



## AUSTRALIAN NETWORK TO BAN LANDMINES AND CLUSTER MUNITIONS INC

### AFGHAN CLUSTER BOMB SURVIVOR JOINS AUSSIE CAMPAIGNERS

Soraj Ghulam Habib was 10 years old when he tried to open a small, interesting looking yellow object he had just found near his home. His cousin and some of their friends looked on. That was that last day that this carefree boy ran and played with abandon. The yellow object was a cluster bomb. It claimed both of Soraj's legs, one finger and the life of his cousin. Their friends were also injured, with varying degrees of severity.



Soraj, now 19, and his carer and translator, Mohammed Safdar, have just spent two weeks in Australia. Soraj is an active campaigner for the eradication of cluster munitions. In Australia Soraj joined ANBLC and other members of the Cluster Munition Coalition Australia (CMCA) in campaigning for amendments to draft Australian legislation.

During the two weeks Soraj spent here, CMCA organised and ran seminars in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. A fundraising dinner was held in Melbourne and wheelchair basketball games took place in Melbourne and Sydney. We thank the basketball world for their interest, dedication and games organisation. A number of other activities were also organised in Canberra. Scott Ludlam of the Greens acknowledged Soraj in the Senate, ensuring that the consequences of this dreadful weapon were not lost on Senators.

Soraj also took part in an intensive media campaign, being interviewed for newspaper articles, TV and radio broadcasts. Parallel to these activities, campaigners have been lobbying politicians by phone, email and mail. I mailed a package of informative documents to all Liberal politicians, Senators and MP's and followed up by phone calls and requests for meetings.

Two of the most influential politicians so far to grant meetings are Robert McClelland, Attorney General, and Julie Bishop, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs. We have held meetings with several other politicians and are waiting for more replies.

**The bill will be debated in the Senate possibly as early as June so time is of the essence.**

**There are no second chances here**, if passed without amendment the bill will allow the Australian Defence Force to assist in the use of cluster bombs, to allow foreign stockpiles of cluster bombs to be stored on our soil and to allow investment of public and private funds in the manufacture of cluster bombs.

**If you do not want to see this happen please lobby NOW.**

#### What Can You Do?

- Sign the online petition at: <http://cmcaustralia.org>
- Post a comment at: <http://www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2011/05/10/3212999.htm>
- Write letters or opinion pieces for publication
- Seek meetings with your local MP & State Senators
- Write polite letters to politicians, particularly Liberals and Independents plus these key players:

The Hon. Kevin Rudd, MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

The Hon. Julie Bishop, MP  
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs

The Hon. Robert McClelland, MP,  
Attorney General

The Hon. Stephen Smith, MP  
Minister for Defence

Senator the Hon. George Brandis  
SC, Shadow Attorney General

Senator the Hon. David Johnston,  
Shadow Minister for Defence

Senator Steve Fielding

Senator Helen Kroger, Foreign  
Affairs Senate Committee

Mr Tony Windsor, MP

The Hon Bob Katter, MP

Mr Robert Oakeshott, MP

#### All letters can be sent to:

Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**NOW is the time to act.**

LOREL THOMAS  
NATIONAL COORDINATOR

## SOME TECHNOLOGIES SHOULD NOT EXIST

### Thailand

Despite earlier statements to the contrary, on 5 April this year, Thai officials confirmed Thai use of cluster munitions on Cambodian territory during the February 2011 border conflict.

The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) had conducted two separate on-site investigations and had concluded that cluster bombs had been used but both the Thai and Cambodian governments had denied use. Finally, in a meeting with CMC the Thai government admitted use.

The Thai statement confirms the first use of cluster munitions anywhere in the world since the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force and became binding international law. The CMC immediately condemned the use and called upon both the Thai and Cambodian governments to commit to no further use and to accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The cluster bomb strikes took place Svay Chrum Village, Sen Chey Village and around the Preah Vihear temple hill. Atle Karlsen of Norwegian People's Aid said, "There are around 5,000 people living in Sen Chey village that are at risk from these unexploded weapons."

Two men have already been killed, two have lost their arms and more have been injured. This count will continue to rise until all cluster bombs are cleared.

For the complete story go to:

<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/news/?id=3130>

### Libya

Government forces loyal to the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, have fired cluster munitions into residential areas in the western city of Misrata, posing a grave risk to civilians, according to a recent report by Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch observed at least three cluster munitions explode over the el-Shawahda neighborhood in Misrata on the night of April 14, 2011. Researchers inspected the remnants of a cluster submunition and interviewed witnesses to two other apparent cluster munition strikes.

