

MEDIA COVERAGE – BEIRUT 2nd MEETING OF STATES PARTIES

THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Lebanon ‘inconsistent’ on munitions bans - September 15, 2011

By Patrick Gale

The Daily Star

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2011/Sep-15/148798-lebanon-inconsistent-on-munitions-bans.ashx#axzz1XudGuBdd>



BEIRUT: The government is guilty of “inconsistency” and “double standards” over its wildly varying stances on international treaties on cluster bombs and land mines, the head of a global anti-munition organization said Wednesday.

Steve Goose, chair of the Cluster Munition Coalition, said that while Lebanon could be proud of its ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in November 2010, its refusal to sign up to the Ottawa Treaty banning land mines was disingenuous.

“Lebanon is not a party to the [Ottawa] Treaty. This is very bad news and we think this is actually quite inconsistent on the part of Lebanon,” Goose told The Daily Star on the sidelines of the Second Meeting of States Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, currently being held in Beirut.

“Lebanon has been quite clear that it has joined [the cluster munitions] convention because it is convinced of the humanitarian harm that cluster munitions cause. Well guess what? Land mines cause the exact same kind of humanitarian harm,” he said.

The Ottawa Treaty outlaws the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines. It currently has 156 party states.

There remain tens of thousands of land mines throughout Lebanon planted by almost all belligerents in the 1975-1990 Civil War. As for cluster bombs, which unlike land mines are fired from aircraft and are designed to explode on impact with the ground, Israel dropped up to 4 million across swathes of the south during the final hours of its 2006 July-August war with Hezbollah.

While there have been suggestions that authorities are reluctant to remove land mines close to the Blue Line – the boundary of Israeli military withdrawal from Lebanon – in order to deter a repeat of the ground invasions conducted by Israel in the past, Goose said there was no good reason for Lebanon not to sign up to Ottawa.

“It’s a separate thing. Your priorities for clearance are separate [from legislation]. It’s a different process. Fieldwork [in removing land mines or cluster munitions] is quite apart from what they are doing in Cabinets and in legislature,” he said.

“The long-term effect of cluster munitions and the long-term effect of land mines, in terms of civilian casualties and in terms of hindering development, is exactly the same. Usually the term people use is that cluster munitions, when they don’t explode like they are supposed to become de facto anti-personnel mines, so the fact that Lebanon has stayed away from the [Ottawa] treaty while being a champion this [the Convention on Cluster Bombs] is very inconsistent,” Goose added.

Lebanon was mulling signing up to Ottawa in 2005 but, according to Goose, the 2006 conflict caused the government to concentrate its cleanup efforts and adherence to international guidelines on cluster bombs, ignoring the continuing threat of land mines.

“It is an inconsistency and a double standard on the part of the Lebanese government,” he said.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions – signed in Oslo in 2008 – bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of the weapons. Countries where the convention is in force are obligated to clear contaminated areas within 10 years and destroy existing supplies of the weapons in 8 years.

In the first days of this year’s meeting, Swaziland, Italy and the Czech Republic joined Afghanistan in either ratifying or voicing their intention to ratify the convention.

One of Wednesday’s most high-profile discussions, led by Human Rights Watch, focused on the need for states that have ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions to produce domestic legislation in order to ensure that anyone found to be in breach of the treaty can be prosecuted. So far, almost a year after ratifying the convention, Lebanon has come up with no such laws.

Goose said all countries party to the convention “should have criminal penalties in place and Lebanon should be doing that.”

He added: “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been very busy preparing for this [convention] rather than pushing forward domestic legislation.”

Millions of dollars have been spend in removing hundreds of thousands of cluster bomb fragments in south Lebanon since August 2006. The Lebanese Army contributes to the cleanup effort through the Lebanese Mine Action Center.

Goose said that the fact that unexploded ordinance remained in large areas of the south should not prevent the Cabinet passing legislation on cluster munitions.

“Especially now we have gotten past this meeting of state parties, this should become a top priority. That doesn’t mean that they should or have a need to slow down any clearance operations they are doing, because this is different. In the range of obligations that Lebanon has under this convention, developing and passing legislation should now be a top priority,” he said.

Goose added that his organization was hopeful Lebanon would be moved to ratify the Ottawa Treaty. “There is more discussion now than there ever was,” he said. “[This week’s meeting] has raised awareness and the need to join the treaty and I believe they will.”



'Israel, cluster munitions inseparable' - Thu Sep 15, 2011





Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri

Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri says the Israeli regime and fatal cluster bombs cannot be separated from one another, Press TV reports.

<http://presstv.com/detail/199236.html>

Berri said on Wednesday that Israel has not even provided the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon with “maps that show the areas it targeted with cluster bombs” during the 2006 war on Lebanon, a Press TV correspondent reported.

