



# Action Alert!



## Urge President Obama and Senate to Join the Mine Ban Treaty!

### Landmines and Catholic Social Teaching

Landmines are "inhumanly insidious because they continue to cause harm even long after the cessation of hostilities."\*

The U.S. bishops have long supported elimination of landmines as they are indiscriminate, morally unacceptable weapons that do not distinguish between soldier and civilian, or between times of war and times of peace.



In a November 30, 2009 message, Pope Benedict XVI asked all states "to recognize the deplorable humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines." He called on the international community to keep on funding mine clearance and assisting victims.

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, Chair, USCCB's Committee on International Justice and Peace, signed joint letters to President Obama calling for a comprehensive review of U.S. policy on landmines and for the U.S. to join the Mine Ban Treaty.

*\*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 510.*

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**Summary:** Years after landmines have been laid, they continue to kill and maim innocent civilians. Urge President Obama and your Senators to support a comprehensive review of landmine policy, so the U.S. joins the Mine Ban Treaty.

**Background:** A landmine is a weapon designed to explode when it comes into contact with a person. From 1969 to 1992, the U.S. exported over 4 million landmines to countries like Afghanistan, Angola, Iraq, Laos, Lebanon, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Somalia and Vietnam. While many of these conflicts have long ended, landmines still remain in more than 70 nations and kill or maim thousands each year, the vast majority of them civilians. Over a quarter of the victims of landmines are children under 15 years.

**Why is the Mine Ban Treaty Important?** Given the indiscriminate destructive capability of these weapons, non-governmental organizations around the world lobbied for a treaty to ban landmines. The Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction, otherwise known as the Mine Ban Treaty, came into force in 1999. The 156 countries, including NATO allies, that have signed agreed to:

**Never use anti-personnel mines, and never develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer landmines.** Although the U.S. has yet to sign this Convention, it is heartening that the U.S. has not used landmines since 1991, has not exported landmines since 1992, nor has it produced landmines since 1997.

**Destroy existing stockpiles of landmines.** 86 countries have completely destroyed their stockpiles of landmines, a total of about 44 million landmines. The U.S. has about 10 million landmines stockpiled, the third largest mine arsenal in the world, after China and Russia.

**Offer assistance in clearing mines and in assisting survivors.** Between 1993 and 2008, the U.S. was the largest contributor (about \$1.5 billion) toward mine clearance, mine risk education, survivor assistance, and training of foreign demining personnel. But more is needed to clear the millions of mines still buried, potential hazards to farmers, children or anyone walking over this land.

Neither President Clinton nor President Bush signed the Mine Ban Treaty, yielding to concerns raised by U.S. military. But in late 2009, the State Department was pressured into announcing that it would conduct a review of U.S. policy on landmines. In May 2010, 68 Senators sent a letter to President Obama calling for a comprehensive review of landmine policy, with the aim of removing any obstacles toward U.S. accession to and eventual ratification of the Mine Ban Treaty. To satisfy military concerns, they suggested that the U.S. consult with NATO allies who are signatories to the Treaty.

### Take Action Now!

- Contact President Obama and your Senators today and urge them to support a comprehensive review of U.S. landmine policy, in order that the U.S. join the Mine Ban Treaty. (For contact information, visit [www.whitehouse.gov/contact](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)). The White House number to leave a comment is 202-456-1111. The Capitol switchboard number is 202-224-3121 to locate your Senator.

### For more information, contact:

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