the government.

The presentation was well received by an audience that clearly had received very little information on the issue prior to the meeting. Geneva Call has had one on one meetings with the diplomatic community and other stakeholders and it is hoped that through these and other presentations planned for the future the international community can be mobilized to take informed action on the landmine issue in Burma/Myanmar.

## Senegal: People at risk take up the AP mine ban

In December 2009, more than 140 community leaders living in the mine-affected Casamance region participated in two advocacy meetings organized by Geneva Call and its local partners. The meetings brought together village chiefs, local elected officials, school teachers, religious leaders, elders, leaders of local youth and women's groups as well as representatives of local civil society associations from the rural communities of Boutoupa Camaracounda and Nyassia. The aim of the meetings was to inform community leaders on the AP Mine Ban Convention's norms and to encourage them to contribute to ongoing mine action efforts, notably by helping to convince members of the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) to abandon AP mine use and accept humanitarian demining operations. The communities were chosen because of their proximity to MFDC camps and their contamination by mines. Facilitators included the Senegalese National Mine Action Centre (CNAMS), Geneva Call's local partner Association pour la Promotion Rurale de l'Arrondissement de Nyassia - Solidarité, Développement, Paix (APRANSDP) and three other local NGOs active in mine action



From the reference manual on landmines used in community meetings in Casamance to address questions of AP mines and humanitarian mine action.

and peace-building. During the sessions, participants were handed out a small 16-page reference manual published by Geneva Call and APRAM. This manual explains the AP Mine Ban Convention's norms, the landmine situation in Senegal and what role ordinary people can play to support mine action. After the sessions, they returned home to explain and distribute manuals to fellow villagers and, in some cases, to MFDC fighters. Geneva Call is currently extending the meeting format to other rural communities in Casamance.



AP mine ban advocacy meeting with community leaders, Nyassia, Casamance region, December 2009. Photo Credit: Geneva Call



## Geneva Call holds a side-event on armed non-State actors at the ECOWAS conference “Two Decades of Peace Processes in West Africa: Achievements, Failures, Lessons”

Some 40 delegates attended a session on the issue of armed NSAs organised by Geneva Call, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the UN Office in West Africa (UNOWA), on the sidelines of the ECOWAS international conference “Two Decades of Peace Processes in West Africa: Achievements, Failures, Lessons” held in Monrovia, Liberia, from 22 to 27 March. The side-event, which was opened by officials of UNOWA and the Swiss Federal Department

of Foreign Affairs, included presentations from representatives of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the former rebel movement, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). It aimed at reviewing the challenges posed by NSAs in West Africa and the experiences made by humanitarian actors in engaging them towards compliance with humanitarian norms in situations of armed conflict.

## Geneva Call celebrates its tenth anniversary

Geneva Call celebrated its tenth anniversary at the Musée Ariana in Geneva on 25 March, accompanied by 120 guests. Geneva Call would like to thank Mr David Hiler, Member of the Government of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Ambassador Thomas Greminger, head of political division IV of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and Mr Cornelio Sommaruga, former President of the ICRC and of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), for their kind words. It also thanks the Canton of Geneva and Mr Ivan Pictet, who generously supported this event.

<http://www.genevacall.org/10-years/10-years.htm>



Members of the Geneva Call team. Missing are the many partners from the field who make Geneva Call's work possible, and could not attend. Photo Credit: Geneva Call

### Staff news

Since the beginning of the year, Geneva Call has appointed a new Programme Officer for Africa, Adrian Goodliffe, to replace Nicolas Florquin who has joined the Small Arms Survey, and welcomes Silvana Lisca as interim Gender Issues Coordinator during the maternity leave of Aurélie Lamazière.

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