The Lebanese official made the remarks at the conference of signatories to the UN Convention on Cluster Munitions in Beirut, which will run through September 16.

Berri said the application of cluster munitions by Israeli forces has led to the death of around 51 people and injured more than 350 others since the 2006 conflict.

“Israel continues to violate the Blue Line via land and air,” Berri added.

He said that the Lebanese parliament is working hard to make the country a place free of cluster bombs and that Lebanon, “which has suffered from these weapons,” will lead the way to make the ban on cluster munitions and mines international.

The United Nations estimates that the Israeli regime used about four million cluster bombs over southern Lebanon during the final days of the 2006 war.

Israel launched an all-out offensive on Lebanon five years ago under the pretext of releasing Israeli soldiers allegedly captured by the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah in southern border region of the country.

Israel, however, suffered a crushing defeat and was forced to leave the region without achieving any of its objectives.

The United States and Israel, which have not joined the convention, manufacture and stockpile most of the world's cluster munitions.

International researchers say the US has transferred hundreds of thousands of cluster munitions, containing tens of millions of bomblets, to 28 countries in the world.

The Beirut conference brings together representatives of 80 of the 107 countries that have signed the convention, which calls for destruction of the deadly weapons.

Israel's goal is keeping Lebanon "war-distorted" and "economically-handicapped", Berri says – BEIRUT | iloubnan.info /15 sep 2011

<http://www.iloubnan.info/politics/actualite/id/66335/titre/Israel's-goal-is-keeping-Lebanon-%22war-distorted%22-and-%22economically-handicapped%22,-Berri-says>

House Speaker Nabih Berri slammed on Wednesday Israel's goal to keep Lebanon "war-distorted" and "economically-handicapped."

"Israel pursued its war on Lebanon with the cluster munitions it left behind within the last 48 hours of its 2006 aggression on Lebanon."

The International Security Council issued resolution 1701 on August 11, 2006, following an Israeli war against Lebanon which lasted 33 days. Israel's 48-hour procrastination to announce a halt to its war acts in Lebanon, left behind millions of cluster bombs, which have taken thus far many innocent lives.

"Israel never practically stopped its war acts in Lebanon," Berri said in an attempt to explain to the world Israel's cluster-munition and land-mine tactics.

"I would like to get the world's attention to the fact that Israel never waged a war against Lebanon within the frame of an official confrontation. Lebanon, as you may know, never took part in any of the Middle Eastern wars, but was subject to major military invasions by Israel," Berri said, abhorring Israel's intention to make out of Lebanon a "war-distorted" and "economically-handicapped" image.

Speaker Berri's words came amid a reception he held along with his wife in Ein-Teeneh, hosting members of the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which was held on Monday in Lebanon, in presence of the total of 109 countries, of which 61 are states parties.

"Lebanon is leading an international campaign to reach a special international agreement for clearing cluster munitions from Lebanese lands," Berri said. Moreover, he voiced House of Parliament's support to the awareness campaign aiming to warn citizens from the grave danger of landmines and cluster munitions.

"The Lebanese House of Parliament has launched a Parliamentary diplomacy during meetings with the Councils of Islamic states and other parliamentary organizations, in a bid to support the agreement on clearing cluster munitions," he said, calling on countries world-wide to support cluster-bomb clearing operations, as well as demining activities in Lebanon, which still require a huge financial sum, almost 75 million dollars, to be fully able to end the harm caused by said merciless weapons.



Morocco: Govt Adheres to Humanitarian Principles, Goals of Convention on Cluster Munitions – Diplomat - 14 September 2011

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201109141386.html>

Beirut — Moroccan permanent representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Ambassador Omar Hilale, said Wednesday in Beirut that Morocco, deeply convinced of the humanitarian objectives that led to the signing of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, adheres to humanitarian principles and objectives which it is based on.

Hilale, who heads a delegation to the work of the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which runs until 16 September in the Lebanese capital, said that Morocco has joined the Oslo process since its early stages from Vienna to Wellington and Dublin.

Morocco shared the satisfaction expressed during this conference about the entry into force in August 2010 of this Convention, he said, noting however, that the Kingdom "is unable for the moment to join it and this because of the situation of the regional conflict imposed on it (Morocco) for over three decades."

Morocco, whose large part of its southern provinces are infected by landmines and explosive remnants of war, carries out, for over two decades, de-mining operations through the mobilization of significant human and technical resources, he said.

"Fortunately, none of the victims of mines and explosive remnants of war has been injured by cluster munitions," he added.

Hilale also recalled that Morocco, a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, began the compliance of national legislation with the provisions of the Convention, adding that all the victims of explosive devices are provided with free medical care and prostheses in the hospitals of the Royal Armed Forces.

