

Cluster bomb ban treaty enters into force

On 16 February, the Convention on Cluster Munitions became international law after Burkina Faso and Moldova deposited their instruments of ratification with the UN. The new convention will enter into force on 1 August 2010. Opened for signature in December 2008, it has taken only 15 months to attain the 30 ratifications necessary for the convention to become binding international law.

According to a statement by the International Cluster Munition Coalition, of which JRS is a member, the short time it took to reach this milestone shows that governments have a strong desire never to see these terrible weapons used again. But every signatory needs to ratify, and those who haven't signed need to come on board to keep more civilian lives and limbs from being needlessly lost <http://jrs.net/news/index.php?lang=en&sid=4287>.

Non-signatories

In light of this new international law, it is especially important for former users of the weapon – such as the USA, Russia, and Israel – to re-examine their positions, which put questionable claims of military necessity above the well-documented humanitarian damage cluster munitions cause, the statement continued.

JRS activists also expressed disappointment that Cambodia and Thailand still have not come on board. A 2007 Handicap International report revealed the presence of as many as 7.8 million unexploded cluster munitions in Cambodia, primarily the result of the US military's secretive Vietnam-era bombing campaign between 1969 and 1973.

“Cluster munitions are huge bombs which contain about 1,000 small bomblets inside... What happens is that once you drop one, the bomblets are released over the area the size of a football field... The theory is that they all go off. They explode on impact, and there's no further damage. But this is completely not true,” said JRS Cambodia Director Sr Denise Coghlan, who has worked extensively on anti-landmine campaigns.