

# Exceptionally Inhumane Weapons

CAII • THE CHURCHES' AGENCY ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES: RESOURCING CHURCHES AND CONGREGATIONS ON GLOBAL CONCERNS



## Why are inhumane weapons a Hot Topic?

**Did you know the New Zealand Superannuation Fund amongst others has investments in the arms industry? Did you know that despite an international ban, land mines continue to kill or injure thousands of people a year? Would you invest in bombs? Should the manufacturers of inhumane weapons be treated as just another business? Can the weapons be stopped?**

**This Hot Topic explores three exceptionally inhumane weapons still in use, movements to ban them and questions the ethics of arms investment.**



The decision by the Guardians of the New Zealand Superannuation Fund to begin the process of divestment from companies involved in the nuclear industry was a step forward but the Fund continues to retain investments in other aspects of the weapons industry. The very fact that the Superannuation Fund has such investments may have shocked many, but sadly is not unusual. In many countries manufacturers and exporters of weapons enjoy strong financial support from governments, banks and other investment bodies. With growing public interest in ethical investment some financiers and investors are beginning to examine the ethics of their trade, yet only a few have so far dared to take action.

Since the development of nuclear weapons in the early 1940s many more

exceptionally inhumane weapons have been developed by companies specializing in weapons manufacture. Global military expenditure continues to rise steadily. In the year ending June 2007 US \$ 1,339 billion was expended on military activity, in real terms up 6% from the year before and 45% from 1998. This equates to 2.5% of Global Domestic Product [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute]. Although some weapons like napalm bombs, have been so successfully stigmatized that they are no longer used, new technology enables the production of a greater quantity and variety of mechanisms of death and destruction.

In this issue of "Hot Topics" we highlight three of many inhumane weapons which are still in use.

Together concerned individuals, coalitions, humanitarian organizations and diplomats

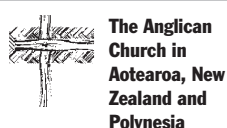
from around the globe moves are trying to stop the use of all three. The growth of interest in ethical investment is also an indication of the unwillingness of people to support the excesses of the weapons industry.

### Landmines

**"The landmine is eternally prepared to take victims. It is the perfect soldier."**

**Jody Williams Founding Coordinator of the International Coalition to Ban Landmines [ICBL]**

Landmines fall into two categories. Anti-vehicle landmines detonate when something heavier than 100kg runs over them but cannot distinguish a tank from a tractor. Similarly anti-personnel mines [APLs] cannot tell the weight of a soldier from that of a civilian.



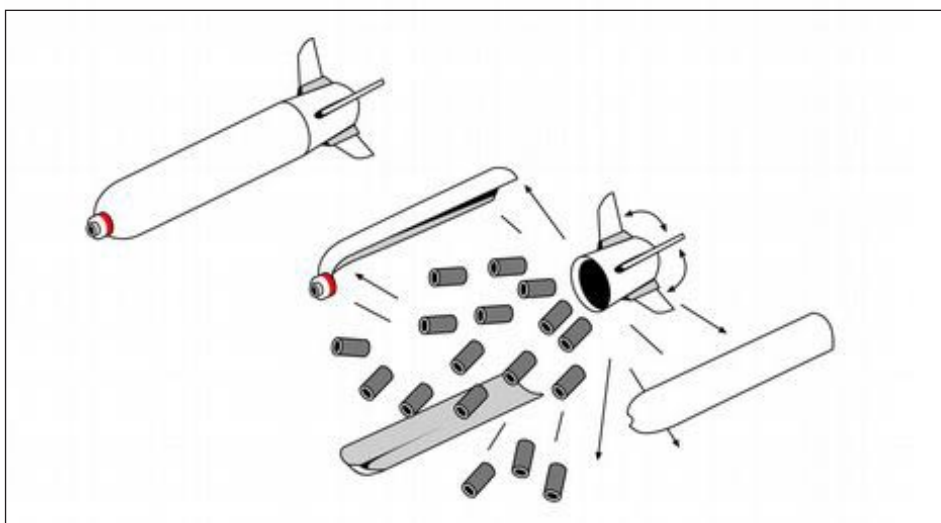
In 1997 the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, commonly known as the Mine Ban Treaty or Ottawa Convention was signed. Yet in 2007 APLs killed a recorded 1,401 people, injured another 3,939 while the status of another 86 people remains unknown [Landmine monitor]. More than 75 countries are affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance. By 2007 at least 38 nations had stopped production of landmines. A huge stockpile remains. 13 nations (Burma, China, Cuba, India, Iran, Nepal, North Korea, South Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, USA, and Vietnam) continue to manufacture landmines and along with a number of other nations have not signed or ratified the treaty. Since the adoption of the treaty the international trade in APLs has almost stopped.