Similarly, local NGOs, in collaboration with the social services of the state, assist their integration into the economic and social fabric of their homes and their compensation, he added. Morocco, he noted, develops long been a humanitarian policy which aims to be exemplary and therefore adheres to humanitarian principles and objectives underlying the Convention on cluster munitions.

Morocco, a party to almost all the instruments on disarmament and arms control, remains convinced, as member states of the United Nations, that the effectiveness of a legal instrument in the field of disarmament depends largely on its degree of universality, he said.



Afghanistan ratifies Convention on Cluster Munitions - Tehran, Sept 14, IRNA

<http://www.irna.ir/ENNewsShow.aspx?NID=30564149&SRCH=1>

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomes Afghanistan's ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

According to a press release issued by the ICRC, the instrument of ratification was deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon in New York on September 8.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions, which was originally opened for signature on December 3, 2008 in Oslo, prohibits the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention or transfer of cluster munitions.

In addition, states possessing or affected by cluster munitions are required to take action to destroy stockpiles, to clear cluster munition remnants and to provide assistance for victims. The Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention is currently taking place in Beirut.

The president of the ICRC, Jakob Kellenberger, speaking at the signing conference in Oslo in 2008 said: 'The signing of this Convention by so many states is evidence that the suffering of victims and affected countries has not gone unnoticed.'

'The convention will establish that these are prohibited weapons and become a bulwark against their further proliferation,' he said. Although the signing of the convention was an important success in itself, the ICRC president emphasized that the true measure of achievement would be how the lives of victims of cluster munitions and their communities change in the months and years to come.

The ICRC stands ready to offer Afghanistan its expertise to help ensure that the provisions of the convention are fully implemented.

Afghanistan's ratification brings to 62 the number of states that are party to the convention, with the biggest number being in Africa, followed by Europe and the Americas. Two countries in Asia – Japan and Laos – and three in the Pacific region – Fiji, the Cook Islands and New Zealand – are also States Parties.



Kuwait supports Lebanon for clearing lethal ordnance - Military and

Security 9/14/2011 4:06:00 PM

<http://www.kuna.net.kw/NewsAgenciesPublicSite/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2190282&Language=en>

BEIRUT, Sept 14 (KUNA) -- Kuwait supports Lebanon's efforts to clear the national territories of cluster bombs and lethal ordnance left behind by the Israeli military forces, a ranking Kuwaiti official affirmed here on Wednesday.

Member of the Permanent Delegation of Kuwait to the United Nations in Geneva Ziad Al-Mashaan, currently taking part in the Second Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which opened in Beirut on Monday, with participation of 119 countries, said the participation of his country in the convention reflected the Kuwaiti Government support for the relentless Lebanese efforts to cope with tragic consequences of the Israeli offensives.

The relevant international treaty is of significant humanitarian, social and economic dimensions, the Kuwaiti official said.

He also urged the international community to "find adequate solutions" to this lethal problem, consequences of which exist for many years after end of combat military action.

Thousands of deadly ordnance have been left behind by the Israeli forces since their withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000

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TEHRAN TIMES

Lebanon hosts conference on cluster munitions - 14 September 2011 15:11

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/index.php/component/content/article/2558>

BEIRUT -- The delegates from more than 100 countries are participating in a five-day conference on cluster munitions with aim to eradicate the inhuman weapon.

Organizers have said that hundreds of thousands of unexploded cluster bombs remain in Lebanon after being dropped by Israel during the July 2006 war, The Daily Star reported on Tuesday.

"These bombs have until today disabled or killed more than 400 victims, therefore constituting a form of occupation [of the country]," Lebanese President Michel Sleiman said on Monday in his inaugural address in Beirut.

The conference will last through Friday.

Sleiman added, these weapons "still threaten our citizens' lives on a daily basis while we have not yet completely removed them and obliterated their impact."

More than 200,000 unexploded cluster bombs have been found and rendered harmless since 2006, but over three millions still remain unfound in southern Lebanon.

The UN investigations in southern Lebanon showed that Israel dropped over four million cluster munitions during the last days of Tel Aviv's war on the country in 2006.

Sleiman said the primary reason the conference is being held in Lebanon because the country has suffered severely because of this inhuman weapon.

He went on to say that the legacy of the Israeli war machine throughout its aggression against Lebanon, especially during the month of July 2006, has caused huge devastation, claimed hundreds of innocent lives, and inflicted physical and moral suffering upon the Lebanese people.

An international convention on cluster munitions has been in force for over a year that requires signatories to give up the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of the weapons.

All the countries, which are participating in the Lebanon conference, have joined the convention.

The United States, Israel and Russia manufacture and stockpile most of the world's cluster munitions. They are among countries who have not signed the treaty.

International researchers say the U.S. has transferred hundreds of thousands of cluster munitions, containing tens of millions of bomblets, to 28 countries in the world.

The worst affected countries are Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and now Libya.