

‘Write To Your MP’ pack for Schools

URGENT ACTION TO HELP PROTECT CIVILIANS!

Everyday Humanity & Inclusion’s teams of physiotherapists, social workers and others care for civilians that have been injured and left traumatised by war in countries like Yemen and Syria. 31,904 civilians were killed last year (a 38% increase from the previous year) and urgent action is needed to better protect civilians.

During this December’s Forgotten 10 Challenge we are taking the **Stop Bombing Civilians** campaign to the UK Parliament and we need your school’s support. We’re asking students to write a letter to their local MP (Member of Parliament) calling for action to save innocent lives.

Creating political will by demonstrating the support from ordinary citizens especially young people was instrumental in the successful campaigns to ban landmines and cluster munitions. Thousands of HI supporters have signed our Stop Bombing Civilians petition but we also need to raise awareness and support for the campaign amongst our elected representatives.

6 reasons to write to your MP

- **You are your Member of Parliament’s ‘constituents’ and it is their job to represent you** in Parliament. Most MPs are very interested in work done by students at schools in their constituency. They depend on constituents like you to tell them about issues and what is important to you. Your letter could have a real impact and may well be the most interesting one that they receive!
- **Urgent action is needed to protect civilians.** The past 7 years has seen a 165% in the number of civilians killed in bombings.
- **There is specific humanitarian harm when explosive weapons are used in villages, towns and cities.** When explosive weapons are used in populated areas 92% of all the victims are civilians.
- Most types of explosive weapons – which include, among others, aircraft bombs, artillery shells, rockets and missiles are inaccurate and are characterised by **blast and fragmentation with a wide-area effect**. This makes their use in populated areas devastating and often in **contravention of the basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL)**.
- **The UN Secretary-General has called on States to engage constructively** in efforts to develop a political declaration to address the harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Despite having a leading role in the protection of civilians in armed conflict at the UN Security Council the UK is not currently engaging with this process.
- **Momentum is building.** Since September Humanity & Inclusion (HI) has written to all UK MPs and worked with MPs to raise questions in Parliament. This has been part of a collaborative campaign in 8 countries with awareness raised amongst nearly 5,000 national MPs.

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Writing to your MP

On the next page you will find key points to include in your letter. The points are a guide but it is important that you use your own words. MPs and their staff receive a large number of letters every day. An original letter sent by a passionate student is far more powerful than a template letter that is ‘copied and pasted’.

Before you write your letter

- Details of your MP’s constituency office and other contact details can be found on the Parliament.UK website. www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/
- The way to address an MP in a letter (often called the ‘salutation’) for most ‘backbench’ MPs is simply Mrs/Ms/Mr. In your letter’s ‘sign-off’ you can use ‘Yours sincerely’. Further information can be found on the Debretts website: www.debretts.com/expertise/forms-of-address/professions/politics/
- If you would like to check something or ask for more information before sending your letter please email schools.uk@hi.org. Further information can be found in the factsheets enclosed in our Campaign Kits.



Representatives from HI and the International Network on Explosive Weapons with the Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament. © HI

After you send your letter

- **Be proud** that you have taken an important action to help generate the political will for change - a vital step towards better protection of civilians.
- **Please let us know if you send a letter** and who your MP is.
- **Please let us know when you receive a reply.**

YOU CAN FIND THE KEY POINTS TO MAKE AND THE SUGGESTED STRUCTURE FOR YOUR LETTER ON THE NEXT PAGE

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YOUR LETTER

Below is a suggested structure for your letter along with key points to make. You do not need to include all of the points in your letter.

Introduce yourself

- Introduce yourself as a pupil at your school (you could tell them what class you are in) at based in your MP's constituency. MPs will usually prioritise correspondence from constituents and sometimes will only reply to constituents.
- Say that you have been learning about the way bombing affect people living in countries affected by war and that you are concerned about the impact bombings have on the lives of children and adults. Tell your MP that you are writing about Humanity & Inclusion's Stop Bombing Civilians campaign, which is calling on the UK and all States worldwide to better protect civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Tell your MP about the situation and why you care about it

Key points

- When explosive weapons are used in populated areas 92% of all the victims are civilians.
- 31,904 civilians were killed or injured by explosive weapons in 2017. Overall there has been a 165% in civilians killed by explosive weapons since 2011. Nine in ten cases of death and injury occur in populated areas.
- The humanitarian consequences of using explosive weapons in populated areas are disastrous. As well as death, injury and psychological trauma some of the other horrific consequences include the destruction of vital infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and transport links; damage to electricity supplies and contamination of water supplies; forced displacement and a deadly legacy of explosive remnants of war.

The UK Government's current position

- The UK has an informal lead role on the UN Security Council on the protection of civilians and is a key member of US-led coalition forces undertaking military operations in Syria and Iraq.
- The UK Government has recognised that there are humanitarian concerns over the use of explosive weapons in populated areas but it can increase its efforts to protect civilians.

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- In October the UK did not join 50 other States (including 27 European countries) in a joint statement highlighting the need for urgent action and an international declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

What to ask your MP

These are three suggestions of questions you could ask in your letter.

- 1 **Raise a written or oral question in Parliament.**
 - Example: With rising numbers of civilian victims of bombings in towns and cities, will the UK look at different ways, including policy responses, that are proposed to improve the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas?
- 2 **To sign the Stop Bombing Civilians petition** (which can be signed at: <http://bit.ly/StopBombingNow>) **and share the campaign on social media.**
- 3 **To meet with your class to discuss the campaign further. This could be after an assembly that your MP is invited to.** *(Humanity & Inclusion would be pleased to help facilitate this, provide support and attend any meetings).*

Thank you for your school’s support