

## **IHLI Statement on Mine Risk Education and Reduction under item 4b.**

Thank you, Mr./MS . Chair

On behalf of the International Humanitarian Law & Youth Initiative (IHLI), we would like to emphasize the vital role of Mine Risk Education (MRE) and community-based risk reduction in protecting civilians, especially in conflict-affected regions such as the Middle East and North Africa. From the national presentations delivered yesterday under the Victim Assistance agenda item, we observed a noticeable absence of youth engagement — both in supporting victims and currently in delivering risk education. This is despite the fact that investing in and integrating young people into national awareness programs can be extremely beneficial.

For example, in many areas — including Gaza — civilians, particularly youth and children, face daily threats not only from traditional anti-personnel mines but also from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexploded ordnance (UXOs). This reality calls for an expansion of risk education programs to be inclusive, context-sensitive, and capable of responding to evolving patterns of contamination. Due to the pressure and ongoing attacks in Gaza, young volunteers have taken it upon themselves to educate their communities using simple tools, aiming to protect as many civilians as possible.

### **So we would like to recommend**

1. Localizing risk education is crucial. Programs should be designed and implemented in collaboration with local communities and young people living in affected areas, as they possess deep knowledge of the local context and can communicate messages in culturally relevant and effective ways.
2. Digital tools and peer-to-peer education have proven effective in reaching hard-to-access communities — especially during movement restrictions, such as those experienced in Gaza. We encourage States Parties and partners to invest in youth-driven innovation and digital platforms to deliver awareness messages.

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**International Humanitarian Law and Youth Initiative (IHLI)**

[IHLI.team@outlook.com](mailto:IHLI.team@outlook.com)

+41772305610

3. Integrating psychosocial support into risk education is essential. Many survivors and at-risk populations suffer from long-term trauma, which cannot be addressed through awareness sessions alone.

Finally, we urge affected States and supporting partners to work together to ensure that mine risk education is not treated as a secondary issue but rather as a life-saving intervention, especially for future generations who continue to live under the constant threat

Thank you.