The area where Human Rights Watch witnessed the use of cluster munitions is about 1 kilometer from the front line between rebels and government forces. The submunitions appear to have landed

about 300 meters from Misrata hospital. Human Rights Watch could not inspect the impact sites due to security concerns.

For the story on the cluster munition strike go to: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/04/15/libya-cluster-munitions-strike-misrata>

In the words of Mr **Peter Herby**, Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mines-Arms Unit, "Some technologies just should not exist." Cluster bombs are one of these technologies. Let us work to eradicate them and end for all time the suffering caused by these indiscriminate weapons.

Anti-personnel landmines have also been laid by both rebel and government forces although the de facto opposition authority in Libya, the National Transitional Council, has now pledged not to use antipersonnel and antivehicle landmines and to destroy its stocks. The pledge was made to Human Rights Watch on April 27, 2011, and in an official communiqué signed on April 28 by Abdulhafeeth Gogha, vice chairman of the National Transitional Council (you can see it at

[http://www.hrwnews.org/press/hrw\\_ntc\\_landminepledge.jpg](http://www.hrwnews.org/press/hrw_ntc_landminepledge.jpg)). For the complete story go to: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13243929>

Until all countries accede to the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions cluster bombs and landmines will continue to kill and maim, often for decades after a conflict is over.

**LOREL THOMAS**  
NATIONAL COORDINATOR

## CLUSTER BOMB LEGISLATION GETS EXTENSIVE MEDIA ATTENTION!

In our last issue we reported on Radio National's coverage of the cluster munitions issue. Since that time, the presence of cluster munitions in the media has been growing. A total of 66 different reports and press releases had been published from 28 February to May 13. An up-to-the-minute list of media and press releases on the issue since late February can be accessed at Cluster Munition Coalition Australia's website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/cmcaustraliapublic/media-1>

**ANNA KING**  
YOUTH COORDINATOR

## FROM THE RICE FIELD TO THE MINEFIELD

Today Ms Bouson, a 35 year old mother of six, is the first deminer in Laos to intentionally find and uncover an M14 Anti-personnel Blast mine. Ms Bouson is a Phoenix Clearance Limited (PCL) staff member, whose training and work clearing the second of the Minefields surrounding her village has been funded by the MIVAC Trust through the generosity of Australian people.



Figure 1. Ms Bouson and M14 Landmine

Ms Bouson, like her 11 fellow deminers on this task, were all recruited from the local community and intensively trained by PCL staff to perform the demining task. She says *“Three months ago we were working in the rice field; now I am very proud to be working saving the lives of my children”*.

This minefield, called Khangpunhor 2, is one of five minefields that surrounded Ms Bouson’s village. All these minefields are remnants of the “secret war” in Laos that was part of what we know as the “Vietnam War”. The Landmines like the one Ms Bouson found today are made of plastic and contain minimum metal, making them very difficult to find without incident.

Last year PCL cleared with MIVAC funding the first minefield in this village and once this one is complete the village will be two steps closer to a Landmine free existence.

Figure 2: Deminers walking the safe lane into the Minefield



Figure 3 MIVAC funded PCL Deminers heading home at the end of the day

MIVAC needs help to secure the future of these very poor people living with the threat of landmines and cluster munitions, a threat that was placed in their village before these brave deminers were born, yet these weapons still kill or maim their relatives and livestock today.

**MIVAC**  
 TO DONATE VISIT [HTTP://WWW.MIVACRUST.ORG/](http://www.mivacrust.org/)

## MEMBERSHIPS

### Due 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 for full 2011-2012 year

We are currently widening our membership base and invite you to formally become a member of our organisation. A member can be an individual or an organisation (who can nominate a person to represent them). If you are the official representative of an organisation, please forward the form to the organization for authorisation and payment. If you are registering as an individual and belong to an organisation, please list its name on the membership form attached with this Memorandum.

We ask Memorandum recipients to indicate their preference to be listed as a Member (with voting rights and the commitment to pay a very small membership fee) or a supporter (without voting rights and no fee). The Memorandum will still be available free to both members and supporters and we encourage everyone to continue to take action against landmines and cluster munitions.

Please note: email addresses listed on forms will be used for Memorandum mail-outs to save postage costs.

