

IHLI Oral Intervention: Capacity Constraints for Victim Assistance Considering the Significant Increase of Victims of War

Thank you, Mr./Ms. Chair,

On behalf of the International Humanitarian Law and Youth Initiative (IHLI), a social movement founded in 2018 by young professionals from Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia, we are honored to speak today. IHLI was created to foster a digital space for youth to engage, learn, and collaborate on issues related to International Humanitarian Law (IHL), particularly in regions impacted by armed conflict.

Our grassroots work places us in close contact with communities facing the immediate and long-term effects of war. In many of these regions, including Somalia and Lebanon, civilians continue to suffer from the consequences of explosive remnants of war. These include unexploded ordnance that, in some cases, reflect characteristics associated with cluster munitions—especially in areas where such weapons have been documented or suspected in past conflicts.

In Lebanon, the legacy of previous conflicts has left communities grappling with the long-term danger of submunitions scattered across agricultural lands and residential areas. In Somalia, ongoing instability and fragmented conflict have made it difficult to monitor and assess the full extent of contamination, though civilians are routinely exposed to unexploded devices with wide-area impact.

Due to the challenges in documentation and access in many conflict zones, including active combat or restricted terrain, it is often not possible to conclusively determine the specific types of munitions used. However, the humanitarian consequences are undeniable: civilians—especially children—continue to suffer life-altering injuries such as amputations, burns, and psychological trauma.

The provision of victim assistance in such environments is deeply constrained. Health systems are often overstretched or under-resourced, and humanitarian workers face threats to their own safety in delivering aid and conducting clearance operations. The persistent danger of unexploded submunitions prolongs fear, hinders recovery, and undermines community resilience.

IHLI emphasizes the urgent need for sustained international cooperation and support. This includes scaling up medical and psychosocial care, increasing investment in mine and ordnance clearance, and ensuring long-term rehabilitation and reintegration services for victims—especially in affected countries like Somalia and Lebanon.

We also call for stronger implementation of international humanitarian law, with a focus on protecting civilians and supporting humanitarian actors in volatile regions. Upholding these principles is essential to prevent future suffering and promote sustainable recovery in post-conflict settings.

In closing, IHLI urges the international community to reaffirm its commitment to assisting victims of explosive weapons, including those harmed by or at risk from cluster munitions, and to ensure that no affected community is left behind.

Thank you.