

Aotearoa/NZ CMC members:

Amnesty International Aotearoa NZ, Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Campaign Against Landmines, Caritas Aotearoa NZ, Christian World Service, Development Resource Centre, Engineers for Social Responsibility NZ, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War NZ, National Council of Women NZ, National Consultative Committee on Disarmament, Oxfam NZ, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament NZ, Pax Christi Aotearoa-NZ, Peace Foundation NZ, Peace Foundation Disarmament and Security Centre, Peace Movement Aotearoa, UN Association NZ, UN Youth Association NZ, UNICEF NZ, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Aotearoa

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PRESS STATEMENT - For Immediate Release

New Zealand Coalition Deplores Russia's Use of Cluster Bombs
Calls on New Zealand Government to Protest Use of the Banned Weapon

(Wellington, 15 August 2008) The Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition [Coalition](#) deplores Russia's use of cluster munitions in Georgia and calls on the New Zealand government to protest this use of cluster munitions, a banned weapon, in the strongest possible terms.

"We deplore Russia's decision to drop cluster bombs in populated areas of Georgia this week," said Mary Wareham, coordinator of the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition. "Russia's use of this indiscriminate weapon is shameful both because of the civilians casualties and because it is an affront to the majority of the world's nations that have agreed to ban cluster munitions."

Today [Human Rights Watch](#) confirmed evidence of Russian cluster munition use in Georgia causing the deaths of at least 11 civilians and injuring dozens more. According to the non-governmental organisation, Russian aircraft dropped RBK-250 cluster bombs, each containing 30 PTAB 2.5M submunitions, on the town of Ruisi in the Kareli district of Georgia on Tuesday, 12 August 2008. Three civilians were killed and five wounded in the attack. On the same day, a cluster strike in the centre of the town of Gori killed at least eight civilians and injured dozens.

"As a leader in the diplomatic process that created the international agreement banning cluster munitions, we fully expect the New Zealand government to condemn Russia's use of cluster munitions in the strongest possible terms," said Wareham. "We also urge civil society and the media not stand by quietly and let Russia get away with this despicable act."

This is the first known use of cluster munitions since 2006, during Israel's war with Hezbollah in Lebanon. On 30 May 2008, 107 nations, including New Zealand, adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which prohibits cluster munitions and requires their clean-up and assistance to victims. Russia refused to participate in the negotiations of the Convention, which will be opened for signature in Oslo, Norway on 3 December 2008.

Cluster munitions contain dozens or hundreds of smaller submunitions or bomblets. They cause unacceptable humanitarian harm in two ways. First, their broad-area effect kills and injures civilians indiscriminately during strikes. Second, many submunitions do not explode, becoming de facto landmines that cause civilian casualties for months or years to come.

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See also:

- HRW Press Release, "Russian Cluster Bombs Kill Civilians," 15 August 2008. <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2008/08/14/georgi19625.htm>
- Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition website: <http://www.banclusterbombs.org.nz>