**CHALLENGE YOUR LOCAL PRESS**

Every year, tens of thousands of civilians are killed and injured by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. In Syria **over 2 million children** are living in fear of bombing attacks and unexploded weapons left behind. Urgent action is needed to protect civilians. Schools can make a difference by letting your local paper know that you’re taking action to support civilians living with the terror of bombings.

**Reasons to contact your local newspaper**

* **You have a powerful story to tell**. Readers will be interested in this human story about the lives of people affected by conflict.
* **You will reach more people and inspire others** to support people that are often forgotten.
* **Editors will be interested** in a story that gives a local angle to a very topical international story, particularly with conflict gripping Syria and millions of people forced to leave their homes.
* **You can promote your hard work.** Local media coverage is a great opportunity to highlight the great work you and your students are doing, make useful contacts with local journalists.
* **We can support you** by providing contact details for your local press and statistics on the issue.

**TOP TIPS**

**Before contacting your local paper**

* **Prepare your press release:** Use the template overleaf to help you. Remember to update the parts highlighted in yellow (e.g. details about your event, a quote from your group, your contact details).
* **Do some research:** A quick call, online research or looking through a previous edition will let you know where to send the press release. There will usually be a news desk or news editor that you can contact. Details for most local papers can be found at: <http://www.nsdatabase.co.uk/>
* **Know their deadlines:** Newspapers work to tight deadlines so find out when these are and send your press release well in advance - around ten days before your event is best. Remember to follow up and send another release with three to four days to go.
* **Be as concise as possible:** Keep your communications to who, where, when, what and why.
* **Be ready for questions:** The journalist may want a little more information so be prepared with some key messages and facts.
* **Ask us for help.** We would be very happy to support you.

**Inviting a journalist and photographer to your school activities**

Inviting a journalist to attend your event will increase the chances of being featured in the paper. Make sure someone is available to show the journalist your activities and answer their questions.

**Once you’ve received coverage**

* Thank the journalist promptly for their efforts.
* Keep an eye out for online comments or written responses to articles. Be prepared to respond.
* Share the coverage with your staff, students and parents, and celebrate your good work.
* **Remember to let us know** and send us clippings or web links for any coverage you receive.

**SPREAD THE WORD ONLINE**

Sharing information online is a great way to promote your event and create awareness.

**Websites, blogs and email**

If you have a website, blog, or email list, make sure to post information about your event and how to get involved. Or you could do a chain email asking friends to sign and share the petition.

**Facebook** [www.facebook.com/HandicapInternationalUK](http://www.facebook.com/HandicapInternationalUK)

* Keep up to date with Forgotten 10 Challenge events by liking our page on Facebook. Look out for the latest photos and information to share!
* Create your own Forgotten 10 Challenge event on Facebook and invite your friends.
* Share updates about your activities with your friends (Photos get more attention than just words).
* Challenge people to sign the petition online at [www.stop-bombing-civilians.org](http://www.stop-bombing-civilians.org)

Suggested posts for Facebook:

Urgent action is needed to protect civilians! Join me in calling on the UK to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Please add your voice here: [www.stop-bombing-civilians.org](http://www.stop-bombing-civilians.org)

When explosive weapons are used in towns and cities, 92% of victims are civilians. I’m taking action to save lives and limbs! [www.stop-bombing-civilians.org](http://www.stop-bombing-civilians.org)

**Twitter** [twitter.com/HI\_UK](https://twitter.com/HI_UK)

* Follow [@HI\_UK](https://twitter.com/HI_UK) to receive Forgotten 10 Challenge news and retweet information to your followers.
* Tweet updates about your own activities. If you include the name of your town, other people in the local area might pick up on it!
* Search for Twitter accounts that list events in your local area. Tweet at them about your event.
* Mention [@HI\_UK](https://twitter.com/HI_UK) in your tweets to let us know how you’re getting on.
* Tweet at local journalists or newspapers to share the information with them.
* Try to include the hashtag [#StopBombing](https://twitter.com/hashtag/stopbombing) in your tweets.

Suggested tweets:

* Bombing civilians. It’s not war – it’s a crime. Sign the petition [www.stop-bombing-civilians.org](http://www.stop-bombing-civilians.org) [#StopBombing](https://twitter.com/hashtag/stopbombing) [@HI\_UK](https://twitter.com/HI_UK)
* 76% of the victims of explosive weapons are civilians. We need to [#StopBombing](https://twitter.com/hashtag/stopbombing) civilians [www.stop-bombing-civilains.org](http://www.stop-bombing-civilains.org) [@HI\_UK](https://twitter.com/HI_UK)
* [#StopBombing](https://twitter.com/hashtag/stopbombing): Call on the UK to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas [www.stop-bombing-civilians.org](http://www.stop-bombing-civilians.org) [@HI\_UK](https://twitter.com/HI_UK)

**Share photos from your event**Don’t forget to take photos of your event and share them on social media. Email your photos to [schools@hi-uk.org](mailto:schools@hi-uk.org) and we’ll add them to our special galleries on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10151133414371922.445849.285228811921&type=1) and [Flickr](http://www.flickr.com/photos/handicapinternationaluk/sets/72157632159136227/with/8265775861/).

**PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE**

For immediate release - [Insert date]

**Young campaigners in [your town] take action to stop the bombing of innocent civilians**

**On the [date of your event], [Your school]** **is organising [Name of year group or the class students are in] are [insert concise details about your activities – what, when, where]. This event is part of the *Forgotten 10 Challenge*, a campaign coordinated by the charity Handicap International UK. From the 1st to 10th December 2016, schools and community groups around the UK are taking action in support of the forgotten victims of conflict.**

Particularly touched by the tragic fate of families living in war zones, [Name of school] students have decided to take action to make sure those civilians are not forgotten. They will be campaigning against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

In Syria alone over 2.2 million children are at risk, living in areas highly affected by the use of explosive weapons[[1]](#footnote-1). 53% of injuries sustained by Syrian refugees and internally displaced people are due to explosive weapons - victims face major, long-term trauma, and 15% of these victims had to undergo amputations[[2]](#footnote-2).

People like Ahmad, 7, who was playing outside his home in Syria when a bomb landed near him. There were no hospitals nearby - to save his life, a rough amputation of both his legs below the knee was done on the spot. His family fled to Lebanon where Handicap International has been caring for Ahmad, providing him with crutches, a wheelchair, a toilet chair and weekly rehabilitation sessions. Ahmad dreams of being able to help other people who have injured their legs: “I’m studying to be an orthopaedic surgeon.”

[Insert quote from a student or teacher explaining why you are taking action] ie: “*Seeing all the suffering of families in Syria, Yemen and other war zones on the news, we wanted to do something to help raise awareness on the devastating impact of explosive weapons on civilians. That’s why we decided to organise this event.”*

Young campaigners are calling on the UK government to commit to ending the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and to take the lead in influencing other states to do the same. They are also calling for more funds to assist the victims and prevent further injuries and deaths by clearing unexploded weapons.

Aleema Shivji, Executive Director of Handicap International UK explains: “*The large-scale use of explosive weapons in populated areas has had a devastating impact on people’s lives, and, in Syria, is contributing significantly to the worst humanitarian crisis the world has seen for decades. Urgent action is needed and the UK should take the lead by committing to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. No civilian, no innocent child should suffer and die because of these weapons.”*

Besides killing and causing horrific injuries, explosive weapons spread terror, make people fear for their lives and devastate vital infrastructures. Homes, hospitals and schools are being destroyed by bombs. Water and electricity networks are also ruined leading to food and water insecurity. The threat to civilians does not stop at the end of a conflict as explosive weapons can stay active for months, even years.

So sign today the petition at [www.stop-bombing-civilians.org](http://www.stop-bombing-civilians.org)

**Notes**

* Handicap International’s report ‘*Syria, a mutilated Future’* is available [here](https://www.handicap-international.org.uk/sites/uk/files/documents/files/factsheet-2016-06-syria-a-mutilated-future-handicap-international.pdf)
* Handicap International’s report ‘*The use of explosive weapons in Syria: A time bomb in the making* is available [here](https://www.handicap-international.org.uk/sites/uk/files/documents/files/2015-05-report-syria-use-of-explosive-weapons-time-bomb-in-the-making-handicap-international.pdf)
* Pictures and full case study of Ahmad available upon request.

**For media enquiries, please contact:**

[Insert contact details for your school spokesperson]

**Or contact:**

Marlene Sigonney  
Media Officer, Handicap International UK  
Email: [marlene.sigonney@hi-uk.org](mailto:tom.shelton@hi-uk.org)   
Tel: +44 (0)870 774 3737

Mob: +44 (0)7508 820 520  
[www.handicap-international.org.uk](http://www.handicap-international.org.uk)

**[Information on the event]: [What]**

When (date+time):

Where:

Information if registration needed

**About Handicap International**

Co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Handicap International works in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. We work tirelessly alongside disabled and vulnerable people to help meet their basic needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights.

After a long campaign against landmines and cluster munitions which led to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, Handicap International now aims to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Handicap International is a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the Cluster Munition Coalition and the International Network on Explosive Weapons.

1. ‘The use of explosive weapons in Syria: A time bomb in the making’, 2015 (Handicap International) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Syria, a mutilated future’, 2016 (Handicap International) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)