



## **THE REVERBERATING EFFECTS OF EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS WITH WIDE AREA EFFECTS IN POPULATED AREAS**

Action on Armed Violence has carried out research into the wide reverberations from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. One of the key areas examined is the devastating impact to health. Health is impacted in a variety of ways, from infrastructure and personnel to lifelong injuries or psychological harm.

In 2018, it was reported that in some of the worst impacted areas of Syria, over 40% of were then living with a disability. Of the disabled in Aleppo, Raqqa and Idlib, 50% of injuries were caused by airstrikes alone.

There are other indirect health impacts when explosive weapons hit infrastructure in urban areas, including exposing those in the impacted areas to hazardous material in both the air and the ground, such as toxic smokes and heavy metal, with serious health consequences. There may also be explosives hidden among the debris or elsewhere, exposing civilians to the danger of further blasts. The destruction of civilian infrastructure also prolongs displacement.

When health infrastructure is destroyed the impact is worsened, with many not receiving the appropriate care due to lack of capacity. In Ukraine, the damage to infrastructure, reduction in medical specialists and in beds, is thought to have helped fuel the rise in hospital mortality rates in Donetsk, which increased 10.5% between 2012 and 2016.

In Sri Lanka, eight years after the end of the civil war, AOAV met many who still had been unable to access surgical procedures or prosthetics. There were just two psychiatrists reported operating in the entire northern part of the country.

However, better data is needed to monitor the long-term health consequences for civilians and also to ensure assistance is provided, including to casualties, their families and communities.