



[The U.S. Must Stop Supplying Ukraine with Cluster Munitions](#)

By Colin Bailey

Last year has gone on record as being labeled the worst year in cluster-bomb-related deaths thus far, primarily due to the war in Ukraine. 2023 is expected to surpass this record by the end of the year as the use of cluster bombs has been implemented by United States-supplied Ukrainian forces. A single bombing on Kramatorsk, a railway station, has resulted in the deaths of 53 people and left another 135 wounded, many of them civilians. Last year, over 300 people died in Ukraine alone due to cluster bombs, and twice as many were injured as a result. A significant portion of cluster bomb deaths and injuries are that of civilians hit due to the inaccuracy of cluster bombs

Cluster munitions, or 'Cluster Bombs' as they are more commonly known as, are a form of explosive weaponry that disperse into several smaller bombs designed to cover a larger area of effect. These weapons are both highly destructive and immensely hard to control, particularly in containing their damage to isolated locations. Due to the large area of effect, these weapons are extremely deadly and often put civilians in danger due to inaccuracy and unexploded 'bomblets' commonly left behind.

In the majority of instances where a cluster bomb is used, several of the bomblets will not detonate on impact and will lie dormant on the battlefield until something triggers it. What is too often the case is these bomblets will not be triggered during the war and will remain situated in the countryside for years, even decades, before coming into contact with a civilian or animal who will unknowingly detonate it. It is this reason alone that makes cluster bombs so controversial. Cluster bombs do not just pose a danger to civilians and soldiers at the time of use, they risk the lives of thousands for decades in the aftermath of conflicts.

Nations such as Cambodia, Laos, and Bosnia & Herzegovina, which have not seen the use of cluster bombs for several decades, continue to report annual deaths and injuries due to cluster munition. Children are the most vulnerable because these bombs often are mistaken for toys.

Because of the devastation brought by such weapons and the risks they pose to civilians, cluster munitions were banned internationally in 2008 under the United Nations Convention of Cluster Munitions. This convention prohibits the use, manufacturing, and dispersal of any form of cluster munitions. Thus far, 126 nations have joined the ban against cluster bombs. Out of the handful of nations that have not banned the use of cluster bombs are the United States, Russia, Ukraine, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. This is unsurprising as the United States and Russia have a long history of not signing international peace agreements due to their strong power on the global stage. Such treaties that these countries have not signed include OPCAT banning torture, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (1996), and the Ottawa Treaty (1997) banning the use of landmines.

The use of cluster munitions in the Ukrainian war has doomed future generations to the risk of sudden and unexpected death long after the war subsides as hundreds of thousands of unexploded bombs will now lay dormant across the countryside. The situation in Ukraine is only going to get worse as the United States continues

to arm Ukrainian forces with cluster bombs. International human rights organizations have since gone on to denounce the United States for the use of cluster bombs and called for the immediate cessation of use. Despite overwhelming evidence, the Russian government continues to deny that they are using cluster bombs in Ukraine.

The use of cluster bombs near civilian populations marks these attacks as indiscriminate and a violation of international humanitarian law. Such indiscriminate use of any weaponry constitutes a war crime under the Geneva Convention of 1949.

The rise in cluster munitions makes it more critical than ever before for all countries to denounce their use and agree to abolish their use in the military. Cluster munitions pose a significant risk to the safety of civilian populations both during the active use of said weaponry and in the decades following as bombs lay dormant and people grow less cautious of their presence. It is in the interest of morality that the United States cease supplying Ukraine with cluster bombs. It will only lead to more destruction for decades to come.