

February 9, 2026 5:04PM EST | News Release

US: Cluster Munitions Plan a Deadly Regression

Purchase Signals Embrace of Indiscriminate Weapons, Disregard for Civilians



Human Rights Watch values your privacy, and we care about how your personal data is used and shared online. We use cookies and similar technologies for marketing and analytics purposes. To allow us to disclose your personal data to third parties for such purposes, click 'Accept.' You will not be tracked unless you choose to allow us to do so. Read our [privacy policy](#).

Accept Decline Privacy policy

[English](#)[DONATE NOW](#)

cluster munitions on civilians.

“The US government’s revival of indiscriminate weapons that the world has worked to ban puts civilian lives at risk,” said [Sarah Yager](#), Washington director at Human Rights Watch. “The Trump administration is simply disregarding foreseeable harm to civilians, from children who pick up unexploded bomblets to communities forced to live with unmarked minefields long after a conflict ends.”

Cluster munitions can be fired from the ground or dropped by aircraft and typically open in the air, dispersing multiple submunitions or bomblets over a wide area. These submunitions cannot distinguish between combatants and civilians at the time of attack, putting civilians at risk. In addition, many submunitions fail to explode on initial impact, leaving unexploded duds that, like antipersonnel mines, can indiscriminately injure and kill people for years until they are cleared and destroyed.

The reported purchase signals a dangerous retreat by the United States from global norms that have helped reduce civilian harm. The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, adopted in response to overwhelming evidence of humanitarian harm from these weapons, bans the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions and requires clearance of remnants and assistance to victims.

While the United States is not a party to the treaty, it has long benefited from the powerful stigma against these weapons and has not used cluster munitions in its own military operations since 2009. Reinvesting in cluster munitions weakens that stigma at a time when restraints on the conduct of war are already under severe strain.

Human Rights Watch has been documenting a broader pattern of the Trump administration’s systematic dismantling of policy guardrails meant to limit civilian harm and uphold international law. In December 2025, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth [rolled back](#) restrictions on the US’ use of antipersonnel landmines, another inherently indiscriminate weapon banned by the 1997 Mine Ban

Human Rights Watch values your privacy, and we care about how your personal data is used and shared online. We use cookies and similar technologies for marketing and analytics purposes. To allow us to disclose your personal data to third parties for such purposes, click ‘Accept.’ You will not be tracked unless you choose to allow us to do so. Read our [privacy policy](#).

[Privacy policy](#)

[English](#)

[DONATE NOW](#)

“US military forces have done important work in recent years to reduce civilian harm, with much more still to do,” Yager said. “The Trump administration’s decision to purchase cluster munitions shows that the Pentagon no longer considers protecting civilians a priority.”

Your tax deductible gift can help stop human rights violations and save lives around the world.

\$50	\$100	<u>\$250</u>
\$500	\$1000	Other

[DONATE NOW](#)

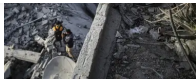
Region / Country [United States, US Foreign Policy](#)

Human Rights Watch values your privacy, and we care about how your personal data is used and shared online. We use cookies and similar technologies for marketing and analytics purposes. To allow us to disclose your personal data to third parties for such purposes, click ‘Accept.’ You will not be tracked unless you choose to allow us to do so. Read our [privacy policy](#).

[Privacy policy](#)

[English](#)

[DONATE NOW](#)



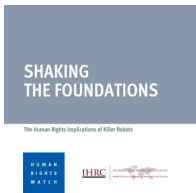
REPORTS



October 31, 2019 | Report

“They’ve Shot Many Like This”

Abusive Night Raids by CIA-Backed Afghan Strike Forces



May 12, 2014 | Report

Shaking the Foundations

The Human Rights Implications of Killer Robots

MOST VIEWED

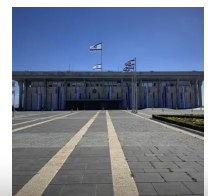
1 April 2, 2026 | Report

“None Can Run Away”



2 March 31, 2026 | Statement

Israel: Discriminatory Death Penalty Bill Passes



Human Rights Watch values your privacy, and we care about how your personal data is used and shared online. We use cookies and similar technologies for marketing and analytics purposes. To allow us to disclose your personal data to third parties for such purposes, click ‘Accept.’ You will not be tracked unless you choose to allow us to do so. Read our [privacy policy](#).

[Privacy policy](#)

[English](#)

[DONATE NOW](#)

Protecting Rights, Saving Lives

Human Rights Watch defends the rights of people in close to 100 countries worldwide, spotlighting abuses and bringing perpetrators to justice

[DONATE NOW](#)

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

Get Updates On Rights Issues Worldwide

Enter an email address

[Sign Up](#)

Connect With Us



[Contact Us](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Permissions](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Child Safeguarding](#) | [Text Version](#)

© 2026 Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch values your privacy, and we care about how your personal data is used and shared online. We use cookies and similar technologies for marketing and analytics purposes. To allow us to disclose your personal data to third parties for such purposes, click 'Accept.' You will not be tracked unless you choose to allow us to do so. Read our [privacy policy](#).

[Privacy policy](#)