

NEWSLETTER

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GENEVA CALL

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New signatory to the *Deed of Commitment* banning anti-personnel (AP) mines

The Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan signed the *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* on 16 June in Geneva. Abdullah Mohtadi, Secretary General, stated that “Iranian Kurds are number one victims of anti-personnel landmines in the country planted during the Iran-Iraq war and even after by the government. I hope that this step raises awareness to the humanitarian aspect of this huge problem.”

The Kurdish provinces in Iran, like all provinces bordering Iraq, have been particularly affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance. Iran is not Party to the AP Mine Ban Convention.

Elisabeth Decrey Warner, Geneva Call President, congratulated the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan for this important decision in contributing to build a mine free world by stating: “With its commitment to the anti-personnel mine ban, the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan is joining 38 other armed non-State actors and proving that humanitarian concerns are of utmost importance for them.”

28 armed non-State actors meet in Geneva to discuss humanitarian engagement

From 17 to 19 June, 44 representatives from 28 different armed non-State actors (NSAs), including internationally non-recognized or partially recognized States, met under the auspices of Geneva Call. Signatories to the *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel (AP) Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* (hereafter *Deed of Commitment* banning AP mines) were joined by other NSAs which signaled their interest in the process, as well as Geneva Call’s local and international partners.

“We cannot continue to conceive of International Humanitarian Law as a mediation technique in conflicts. We must face up to the urgent nature of the humanitarian imperative and the overwhelming need to save human dignity.”

statement by a participant

international humanitarian norms and processes related to women and children in armed conflict.

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Signatories reported on the steps undertaken to enforce the *Deed of Commitment* banning AP mines, the challenges faced, their plans and assistance needs. This was particularly important when it came to mine action. With the feedback of the NSAs, Geneva Call sought to identify ways to increase support for the implementation of the *Deed of Commitment* banning AP mines, and gain the confidence of non-signatories, in order for them to identify the steps towards accession.

The two Final Declarations reaffirmed the participants’ support to the continuing efforts by Geneva Call to universalize the AP mine ban, and requested Geneva Call to move forward on engagement of NSAs on other

Training on the AP mine ban and humanitarian standards for Iranian-Kurdish NSAs

At the request of four Iranian Kurdish signatory NSAs, Geneva Call led two-day trainings on humanitarian standards for their commanders in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, in October. The sessions focused on the AP mine ban, NSA obligations under the *Deed of Commitment* banning AP mines and on International Humanitarian and International Human Rights Law in general. Through presentations and discussions, Geneva Call provided a framework for the NSAs to deepen their understanding of these humanitarian standards and to consider processes to integrate them into their rules and codes of conduct, and into the training and education of the Peshmerga. Each NSA (the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, the Komala Party of Kurdistan, the Komalah- the Kurdistan Organization of the Communist Party of Iran, and the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan) had carefully selected a number of commanders to attend. Geneva Call gained a better understanding of the NSA's internal rules, their perceptions of international humanitarian standards, and how the two compare. In many cases, all four NSAs granted even greater humanitarian protection than international law.

Somalia: Puntland authorities and stakeholders review progress in the implementation of the *Deed of Commitment* banning anti-personnel mines

The Puntland Mine Action Centre (PMAC), with the participation of Geneva Call and the support of Medico International, held a workshop on the implementation of the *Deed of Commitment* banning AP mines, which the Puntland authorities had signed in 2002. The workshop, which was opened by the President of Puntland, brought together more than 70 participants, political leaders, military commanders, community leaders, representatives of UN agencies and international mine action NGOs. It provided a timely opportunity to review progress with the newly elected Puntland authorities and to identify further actions to be taken, notably in mine clearance and victim assistance.



Photo Credit Geneva Call



Photo Credit Geneva Call

Fostering dialogue on Humanitarian Mine Action in Burma/Myanmar

In July, five non-State actors which have yet to ban the use of landmines met Geneva Call together with the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB). At the workshop, the fourteen participants were introduced to international standards regarding the use of landmines and reflected on how their organizations' policies could be changed to better reflect international norms. The landmine ban was promoted as the most effective way to ensure such compliance. The participants agreed that the workshop was a useful forum to begin discussions, and Geneva Call will continue to work with each organization to address the landmine issue. Then, in August, Geneva Call held a meeting on international standards and landmine control with the New Mon State Party (NMSP), which has a ceasefire agreement with the government and is interested in working on the landmine issue. The NMSP requested further facilitation by Geneva Call to move its considerations forward.

Geneva Call in Colombia

Geneva Call has been working since 2003 to promote adherence to the anti-personnel (AP) mine ban by the FARC and the ELN, two active armed non-State actors, and to facilitate the implementation of emergency humanitarian mine action in favour of communities affected by AP mines.

Geneva Call is working with Colombian civil society (trade unions, indigenous peoples, the afrocolombian minority, and women's organizations) to mobilize public opinion against AP mines and to call on NSAs to take immediate measures to reduce the impact of AP mines on civilians. Activities have included organizing national, regional, and local seminars and workshops with civil society organizations, national, departmental and local authorities, affected communities, and other stakeholders. Geneva Call also works with civil society organizations and local authorities in facilitating and supporting emergency mine action initiatives in mine- and unexploded ordnance-contaminated areas.

At the national level, Geneva Call has mainly collaborated with the Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines. Since 2007 Geneva Call has concentrated its work in southwest Colombia, where landmine and Explosive Remnant of War (ERW) problems became a real and daily danger for the population living in the midst of armed conflict.