While it is important that people and governments continue to campaign for a political end to the problem, another means identified for action is to put pressure on banks and investment funds that loan them money or invest in companies that produce them. [See: **“What is an ethical investment?”**]

### Cluster bombs

Cluster munitions are made up of a container filled with small sub-munitions or bomblets which can be spread over an area the size of a football-pitch to hundreds of acres and where they remain unexploded for years. In Southern Lebanon one quarter of all farmland remains unusable because of millions of unexploded bomblets dropped in 2006. Technically the term cluster bomb refers only to those weapons dropped from aircraft while the broader term cluster munitions is used to include those that are ground-launched.

The New Zealand government supported efforts to ban cluster munitions and hosted the Wellington Conference on Cluster Munitions in February 2008 as



part of international negotiations to write a new treaty to ban the production, transfer, stockpiling and use of cluster munitions. Some of the most compelling speeches in support of a ban came from bomb disposal experts who cited extreme risks when clearing an area showered with bomblets.

Often brightly coloured and trailing a ribbon to direct them in the air, unexploded bomblets attract the attention of children, who make up one third of all victims. Their small size [similar to a D battery] means bomblets are easily covered by rubble or vegetation. Their detonation fuses are notoriously unpredictable, enduring the initial impact of a hard-ground landing but later exploding from the vibration of a footfall nearby.

Some delegates from producer countries were sent to Wellington by their governments to seek exemptions for highly sophisticated and electronically guided heat-seeking and “sensor fused” bomblets. These are also equipped with timing devices set to detonate if they do not find a target.

However the failure rates of time-fuses was found by bomb disposal teams to be far higher in the field than manufacturers claimed. “Furthermore” said one disposal expert, “there are no heat seeking guidance devices which can distinguish between an enemy tank and the smoking chimney of a civilian house.”

Despite the energetic attempts by some delegates to weaken the wording of the draft Cluster Munitions Convention, significant progress on the text was made in Wellington. Discussions then

moved to Dublin for final negotiations on the adoption of the text in May. In December 2008, 94 nations signed the new international treaty banning cluster munitions in Oslo, Norway. New Zealand was one of the first signatories but has yet to ratify the treaty (the process that incorporates it into New Zealand law). So far two more countries have signed the treaty and six have ratified.



## Hot Topics

Writer: Rob Ritchie.

Photos courtesy of the Cluster Munitions Campaign and CWS. Thanks to: Mary Wareham, Sergey Ponomarev, John Rodsted



## Depleted Uranium [DU] weapons

Weapons containing uranium may yet prove to be the most terrible of all three, because they are likely to cause genetic damage not seen since the use of Agent Orange in the 1960s and 1970s.

Uranium is an extremely hard metal nearly twice as heavy as lead. There are several forms [or isotopes] of uranium, the most common being Uranium 238 or Depleted Uranium [DU] which is used to form the very hard and heavy penetrator-rod in the core of DU anti-tank and -aircraft shells.

DU is a nuclear waste product which has been piling up for several decades in nations with nuclear reactors where safe disposal is difficult. Plentiful supply means manufacturers pay little or nothing for this component which is devastatingly effective - but with terrifying costs to human health and the environment.

When a DU shell strikes a hard target it ignites and burns at temperatures between 3,000 and 6,000 degrees centigrade - equal to those on the surface of the sun. A fume of radioactive smoke is produced made up of microscopic ceramic particles of Uranium Oxide. Some researchers are making links between this toxic radioactive smoke and Gulf War Syndrome. Attempts have been made to block unfavourable research results from being published, with some success.

