

The Cluster Munition Coalition is led by a Governance Board of:

Action On Armed Violence, Asociación para Políticas Públicas-APP,
Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines, Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas,
DanChurchAid, Handicap International, Human Rights Watch, ICBL Georgian Committee,
IPPNW, Mines Action Canada, Ban Landmines Campaign Nepal (NCBL), Norwegian People's Aid,
and Protection.



12 January 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Cluster Munition use in Sanaa, Yemen

Dear President Obama,

The Cluster Munition Coalition is very concerned with evidence of cluster munition strikes in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, on 6 January of this year. We urge your administration to demand that Saudi-led coalition members stop using cluster munitions. We also call on the U.S. to investigate its own role in the recent strikes and to cooperate with any independent, international inquiry into alleged violations of the laws of war by all sides. As a party to the conflict in Yemen, the United States must have a role in minimizing civilian harm and ensuring that international humanitarian law is upheld.

Detailed evidence (<http://bit.ly/1RbDqkz>) of aerial attacks in two residential neighborhoods of the densely populated capital city has been collected by Cluster Munition Coalition member, Human Rights Watch, and by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) in Yemen. There are also unconfirmed reports of a third attack in the al-Thiaba neighborhood. Already there is evidence of civilians who have been killed and injured during strikes. (See, for example: <https://t.co/BtMr6AmBuS>).

The use of cluster munitions, an indiscriminate weapon, in populated areas makes these strikes a violation of international humanitarian law. As you are well aware, cluster munitions have been banned under the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, on the basis of the unacceptable harm they cause to civilians both at the time of attack and in the longer term.

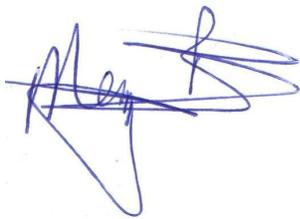
While the 6 January strikes were the first recorded cluster munition attack in Sanaa, there is clear and compelling evidence that five other types of air dropped and ground launched cluster munitions have been used elsewhere in Yemen, particularly Hajja and Saada. As a result of cluster munition strikes occurring in 2015, Human Rights Watch (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/08/26/yemen-cluster-munition-rockets-kill-injure-dozens>) and the UN OHCHR (<http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16923&LangID=E>) have identified dozens of civilian casualties- both deaths and injuries.

We also urge the U.S. to:

- Review the Gates Policy to eliminate the exception allowing continued use of cluster munitions resulting in less than one percent unexploded ordnance rate during military operations;
- Take further steps toward accession to the Convention, including by accelerating the Gates policy timeline to fully implement it this year; and
- Participate in regular meetings of the Convention on Cluster Munitions starting with the Sixth Meeting of States Parties in Geneva in September 2016, as the U.S. has done for the Mine Ban Treaty since 2009.

We thank you in advance for the actions you will take on this issue. We are available to discuss the matter further with representatives of the United States at the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, and we will communicate with the Permanent Mission to this effect in the coming days.

Sincerely,



Megan Burke
Director

cc. H.E. Ms. Ambassador Samantha Power, Permanent U.S. Representative to the United Nations, New York