

DATE

NOT TO BE CIRCULATED PUBLICALLY UNTIL SENT

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned leaders of major US-based health associations, are concerned that antipersonnel landmines continue to terrify, threaten, maim, and kill civilian populations during and after times of armed conflict. We urge you to support a US ban on these inherently indiscriminate weapons.

Antipersonnel landmines injure and kill thousands of people each year. Hundreds of thousands more suffer from the agricultural, economic, and psychological consequences of living in mine-affected communities, mostly in the world's poorest countries.

As health professionals see first-hand, landmines kill, amputate, and blind men, women, and children. They propel shrapnel, vegetation, and contaminated soil and debris into soft tissue and bone, often producing severe infection. Inadequate hospital and surgical care further endanger landmine survivors. Rehabilitation, both physical and psychological, is scarce to nonexistent in many mined areas.

Humanitarian demining and victim assistance efforts by the United States are laudable. However, they are not sufficient to prevent the continuing mortality and maiming caused by the weapon. The 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, now joined by eighty percent of the world's nations and nearly all US allies, prohibits the use, production, trade, and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines. The treaty, serving as an efficacious vaccine against the landmine scourge, has led to a dramatic decline in mine-related casualties worldwide. Recently, 68 US Democratic, Republican, and Independent Senators sent a letter to you stating their support for the treaty.

Many senior retired US military leaders have also voiced support for the treaty, citing the danger mines pose to our own troops as well as the lack of need for mines on the modern battlefield. As long as our government remains outside the international norm banning antipersonnel landmines, we give political cover to nations that continue to use the weapon.

Given your administration's current landmine policy review, the US now has the opportunity to lead by example on this issue and cooperate with the community of nations by joining the Mine Ban Treaty. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

The following US-based health associations [as of June 17, 2010. Deadline for signature is June 25, 2010]:

American Academy of Facial & Plastic Reconstructive Surgery
Daniel E. Rouso, MD, President

American Academy of Pediatrics
Judith S. Palfrey, MD, FAAP, President

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
John J. Callaghan, MD, President

American Academy of Urgent Care Medicine
Franz Ritucci, MD, President

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Richard N. Waldman, MD, President

American Nurses Association
Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR, President

American Public Health Association
Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (Emeritus), Executive Director

American Medical Student Association
John Brockman, President

Health Volunteers Overseas
Julia Plotnick, MPH, RN, FAAN, Chair

International Council of Ophthalmology
Bruce E. Spivey, MD, MS, MEd, President