Transcript

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Welcome to After the End from the Ethoc Centre at the University of Oxford, funded by the Wellcome Discovery Award Scheme.

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I'm Patricia Kingori, Professor of Global Health Ethics at the University of Oxford.

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In this series, we explore endings and their aftermaths.

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Who decides when an end has been reached, whether the end for one person is the end for everybody, and what happens after these so-called endings.

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In this podcast, we hear from lawyer Ricardo Labianco, International Policy Manager at the Mines Advisory Group, also known as MAG, on dealing with the explosive remnants of war.

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I'm a lawyer specialized in the link between disarmament and human rights and humanitarian law.

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MAG is a humanitarian disarmament organization which addresses and prevents the harm caused by conventional weaponry used during conflict.

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In particular, we work on the different types of harm caused by explosive ordinance, all the unexploded devices including anti-personal landmines, mines of other kind, clusters, sub-munitions.

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and other explosive ordinance that remain active way after the end of active hostilities.

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The concept of end in our line of work is very relevant, and this is how I became involved with the work of Professor Kim Gori, because we do have international treaties like the Anti-Personnel Mind Bank Convention or the Cluster Munition Convention,

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which specifically requires states to clear and destroy all the remnants or the explosive ordinance that pose harm, that pose risk to people and communities.

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This explosive ordinance, because of their failure rate, they might be launched or they might be emplaced,

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but they do not explode when required and they remain active in a setting populated by people and communities.

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And so even when the active hostilities of a conflict might be declared as finished, that's not the end of a potential harm.

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when the guns are silenced, this explosive ordinance are left on the ground active, and they still pose a significant risk for the population living in the areas where this explosive ordinance are.

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So the formal end of the hostilities doesn't mean the end of the risk and the impact of this explosive ordinance in multiple harmful ways.

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I was invited by Professor Kingori to the launch event of this very interesting project after the end, because even in humanitarian disarmament, there are multiple ends.

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We need to understand according to whom an end is established and what does it mean, because there are multiple ends of explosive remnants of war or explosive ordinance.

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So when we speak about humanitarian disarmament, the main focus is on human security, so on the impact that weapons have on human lives, not only at the time of

use of those weapons, but also the long-term effects and the risk that they pose to people and community.

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We do have right now in the humanitarian disarmament institutional and legal architecture, we do have different treaties that signpost some ends.

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Some of them are aspirational.

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For example, Article 5 of Anti-Personal Mine Ban Convention establishes an obligation for states parties to destroy all the landmines present within their jurisdiction or under their control.

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That contributes to the aspiration of a mine-free world, so a world where we will see an end of the risks generated by anti-personal landmines.

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This should align with the end of the risk and insecurity for people and community.

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But what kind of harm, what kind of risk are we talking about for those communities?

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And every community has its own impact, which is contingent on the context, their habits, their political situation, the socioeconomic situations.

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for example, in Laos, in Cambodia, where we are seeing so-called legacy contamination of explosive ordinance dating back the 60s and the 70s.

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We still see communities that are affected by explosive ordinance in the way they procure and produce food, but we don't see yet the end of traditional way of farming and other agricultural tools that will not excessively disturb an ordinance if hit or found while farming, but this means important repercussions on the food security of those people.

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In other cases, like for example, the case of Zambia with which we have been working very closely in the last year, Zambia declared completion, so declared itself as free of anti-personal landmines and cluster munitions.

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But despite the declaration of completion, they actually maintained an institutional framework able to capture the so-called residual risk, so the possible finding of previously unknown contamination.

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they had to raise the fact that they suspect the presence still of explosive ordinance.

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And on this regard, the case of Zambia is a positive one because they actually showed their preparedness to deal with a flexible conception of end.

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For me, a very interesting aspect of the After the End workshop was the fact that we were a group of scholars and practitioners dealing

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with the same concept of AND, but then at the same time, different aspects of it.

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What was interesting is also to realize the human factor.

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The human factor can be very relevant in the sense that some types of AND can be managed and they are manageable.

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That's, for example, the case in our situation, because many times the way in which we end the risk, we end the harm, it's through international assistance and cooperation.

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But in other cases, even with the highest level of cooperation among states, so in the case, for example, of climate change, it's definitely a human-made issue, but now it escaped the control of human beings.

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So it's an issue more of adaptation.

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Even at humanitarian disarmament level, we need to speak about adaptation when we cannot address the root causes of explosive ordinance contamination.

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In terms of humanitarian disarmament, the sector has achieved a lot, because decades ago we would have seen states using indiscriminate weapons and without much attention on the long-term impact of those weapons to people and community.

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So even though conflicts are still happening, and unfortunately we must accept reluctantly that conflict and armed violence is part of the dynamics of the international community,

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we are in a position that we have a system of treaties, norms and rules that aims at minimizing the risk that we saw in the past.

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What we have to do is believe in this system and believe in the right of every state and of every person to live free from fear of explosive ordinance.

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And that's something that, despite recurring conflicts, I think it's something that will actually make us walk towards a world in peace and free of all the terrible consequences of the use of weapons and armed violence.

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That brings us to the end of this podcast.

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Thank you for listening.

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Next time, Riccardo Labianco joins me and Patricia Daly, Professor of the Human Geography of Africa at the University of Oxford,

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for a discussion on endings in times of conflict.

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I'm Patricia Kingori, and you've been listening to After the End, brought to you by the Ethox Centre at the University of Oxford, funded by the Welcome Discovery Awards Scheme.

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You can find more information about the After the End project on our website at www.aftertheend.squarespace.com.