International concern about the health and environmental effects of DU is gaining momentum amongst both civilians and military personnel. For example military organizations like Euromil [European Organization of Military Associations] and the European Parliament are calling for a moratorium and world-wide ban.

While the UK, USA, and Russia along with other countries such as Bahrain, Greece, Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, remain reluctant to accept the very strong evidence gathering against DU, one country - Belgium - has already banned DU munitions and there is a petition currently before the New Zealand parliament seeking a similar ban.

### Alternative Processes: Diplomacy on an independent-track

The pace at which agreement was reached on the Cluster Munitions Convention was

<b>Three types of weapons:</b>			
<b>Weapon type:</b>	<b>Anti-Personnel Landmines</b>	<b>Cluster Munitions</b>	<b>DU weapons</b>
<b>Victim profile:</b>	<b>Civilian &amp; Military</b>	<b>Almost all Civilian</b>	<b>Civilian &amp; Military</b>
<b>Date of ban:</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>none yet</b>
<b>International Campaigns</b>	<b>ICBL [International Coalition to Ban Landmines]</b>	<b>CMC [Cluster Munitions Coalition]</b>	<b>ICBUW [International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons]</b>

unusually rapid and the wording of the text remarkably strong.

Notably absent from negotiations were some of the world's most powerful nations including China, Russia and the USA. Yet such rapid progress towards majority agreement would almost certainly not have been possible if these large nations had attended. Anticipating such opposition, a small group of international diplomats resolved to initiate discussion amongst a core of nations who were firm in their opposition to cluster munitions, whether or not the 'super-powers' participated.

These core nations were powerfully supported in their resolve by the collaboration of non-governmental organizations [NGOs] who formed the Cluster Munitions Coalition. At each stage of discussion observers from this coalition lobbied conference delegates, cajoling the reluctant and applauding the leaders.

This type of diplomatic initiative originated with the Ottawa Process named after the efforts of Canadian diplomats who pioneered diplomacy amongst like-minded groups in the Middle East in the early 1990s.

The Oslo process used in the Cluster Munitions Convention was not the first success using an alternative process. It

was modified from that used in Ottawa to negotiate and adopt the Mine Treaty Ban in 1997, and is now known as the Ottawa/Oslo Process.

Having become disillusioned with previous attempts to achieve a ban on APLs some diplomats took an independent-track initiative to speak directly with concerned NGOs. The ban on APLs which resulted had a more strongly worded text than any seen before, declaring that signatories would "...never under any circumstances use, manufacture, store or transport anti-personnel mines".

The Ottawa/Oslo process enables the self-selection of participating states who agree to work together over a set time period.

***“Weapons containing uranium may yet prove to be the most terrible of all three”***



Effectively this process gathers like-minded states and NGOs to establish a moral standard and with it a moral force against the use of particular weapons. The NGOs have observer status at all discussions and delegates from participating nations feel their presence keenly.

Change can come very quickly with this new form of diplomacy. For example in late 1997 Australia and Japan, who had previously been vocal supporters of USA in

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***“Since when does the safety of civilians come second to the interests of military and political force?”***

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opposing a ban on APLs, suddenly isolated the USA completely by joining previously hesitant Russia in declaring their intention to sign. Commentators on the 1997 ban have noted how military objections ultimately failed to override other political imperatives.

At the Wellington Cluster Munitions Conference 2008, a similar sentiment came from the Pacific island nation of Belau whose diplomat said:

“The way the arms business has been conducted in the past is that the weapons manufacturers endorse the political campaigns of those who have assisted them, with fat cheques. Business as usual must be disrupted. Since when does the safety of civilians come second to the interests of military and political force?”

### **Changing Investments**

Perhaps of equal importance to international diplomatic action is the move by many large investment institutions, including the New Zealand Superannuation Fund, to withdraw from companies involved in the manufacture of certain weapons.

Immediately following the signing of the Cluster Munitions Convention the Guardians of New Zealand Superannuation released a list of companies for divestment and exclusion.

