

***Letter to Obama Administration from 67 national organizations,
requesting a review of U.S. policy on landmines and cluster bombs.***

February 10, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In early December, as half of the world's governments signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo, a spokeswoman for your Transition Team said that you would "carefully review the new treaty and work closely [with] our friends and allies to ensure that the United States is doing everything feasible to promote protection of civilians."

We welcomed this statement. We write now to urge you to launch a thorough review within the next six months of past U.S. policy decisions to stand outside the treaty banning cluster munitions, as well as the treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. We expect that such a review will give appropriate weight to humanitarian and diplomatic concerns, as well as to U.S. military interests.

The closest allies of the United States negotiated the Convention on Cluster Munitions based on their conclusion that these indiscriminate and unreliable weapons pose an unacceptable threat to civilian populations during and long after combat operations have ceased—in much the same way as do landmines.

British Foreign Minister David Miliband, representing the world's third largest user of cluster munitions in the past decade, asked states at the signing conference to "tell those not here in Oslo that the world has changed ... that a new norm has been created." He went on to say: "Our global community must continually keep challenging itself about the way it behaves. Political leaders must show they are prepared to listen and respond to the voices of victims, of civil society, and of ordinary people."

We recognize the U.S. Government's significant contributions to demining operations around the world, but note that these contributions are undermined by U.S. nonparticipation in the decade-old Mine Ban Treaty and the new Convention on Cluster Munitions.

As you stated during the campaign, U.S. forces have been moving away from using cluster munitions and anti-personnel landmines. The United States has not deployed

anti-personnel landmines since 1992, and it has not used cluster munitions in Iraq since 2003 or in Afghanistan since 2002.

Indeed, Secretary Gates has recognized that cluster munitions are weapons of grave humanitarian concern and recently issued a policy to begin destroying them in 2018. U.S. policy on landmines, as articulated in 2004, also encompasses phased elimination of most mines from operational planning.

These steps, while positive, are not nearly enough. The use of weapons that disproportionately take the lives and limbs of civilians is wholly counterproductive in today's conflicts, where winning over the local population is essential to mission success.

Your election stirred great excitement in this country and abroad in large part because of your clear commitment to restoring U.S. moral leadership in the world. Reconsidering these two treaties—and eliminating the threat that U.S. forces might use weapons that most of the world has condemned—would greatly aid efforts to reassert our nation's moral leadership.

We look forward to hearing that the policy review is underway.

Sincerely,

David T. Tayloe, Jr., MD, President, ***American Academy of Pediatrics***

Mary Ellen McNish, General Secretary, ***American Friends Service Committee***

Karen Frederickson, President, ***American Refugee Committee***

George Cody, PhD, Executive Director, ***American Task Force for Lebanon***

Ziad Asali, MD, President, ***American Task Force on Palestine***

Kareem Shora, National Executive Director, ***American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)***

Larry Cox, Executive Director, ***Amnesty International USA***

Dr. James Zogby, President and Founder, ***Arab American Institute***

Hassan Jaber, Executive Director, ***Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)***

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director, ***Arms Control Association***

Sarah Holewinski, Executive Director, ***Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict***

Helene D. Gayle, MD, President and CEO, ***CARE***

Ken Hackett, President, ***Catholic Relief Services***

Vincent Warren, Executive Director, ***Center for Constitutional Rights***

Margurite Carter, National Board President, ***Church Women United***

Rev. John L. McCullough, Executive Director and CEO, ***Church World Service***

Warren Clark, Executive Director, ***Churches for Middle East Peace***

Don Kraus, Executive Director, ***Citizens for Global Solutions***

John Isaacs, Executive Director, ***Council for a Livable World***

Bishop Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the ***Eparchy of St Maron of Brooklyn***
The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop, ***Episcopal Church***
Robert W. Radtke, President, ***Episcopal Relief & Development***
The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop, ***Evangelical Lutheran Church in America***
Ronald J. Sider, President, ***Evangelicals for Social Action***
Joe Volk, Executive Secretary, ***Friends Committee on National Legislation***
Wendy Batson, Executive Director, ***Handicap International U.S.***
Elisa Massimino, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, ***Human Rights First***
Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, ***Human Rights Watch***
Bruce E. Spivey, MD, President, ***International Council of Ophthalmology***
Amb. Donald Steinberg, Deputy President for Policy, ***International Crisis Group***
Mark Pitkin, PhD, Director, ***International Institute for Prosthetic Rehabilitation of Landmine Survivors***
George Biddle, Senior Vice President, ***International Rescue Committee***
Kenneth Gavin, S.J., National Director, ***Jesuit Refugee Service/USA***
Robert Naiman, National Coordinator, ***Just Foreign Policy***
Dr. Pary Karadaghi, Executive Director, ***Kurdish Human Rights Watch***
Marie Dennis, Director, ***Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns***
Co-President, ***Pax Christi International***
Rolando L. Santiago, Executive Director, ***Mennonite Central Committee U.S.***
Jim Schrag, Executive Director, ***Mennonite Church USA***
Heather Hanson, Director of Public Affairs, ***Mercy Corps***
Nancy Ratzan, President, ***National Council of Jewish Women***
William Hartung, Director, Arms and Security Initiative, ***New America Foundation***
Vernon Nichols and Jim Nelson, Co-Chairs, ***NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace & Security***
Stephen Rickard, Executive Director, ***Open Society Policy Center***
Richard M. Walden, President and CEO, ***Operation USA***
Raymond C. Offenheiser, President, ***Oxfam America***
Frank Donaghue, CEO, ***Physicians for Human Rights***
Peter Wilk, MD, Executive Director, ***Physicians for Social Responsibility***
Ahuma Adodoadji, President and CEO, ***Plan USA***
Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, ***Presbyterian Church (USA)***
Farshad Rastegar, CEO, ***Relief International***
William F. Vendley, Secretary General, ***Religions for Peace***
Rev. W. Douglas Mills, PhD, Judith Hertz and Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia, leadership of ***Religions for Peace USA***
Heidi Kuhn, Chairman of the Board, ***Roots of Peace***
September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
Jerry White, Founder and Executive Director, ***Survivor Corps (formerly Landmine Survivors Network)***
Nicole Lee, Executive Director, ***TransAfrica Forum***
Lavinia Limon, President and CEO, ***U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants***
Caryl Stern, President and CEO, ***U.S. Fund for UNICEF***

Rev. William G. Sinkford, President, ***Unitarian Universalist Association***
Rev. John H. Thomas, General Minister and President, ***United Church of Christ***
Amb. William H. Luers, President, ***United Nations Association of the United States of America***
James E. Winkler, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society, ***United Methodist Church***
Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace, ***United States Conference of Catholic Bishops***
Bobby Muller, President, ***Veterans for America***
Michael McPhearson, Executive Director, ***Veterans For Peace***
Sen. Timothy E. Wirth, President, ***UN Foundation***
Susan Shaer, Executive Director, ***Women's Action for New Directions***
Carolyn Makinson, Executive Director, ***Women's Refugee Commission***

cc: Honorable Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State
Honorable Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense
Honorable Gen. James L. Jones, National Security Advisor
Honorable Susan Rice, Ambassador to the United Nations
Honorable John Kerry, U.S. Senate
Honorable Richard Lugar, U.S. Senate
Honorable Carl Levin, U.S. Senate
Honorable John McCain, U.S. Senate
Honorable Patrick Leahy, U.S. Senate
Honorable Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senate
Honorable Jim McGovern, U.S. House of Representatives

Please address any response to this letter to <lora@fcnl.org>.