

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Leading Health Professional Sign-On Letter Regarding Antipersonnel Landmines to Presidential Candidates</b></p>
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October 16, 2003

Dear 2004 Presidential Candidates:

As health professionals, we are deeply concerned that antipersonnel landmines continue to terrify, threaten, maim, and kill civilian populations during and after times of armed conflict. We, the undersigned, urge you to support a ban on these inherently indiscriminate weapons.

Antipersonnel landmines injure and kill 15,000-20,000 people each year. Millions more suffer from the agricultural, economic, and psychological consequences of living in mine-affected communities. Approximately 90 million landmines and other unexploded ordnance remain in the earth, lying in wait for innocent children, women, and men in many of the world's poorest countries. As we have seen recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, the presence of mines makes post-conflict reconstruction even more difficult, dangerous, and costly. Humanitarian demining and victim assistance efforts by the United States are laudable but are not sufficient to prevent the continuing mortality and maiming caused by the weapon. Only a global ban will do that.

The 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, now joined by three-quarters of the world's nations, including all of NATO except for the US, prohibits the use, production, trade, and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines. The treaty has already led to tremendous success in reducing the global threat and casualties from this weapon. Even major retired military leaders in this country have voiced support for the treaty, citing the danger antipersonnel mines pose to our own troops.

Landmines do not only kill, amputate, and blind. They also propel shrapnel, vegetation, and contaminated soil and debris into soft tissue and bone, often producing severe infection and sepsis. Inadequate hospital and surgical care further endanger landmine survivors. Rehabilitation, both physical and psychological, is scarce to nonexistent in most mined areas, and this in turn creates an additional socio-economic burden for each country affected.

As long as our government remains outside the international norm banning this indiscriminate menace, we give political cover to nations such as Russia, India, and Pakistan that continue to sow this lethal legacy, with devastating consequences for civilians.

As health professionals in the United States, we appeal to you and all the candidates running for president to support the Mine Ban Treaty and to raise this issue during your election campaign. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely, \*

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