The Fund had already divested from four companies in 2006 because of their involvement in the manufacture of Anti-Personnel mines: **Alliant Techsystems, General Dynamics, Singapore Technologies Engineering and Textron Systems**. Six more have now been added:

- Goodrich Corporation
- Hanwha
- L-3 Communications
- Northrop Gruman
- Poonsang Corporation
- Raytheon

Two others: **Lockheed Martin** and **Honeywell International** are excluded because of their simulated testing of Nuclear Explosive Devices.

Unfortunately the Fund retains investments in companies involved in the manufacture of Depleted Uranium munitions.

# What is an ethical investment?

**Few would argue in favour of investment in weapons production. However many citizens around the world are unwittingly profiting from the sale of such weapons. Even though APLs, cluster and DU munitions all injure and kill indiscriminately, banks around the world continue to provide loans and national superannuation funds still buy shares in companies making these weapons.**

In the Netherlands, public concern has led the superannuation giant PGGM to declare publicly all its investments. This has never been standard practice in the industry, but it may soon become so. PGGM directors believe the vast majority of people do not want to be involved in unethical investments. Therefore by exposing their investment decisions to public scrutiny they can reassure investors, and thereby improve the company's balance sheet. PGGM holds superannuation funds for Holland's health and social workers and it is medical workers and their allied professions who witness the impact of indiscriminate weapons.

In February 2009, the UK Cooperative Bank announced that it would no longer invest in DU weapon manufacturers, classifying uranium weapons along with cluster bombs as indiscriminate.

In the fifth review of its ethical policy of more than 80,000 of the bank's customers, the bank found that 99% of respondents supported the exclusion of firms that manufacture and sell indiscriminate weapons, such as cluster bombs and depleted uranium rounds.

In New Zealand vigorous efforts are being made by groups such as No Warp! [Network Opposed to Weapons and Related Production] to encourage the Guardians of the Superannuation Fund to divest from DU along with other inhumane weapons. At the same time a petition before the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee asks the House to follow the example of the Belgian Parliament, which in 2007 banned DU weapons by close to unanimous vote.

US author Kathy Kelly makes a direct comparison between the weapons industry and the historic ending of another unethical business asking:

"When will the world look back on the arms trade as we look back today on the slave trade?"

- » **Surprised to learn of the New Zealand Superannuation Fund's involvement in manufacture of weapons containing DU? The Fund is administered by guardians who are required to make investment decisions independent of the government. Government ministers therefore tend to defer to the Guardians. They can be contacted at: [enquiries@NewZealandsuperfund.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@NewZealandsuperfund.co.nz)**
- » **Interested in reading a US Christian's perspective on ethical investment? Kathy Kelly believes one day we will look back on the arms trade in the same way we now remember the slave trade: <http://www.counterpunch.org/kelly07042008.html>**
- » **Interested in the ethical investment policies of other governments? The Government Investment Fund of Norway has published a specific list of companies which it will not invest in. The list encompasses weapons manufacturers worldwide. Like the New Zealand Fund, the Norwegian Fund is managed by an appointed group of investment specialists.**
- » **Want to know more about ethical investing? There are specialist investment companies in New Zealand. One is called Prometheus - formed in 1983 to follow the example of ethical investment companies in Europe: [www.prometheus.co.nz](http://www.prometheus.co.nz)**

## DU and cancer

At the Basra Teaching Hospital in Iraq, the effects of the war are collected in tissue analysis reports showing a range of cancers increasing at an accelerating rate throughout the 1990's. The age distributions are changing too, with younger and younger patients arriving for treatment.

"We have also seen a rise in the presence of double and triple cancers in patients" says British trained cancer specialist Dr Al-Ali. "The rates increased only a few years after the 1991 war and now after the 2003 conflict we have started to have another alarming increase." Uranium was a key new component in some of the weapons used in these conflicts.

Iraq's Environment Ministry's own research has linked the dramatic cancer increases to 350 DU-contaminated sites; the WHO and the British Royal Society rely on several ageing reports to discount the

dangers of DU munitions. However other voices, some from within the WHO itself, are calling for up-to-date and independent analysis. Meanwhile in Europe the combined military union, Euromil, has endorsed the European Parliament's 2008 vote for an immediate moratorium on the use of DU.

