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AFP supports Democrats' bill prohibiting cluster bombs

Providing a Voice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Democrats Senator Lyn Allison intends tabling a Bill in the Australian Parliament which, if enacted, will prohibit Australians from manufacturing, possessing and/or using cluster bombs in conflict zones where they have already been shown to cause horrific injuries to the civilian population, particularly in the post-conflict period.

In its groundbreaking preliminary report "Fatal Footprint: The Global Human Impact of Cluster Munitions", Handicap International has revealed that 98 per cent of cluster bomb casualties are civilians who have been injured or killed while carrying out their normal day-to-day activities in an environment contaminated by unexploded munitions.

Most recently, Israel's bombardment of Lebanon in the days just before the ceasefire took effect, has left more than one million unexploded bomblets strewn throughout the south of the country, already killing 22 people and injuring 135 others since the war ended.

Obviously shocked by the statistics, Moammar Mashni, spokesperson for *Australians for Palestine* said that "Australians should put pressure on the government to enact the proposed Bill and support an immediate moratorium on the use of cluster bombs. It is unbelievable that any government committed to the dignity of the individual could possibly sanction the use of such weapons," said Mr Mashni.

Members of *Australians for Palestine* were present at Senator Lyn Allison's briefing session after her return from Lebanon and heard about the extent of the devastation and the terrifying conditions created by the unexploded cluster bombs hidden in the rubble.

"We welcome Senator Allison's initiative," said Mr Mashni "particularly in light of the fact that Israel has been bombing Gaza and using lethal weapons that have raised serious concerns about their legality. Until the international community begins negotiating a new treaty to prevent the use of such weapons, Australians should lobby the government hard to enact this legislation so that Australia at least will never manufacture, possess or use cluster bombs."

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