I am deeply disturbed by the news of civilians being killed by coalition air strikes that hit a wedding party in Yemen's Dhamar Governorate yesterday. The Ministry of Public Health and Population reports that at least 47 civilians were killed, and 35 injured, among them many women and children.

Once again we are seeing the devastating impact of explosive weapons – used by all parties – in this conflict. Some 4,500 civilians have reportedly been killed or injured by explosive weapons in Yemen during the first seven months of this year: that is more than in any other country or crisis in the world during the same period.

International humanitarian law very clearly sets out the responsibilities of warring parties to protect civilians and to take every possible measure to avoid damage to homes and other civilian structures. With modern weapons technology there is little excuse for error.

Ninety-five per cent of the Yemeni people killed or injured by explosive weapons in towns or cities were civilians, according to a recent report, and more than half of all the air strikes occurred in towns or cities, often in densely populated areas, resulting in very high numbers of civilian casualties.

I call for a swift, transparent and impartial investigation into this incident. Real accountability for parties to conflict, whether they are States or non-State armed groups, is urgently needed, to ensure that the commitment under international law to protect civilians is meaningful.

8 October 2015
New York