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***"When will the world look back on the arms trade as we look back today on the slave trade?"***

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Photograph: Alison Locke



## A theological reflection

**With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin which clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started.**

Hebrews 12:1

To touch another's heart is a disarming thing. Writing can sometimes achieve this. Gandhi once wrote a very humble and respectful letter to Hitler, imploring him to consider nonviolence - recommending it as an effective strategy. But some hearts are too well guarded.

This issue of 'Hot Topics' includes a suggestion that concerned citizens write to the Guardians of New Zealand Superannuation and encourage them to discard their investments in the weapons trade. Certainly the Fund still has huge interests in the profits of war. Some say the Guardians lack conscience and are too slow to divest from the arms industry. Yet their recent decision to exit from cluster munitions manufacture will contribute to the international move against these arms. The Guardians deserve our encouragement to remove all the large planks from our nation's eyes, so we might have a clearer view of a world still torn by armed conflict.

For over two decades we've had a law banning nuclear weapons. While the threat of nuclear war has not passed, each new weapon banned and every new fund which declines to profit from such weapons exerts God's will for peace.

The Guardians of the New Zealand's Super Fund have said:

"Engagement is often preferable. It can be a powerful tool to promote change. Working in collaboration with like-minded peer funds we have engaged with many companies across a wide variety of corporate practices."

But what if engagement and gentle encouragement fail to bring change?

After several days of lobbying delegates reluctant to allow progress towards a comprehensive ban on Cluster Munitions in Wellington, some NGOs organized a public protest with banners outside the conference-hall naming the offending nations. Inside the tempers of those

## AN ACTIVIST'S STORY

**Soraj Ghulam Habib, 16, Herat, Afghanistan.**

***"Now I am part of this international campaign to ban the weapon that took my legs."***

I lost both my legs when I found a cluster bomb I thought was a can of food. I was six years old at the time and was walking home from a picnic with my cousin and four other members of my family. My cousin was killed instantly in the blast and the rest of us were injured.

When I got to the hospital, I was so badly injured one doctor even suggested I be given a lethal injection. But after a series of operations I survived. I am now in a wheelchair and my world has shrunk considerably.

Before I lost my legs I had great dreams. When I grew up I wanted to

work for my family and society. Cluster bombs have shattered my dreams. I can no longer go to school or play with my friends and my family must support a wheelchair user forever. When people see me in the street they laugh at me and they pity me. But now I am part of this international campaign to ban the weapon that took my legs.

I am calling on governments to deliver a treaty that will not only ban cluster munitions but will provide opportunities for people like me. I urge all governments who formally approved the treaty in Dublin, to make their promise a reality and sign it in Oslo, in December.

**For more information go to Soraj's blog: <http://blog.banadvocates.org/index.php?category/Soraj-Ghulam-Habib>**

Story: Handicap International, Belgium

## Victims ... and Perpetrators



countries' delegates flared. But by the end of the week-long conference the international mood against cluster bombs had changed so markedly that many previously reluctant nations were moved to join the ban.

When we become involved in protest, judgments are inevitable. Often a protest action will be reported as angry and judgmental. However the most effective protests arise out of hearts filled with love rather than bitterness. The 7th Chapter of Matthew's gospel begins with a caution about judging others:

*"Do not judge and you will not be judged; because the judgments you give are the judgments you will get, and the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given."*

While this verse does not forbid judgment, it reminds us about the consequences.

When others are bent on wickedness let's first seek to touch their hearts. And if it then proves necessary to stand up and speak out, we will do so knowing we are in good company. Not only will we find ourselves alongside those like Soraj Ghulam Habib who have already experienced the immense impact of inhumane weapons, but we will be amongst a great host of witnesses calling for an end to such violence, injury and death.