This year, Geneva Call, with the support of UNMAS and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland, has been implementing a project to build the capacity of affected communities to protect themselves from landmines and ERW, through supporting local initiatives. Geneva Call has also been working on creating a space for dialogue among local organizations from affected communities as well as national and international organizations. In this context, it has conducted research on the impact of landmines



Photo Credit Geneva Call

and ERW on women. The results of this research are being used in local workshops, organized in collaboration with women's organizations, to promote advocacy for an AP mines ban.

Expanding its work to other humanitarian and human rights norms, Geneva Call is carrying out research on the scope and the legal aspects of NSAs' use and recruitment of children, and on the protection of women's rights impacted by the conflict.

International Experts assist Geneva Call in drafting a *Deed of Commitment* on Children and Armed conflict

Geneva Call has convened an Expert Advisory Group of international legal and policy experts on the drafting of a *Deed of Commitment* on Children and Armed conflict. The first meeting was held on 30 April in Geneva, with the purpose of identifying points of convergence and divergence on content, and to determine whether any type of consensus could be achieved on an initial outline. Children and Non-State Actor Programme Coordinator Jonathan Somer reports, "the experts tackled a number of difficult issues pertaining to children and armed conflict, particularly on the recruitment and use of children. It was very encouraging that a general consensus on recommendations for moving forward emerged out of the meeting."

A second meeting of the Expert Advisory Group will be held in November in order to discuss a preliminary draft of the *Deed of Commitment*. While the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group will provide key input into the final draft, the Group does not play a role in endorsing any actual *Deed of Commitment*, as such responsibility remains with Geneva Call.

Geneva Call has also discussed a potential *Deed of Commitment* on Children and Armed Conflict with several NSAs towards gaining a better understanding of the realities and challenges they face in protecting children. During the Second Meeting of Signatories to the *Deed of Commitment* banning AP Mines (see *28 armed non-State actors meet in Geneva to discuss humanitarian engagement*), NSAs endorsed efforts to create a *Deed of Commitment* on Children and Armed Conflict.

For more details on the membership of the Expert Group and its deliberations, please contact Jonathan Somer, Programme Coordinator.
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Geneva Call welcomes the United Nations Secretary General's report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/official-documents/f-official-documents/2001-2010/2009-29may-unsc.pdf>

On 29 May, the UN Secretary General released his report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2009/277), which was debated on 26 June at an open session of the Security Council. The report stresses the continued necessity of engaging NSAs on humanitarian norms. It highlights the positive contributions made by NGOs, in particular Geneva Call, that engage such actors through dialogue with a view to protecting civilians in situations of armed conflict. It recognizes that the engagement of non-State parties to a conflict is a necessary humanitarian act that does not affect their legal status, and calls on States to support such engagement. Geneva Call welcomes the acknowledgement of its achievements by the Secretary General. The implementation of the report's recommendations will bolster the effectiveness of humanitarian organizations, facilitate the engagement of NSAs, and help ensure that they take responsibility for abiding by humanitarian norms.

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In October, Geneva Call thoroughly revised its website

This new version provides a simpler, more intuitive and rapid navigation. It is now possible to access the desired information directly by thematic issues or by geographic zone.

Most of Geneva Call's publications can be downloaded from the 'Resources' page and the different partners (donors, academic partners, etc.) each have their own section. The latest information on Geneva Call's activities is constantly updated on the home page.

RSS provides the opportunity to stay updated on different job or internship opportunities within the organization. It is also possible to register in order to receive this Newsletter. And last but not least, partners wishing to support Geneva Call can access the necessary information directly.

Advocating for Humanitarian Mine Action in NSA Areas

<http://genevacall.org/resources/gc-statements/f-gc-statements/2001-2010/2009-may29-gc.pdf>

One of Geneva Call's main contributions to the Inter-sessional Standing Committees Meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Geneva was to coordinate a *Statement by Humanitarian Mine Action Agencies in Support of Mine Action in Areas Under the Control of Armed Non-State Actors or Where They Are Present* that was circulated and read out on 29 May. It was the first time that the 10 international humanitarian mine action agencies signed a statement together.

Project Evaluation: A Request for Good Practices

Geneva Call is currently reviewing its mechanisms for project evaluation. In order to make this possible, Geneva Call mandated one person to work part-time on evaluation for a six-month period (mid-2009-early 2010). This mandate includes the preparation of tools for internal evaluations, drafting an evaluation policy, and the conduct of at least one internal evaluation. Given the particular nature of Geneva Call's work, part of this exercise involves consulting other organizations in similar fields to learn about their evaluation methods. Geneva Call would therefore appreciate suggestions and ideas for how to better integrate evaluative thinking and practices into the day-to-day work of the staff and the organizational functioning. Please contact info@genevacall.org.

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Mission Statement
Geneva Call is a neutral and impartial humanitarian organization dedicated to engaging armed non-State actors (NSAs) towards compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (HRL). The organization focuses on NSAs that operate outside effective State control.

Latest Information
Communication
Integrating Mine Action in Colombia, Bosnia, (French and Spanish versions)
13-14 August 2009
Studies
From Geneva to Sri Lanka, the ISH issues a study on the challenges to IHL today.
By Georg-Sebastian Hölzer for ISH Security Watch
12 August 2009
Studies
The International Peace Institute has issued a report "Beyond Market Forces: Reshaping the Global Security Industry", citing Geneva Call.
International Peace Institute - web site
11 August 2009

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