## CAMBODIAN DEMINERS

The ANBLC expresses its condolences to the families of three de-miners from the Cambodian Mine Action Centre who died in an explosion last Saturday. See the story at: <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/index.php/2011051649093/National-news/deminers-die-in-explosion.html>

## CNN iREPORT OF THE YEAR

Cluster Munition Coalition's iReport on cluster bombs in Laos won the CNN iReport Community Choice Award in March. This meant it received the most votes of any of the reports submitted, in the first year of the competition. The video report can be viewed at

<http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-517374>

## US BOMB LEGACY SPREADS IN LAOS

The mountainous northern province of Phongsaly in Laos is better known for its ancient tea bushes and colorful ethnic melange than for its unexploded ordnance (UXO). But United States Department of Defense maps detailing US bombing drops during its "secret war" in Laos show a dense acne strip of cluster bombs dropped in the area.

Australian Network to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions Incorporated  
PO Box 445, Walkerville SA 5081 website <http://australia.icbl.org/>

National Coordinator: email [australia@icblcmc.org](mailto:australia@icblcmc.org) or phone +613 9803 5139

Jim Harris, the founder of We Help War Victims, a small UXO clearing organization, said in a recent interview, "The map doesn't tell you anything about ground fighting. Since we have been working there, we have found all sorts of munitions: rockets, mortars, incendiary devices, and mines, all old and unstable. Some if it is big, 750 pounds and still live, and highly dangerous."

Phongsaly is no tourist haven - as many other uncontaminated areas of the country have recently emerged. But as the communist regime has gradually allowed for more economic openness and prioritized the development of trade-linking infrastructure, Phongsaly's growing population is re-encountering its UXO legacy as villagers retake contaminated lands for plantations and other economic activities. "It's hard to know the consequences of the bombing on this area," said Harris. "The old people told me about villages along the road that had disappeared and been bombed out of existence. Other new ones have sprung up since. The people live in areas that they think are safe until someone has an accident," he added.

International aid workers often draw a direct connection between UXOs and entrenched poverty in Laos. In a country where the monthly minimum wage in urban areas is around 500,000 kip (US\$60) per month, the economics of trading in UXOs are compelling. Residual explosive is sold for around 40,000 kip per kilogram, while the metal casing garners as much as 20,000 kip per kilogram. That's driven an underground market of local bomb collectors who often lack the skills and knowledge to handle UXOs safely.

As the geography of Laos' UXO problem expands into regions previously considered only mildly contaminated, the revelations have underscored the US's role in the still unfolding civilian tragedy. Some independent groups have estimated it will cost as much as \$16 billion to clean up most of the UXOs scattered by US bombers across Laos during the wider Vietnam War. Last year, the US government donated a mere US\$5.1 million to Laos for UXO clearance activities.

For the full article, see

[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/MD28Ae01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/MD28Ae01.html)

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**Please complete the details below and return by July 1 2011 for your full year membership:**

ANBLC  
PO Box 445, Walkerville SA 5081

**ANBLC Membership Pledge** As a Member of ANBLC:

- I believe strongly that anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions are indiscriminate and inhumane and therefore should be totally banned worldwide.
- I believe that I have power to assist with the universalisation of Treaties to ban anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions throughout the world.

As a Member of ANBLC I will (please tick those items below you wish to commit to):

- talk to my friends and colleagues about this campaign and where possible spread the word more widely.
- assist ANBLC where possible with advocacy, mailing campaigns and public communication.

**ANBLC Annual Membership Fee : \$20 Individual      \$10 Student/Concession  
\$50 Organisation**

Concession rate: If you feel that it applies to you, then that is sufficient.

A pro rata rate will apply for memberships of less than one year.

Membership runs from 1st July to 30th June the following year. **For 2011 only there will be a bonus 5 months free membership from February to June 30, 2011**

- Yes, please list me as a Member of ANBLC
- No, I prefer to remain a supporter of ANBLC

Name .....Organisation.....

Street Address..... State..... PC.....

Postal Address..... State..... PC.....

Contact Person (Organ.).....Phone.....

Email address.....

(Please list email address if you have one; Memorandum will then be forwarded by email.)

Payment for: Membership : Individual/Concession/Organisation \$.....

Donation: \$.....

Payment: Total of \$.....

If paying by Cheque ..... (tick) and enclose form and cheque

If paying by Direct Deposit payment .....(tick) and provide date of transfer .....

Bank: Commonwealth Bank Account name: ANBLC

BSB: 065-005

Bank Account No.: 1026 3346

Please ensure that **your name/Organisation's name** will appear on our bank statement & post this form to ANBLC.

Signed.....