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***"Engagement is often preferable. It can be a powerful tool to promote change. Working in collaboration with like-minded peer funds we have engaged with many companies across a wide variety of corporate practices."***

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*Mighty God, giver of Peace, slogan for war,*

*We watch while cities burn and  
children cry and  
women weep.*

*We listen while tanks roll and  
missiles zizzle, and  
mobs assemble.*

*We smell while  
flesh burns and  
old tyres smoke and  
oil wells flame  
out of control*

*We dare say,  
we dare imagine,  
we dare confess, that yours is the Kingdom and  
the Power and the Glory.*

*We come to you as victims of terror  
and mass death.*

*We come as perpetrators of death  
and massacre.*

*We come as citizens and patriots  
and taxpayers and  
parents and children.*

*We come bewildered, angry, sorry.*

*You, you beyond the smell and the din and the smoke.*

*You, beyond our hopes and our hates.*

*You, our beginning before time  
our end beyond time.*

*Be present in ways we cannot imagine.*

*Be present -save us from our power  
save us from our violence,  
save us from our fear and hatred,  
save us as only you can do.*

*Save us as you have before saved us ...*

*in love and power  
in compassion and justice  
in miracle and in waiting.*

*Save us because we are your people  
and because this is your world.*



Walter Brueggemann  
(from *Prayers for a Privileged People* Abingdon Press 2008)

## Resources:



### Websites:

Council for Socially Responsible Investment:  
[www.crsi.org.nz](http://www.crsi.org.nz)

International Campaign to Ban Landmines:  
[www.icbl.org/problem/history](http://www.icbl.org/problem/history)

International Coalition to Ban Depleted Uranium:  
<http://www.bandepleteduranium.org/>

No Warp! (Network Opposed to Weapons and Related Production): [www.converge.org.nz/pma/nowarp.htm](http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/nowarp.htm)

New Zealand Superannuation Fund:  
[www.NZsuperfund.com](http://www.NZsuperfund.com)

Peace Movement Aotearoa:  
<http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/>

Stockholm Peace Research Institute for global military expenditure: [http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex\\_trends.html](http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_trends.html)

Stop Cluster Munitions - international campaign:  
[www.stopclustermunitions.org](http://www.stopclustermunitions.org)

Stop Cluster Munitions - New Zealand campaign:  
[www.stopclustermunitions.org.nz](http://www.stopclustermunitions.org.nz)

Uranium weapons: <http://www.bandepleteduranium.org> and find the attached printable booklet at the end of "Uranium Weapons Briefing; Summary".

World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence: <http://overcomingviolence.org/>

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### Other references

- "My Money. Clear Conscience?" a campaign of Network Vlaanderen vzw, Brussels, 2004.
- "History of Landmines" International Campaign to Ban Landmines, 2008.
- "Uranium Weapons Briefing; Summary" International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons, 2008.

## Take action

**The DU petition is still open for signatures and will remain so until a final vote is held in parliament. For supplementary petition sheets email: [ritchie@disarmsecure.org](mailto:ritchie@disarmsecure.org)**

No Warp! has an extensive campaign to stop the New Zealand Superannuation Fund investing in death and destruction, including a petition for parliament. See: <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/petition.htm> Details of further campaign activities are available on the website.

Write or meet with your local MP, or to the Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control, the Hon Georgina te Heuheu encouraging the government to ratify the Cluster Munitions Treaty (Private Bag 18 888, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160).

As part of the Decade to Overcome Violence supported by local churches, organise an event or special service to focus on an aspect of peacemaking. Christian World Service has a number of documentaries available: <http://www.cws.org.nz/resources/documentaries> and worship material: <http://www.cws.org.nz/resources/church>

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### Acronym List

APL:	anti-personnel landmine
DU:	depleted uranium
ICBL:	International Coalition to Ban Landmines
NGO:	Non-government organisation
WHO:	World Health Organisation

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### Questions for Reflection

1. Do you agree that cluster munitions, depleted uranium and landmines are 'inhumane'? Is there such a thing as a humane weapon?
2. Do you think the New Zealand Superannuation Fund should invest in companies that manufacture any weapons?
3. What is your opinion on ethical investment? Does your church have a policy on ethical investment?
4. What more can you or your group do to overcome violence?

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