ISSUES

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Bombs, rockets or shells that open in mid-air scattering explosive payload over a wide area. 

Cluster munitions can deliver explosive force over a wide area without distinction between civilian and military targets and may also injure or kill civilians, including children, for years after a conflict has ended. The Cluster Munition Monitor noted in 2012 that the continuous use of these landmines is currently not in accordance with international humanitarian law and could constitute a grave violation of the laws of war. 

LANDMINES

Placed under, on or near the ground or other surface, bombs, rockets or shells that open in mid-air scattering explosive ordnance over a wide area. For heavy explosive weapons these effects can extend well beyond any immediately destruction caused by the explosion. 

EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

Explosive ordnance, such as artillery shells, mortars, and anti-aircraft missiles, and improvised explosive devices cause harm mainly through blast and fragmentation. 

INCENDIARY WEAPONS

Weapons that contain an incendiary substance, such as napalm or white phosphorous, and cause harm mainly through heat and flame. 

ARMS TRADE

The trade among states of conventional arms, including artillery, combat aircraft, combat ships, and small arms, as well as the trade in ammunition and parts and components of arms. 

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Nuclear weapons can release immense amounts of energy through a nuclear fusion or fission process. They can cause harm of catastrophic proportions through blast, fragment projection, heat, light and ionisation, as well as radioactive fallout. 

CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Chemical and biological weapons use either chemicals or biological agents such as anthrax and smallpox to harm or incapacitate targets. 

DRONES

Remotely piloted aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or ‘drones’, are usually armed with a camera and sensors and are controlled by a human pilot or computer using satellite technology. 

KILLER ROBOTS

Fully autonomous weapons would be able to identify and attack targets without direct human involvement. Although such weapons have not been deployed, several governments are engaged in the development of weapons systems with increasing autonomy.

This chapter was updated in October 2018. It provides a summary of some of the key issues in humanitarian disarmament, but there are other issues not covered here. This include responsibility for recording the casualties of armed violence, the rights of victims of that violence, and responsibility for the basic elements left after conflict.

Some key issues in humanitarian disarmament: some key issues in humanitarian disarmament

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