



**HUMANITY IN WAR
WORKSTREAM 3: THIRD STATE CONSULTATION ON IHL AND PEACE**

**Human Rights Watch statement delivered by Bonnie Docherty
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Thank you.

Human Rights Watch welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on disarmament, international humanitarian law, and peace.

While humanitarian disarmament has recently faced challenges, it remains a critical tool for advancing humanitarian aims in times of armed conflict and beyond. States and other actors should therefore redouble their efforts to preserve and strengthen it.

Value of Humanitarian Disarmament

Humanitarian disarmament seeks to prevent and remediate arms-inflicted human suffering and environmental damage through the establishment and implementation of norms.

Through its rules on indiscriminate and inhumane weapons, humanitarian disarmament decreases the risk of international humanitarian law violations. Its prohibitions on the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of some weapons, and its restrictions on the transfer of others, improve protections for civilians.

Humanitarian disarmament also promotes recovery and resilience through requirements to address harm that has already occurred. Clearance of contaminated lands allows displaced persons to return home and restart their lives. Victim assistance programs provide survivors with a range of physical and psychological care and measures for socioeconomic inclusion. International cooperation and assistance help affected states build the capacity to care for their own communities.

Humanitarian disarmament thus offers a comprehensive and tailored response to the threats posed by specific arms or arms-related activities.

Recommendations

There are several steps that we recommend states take to reinforce and strengthen humanitarian disarmament norms in the face of today's challenges.

First, states should condemn any actions that contravene these norms. They should speak out against the use and transfer of banned weapons, the transfer of weapons that risks leading to violations of international law, and states parties' withdrawals or suspensions from treaties. In so doing, states will demonstrate their commitment to humanitarian disarmament and help stigmatize conduct that runs counter to its norms.

Second, states parties to relevant treaties should comply with their obligations. They should not assist a state not party in the use or transfer of prohibited weapons by permitting transit through their territory. Appropriate conduct on this front is a legal responsibility and sets a standard for others to follow.

Third, states should do more to implement their positive obligations and political commitments. They should provide greater international support for clearance of explosive ordnance and assistance of victims. They should expedite efforts to meet stockpile destruction deadlines. They should adopt national policies and practices to reduce civilian harm and submit required reports in a timely and transparent manner. Such steps can save lives, help those already affected by arms-related harm, and facilitate monitoring and accountability.

Fourth, states should focus on disarmament's role as a humanitarian enterprise. Framing disarmament in this way makes governing weapons a matter of universal importance and prioritizes international cooperation over national interests.

Fifth, states should highlight the benefits and accomplishments of humanitarian disarmament, in addition to condemning violations of its norms. While not a panacea, humanitarian disarmament has made the world a safer place and thus warrants our protection.

Finally, states should support multilateralism, procedurally as well as financially, to provide a context in which humanitarian disarmament can thrive. They should ensure disarmament processes operate in a transparent manner and are not deadlocked by consensus decision-making. They should also facilitate the participation of all states, civil society, and affected individuals in relevant forums. The preservation of global multilateral institutions is crucial to the defense of existing humanitarian disarmament and other international law and the development of new norms to respond to emerging humanitarian challenges.

Thank you.