

CMC Compliance Statement by Verity Coyle
Third Review Conference, Convention on Cluster Munitions
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Thank you, Mr. President.

Recent events in Mali have raised serious questions of compliance that warrant urgent attention. In May 2026, after a series of airstrikes, media source Radio France International reported on the deployment of cluster munitions citing local sources. Subsequently, footage posted on May 17 that visually documented remnants of an air-dropped cluster munition, including several unexploded explosive submunitions, were analyzed and geolocated by Bellingcat and Jeune Afrique, in the northern part of Mali, a state party.

Human Rights Watch reviewed the Bellingcat investigation and confirmed both the location and the type of munition seen in one of the videos. The munition shown has the requisite visual characteristics of the ShOAB-0.5 submunition, including the flutes and the seam where the two halves of the casing are joined. The apparent impact craters in the video are not weathered or otherwise degraded, indicating recent use and are consistent in size with the 0.5kg net explosive content of ShOAB-0.5 submunitions. The ShOAB-0.5 submunition was produced by the Soviet Union and is only known to be used in RBK-500 air-dropped cluster bombs. The submunitions are packed into RBK-500 cluster bombs, which is a dispenser unit that contains over 500 ShOAB-0.5.

Mali, through a statement by the Malian armed forces on May 17, acknowledges conducting airstrikes during this time period in this region, which matches the geolocated video of the unexploded ShOAB-0.5 submunitions in the village of Tadjmart analyzed by Bellingcat and Jeune Afrique. Mali is also engaged in joint military combat operations with Africa Corps, which is controlled by the Russian government. The exact nature of Mali's relationship with Africa Corps is not clear.

The Cluster Muniton Coalition (CMC) has not been able to determine which warring party used the cluster munitions.

In previous transparency reports and statements, Mali has declared that it has never produced, stockpiled, transferred, or used cluster munitions. In response to the specific reports of recent cluster munition use, Mali [stated](#) at a July 2026 preparatory committee meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions: “[W]e would like to reject any allegation that as far as we’re aware is not based on evidence that is verifiable, independent or officially drawn up.”

Given that these reports represent a threat to the letter and spirit of the Convention, Mali should now conduct a rigorous, impartial, and transparent investigation about the recent use of cluster munitions in its territory, including to assess its own compliance with several treaty obligations. According to the Convention’s prohibitions in article 1, Mali is prohibited from using, producing, acquiring, transferring, or stockpiling cluster munitions. While it may participate in joint military operations, it is further prohibited from assisting, encouraging, or inducing anyone to engage in

any activity prohibited by the Convention, and it is required to discourage states not party from using cluster munitions (articles 1(1)(c) and 21(2-3)).¹

The investigation should include, but not be limited to the following elements:

- How those munitions arrive in Mali. Which specific party was operating the aircraft that dropped the cluster munitions. Was that party assisted by another party. And do any stockpiles of cluster munitions remain on Mali's territory;
- What was Mali's relationship with Africa Corps during that operation;
- What steps had Mali taken before this event to prevent any use of cluster munitions by Africa Corps, including by precluding the transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions in its territory; and
- As Mali has not adopted national implementation measures, what other steps has it taken to prevent and suppress prohibited acts by persons or on territory under its jurisdiction or control, including by members of its armed forces and Africa Corps.

Looking ahead, CMC calls on Mali to fulfill its positive obligations under the Convention:

- First, Mali should take steps to prevent future use of cluster munitions on its territory.
- Locate and immediately destroy any remaining stockpiles in areas under its jurisdiction and control;
- Take steps to ensure there is no further use of cluster munitions on its territory, including by ensuring that the Malian armed forces as well as Africa Corps are fully aware of the prohibition on the use of cluster munitions, as well as direct or indirect assistance in any use;
- As required by article 9, Mali should adopt national implementation measures, including legislation with penal sanctions to "prevent and suppress" activities prohibited by the Convention "undertaken by persons or on territory under its jurisdiction or control." Such legislation, which has not yet been adopted by Mali, could have helped deter the use of cluster munitions that took place in Mali and made it easier to hold the perpetrators responsible. Regardless, adopting legislation and other measures at this point could promote deterrence and accountability in the future. Model legislation is available from CMC, Human Rights Watch, and the International Committee of the Red Cross;
- Finally, uphold its article 4 obligations to report on the extent of cluster munition remnant contamination and clear and destroy any remnants left by the use on its territory. Mali's deadline for clearance and destruction expired in 2020; therefore, if it identifies areas known or suspected to contain cluster munition remnants, Mali should seek a new article 4 deadline by requesting an extension of up to five years.

Compliance is a collective responsibility. CMC encourages the involvement other states parties in the process of assessing compliance in the situation in Mali. In line with article 8(1), we

¹ For more information on the prohibition on assistance, see Human Rights Watch and International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School, "Staying True to the Ban on Cluster Munitions: Understanding the Prohibition on Assistance in the Convention on Cluster Munitions," June 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/06/23/staying-true-ban-cluster-munitions>; Human Rights Watch, "Promoting the Prohibitions: The Need for Strong Interpretations of the Convention on Cluster Munitions," November 2010, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/11/06/promoting-prohibitions>.

encourage all states to “to work together in a spirit of cooperation to facilitate compliance.” In this regard, the CMC suggests that the paper on the Coordination Committee and Presidency explicitly assign responsibility for taking steps to address allegations of non-compliance to the Committee on General Status of the Convention and the Presidency.

Finally, the CMC condemns any use of cluster munitions by any actor under any circumstances.

We urge all states parties to do the same.

Thank you.