

A Statement of the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines and Nonviolence International Southeast Asia

On the joint recommendation of the Ministers of Defence of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on withdrawing from the Mine Ban Treaty, and Lithuania's official withdrawal from the Convention on Cluster Munitions

We, the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines (PCBL) and Nonviolence International Southeast Asia (NISEA), express our deep concern and disappointment at the recent announcements of Ministers of Defense of their recommendation of withdrawal from the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, in addition to Lithuania's decision to withdraw from the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions.

As organizations rooted in communities who have long borne the scars of war, colonialism, and militarization, we recognize the use of landmines not simply as a military decision—but as part of a long, violent legacy of control, dispossession, and human suffering. Weapons systems such as landmines and cluster bombs are weapons that do not distinguish between combatants and civilians, between a combatant and a child. These weapons persist long after wars end, long after borders are redrawn, and long after political alliances shift.

Colonial Weapons Perpetuating Colonialism and Occupation

“Weapons such as landmines represent more than immediate harm. They are tools of territorial domination, leaving communities fragmented, displaced, and fearful. Their very use mirrors the mindset of colonialism, where land is controlled not by people, but by the threat of violence. The decision to withdraw from the MBT is a decision to re-embrace these weapons, it risks reviving an old system that prioritizes control over care, militarization over human dignity.”, said Fred Lubang, National Coordinator of the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines, an affiliate of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize laureate International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Cluster Muniton Coalition.

Eastern Europe, like Southeast Asia, carries the memory of colonialism and occupation. The Mine Ban Treaty, signed over two decades ago, was a global act of collective resistance—a rejection of the machinery of war and a commitment to building peace, community resilience, and shared humanity. PCBL and NISEA appeals to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to go reflect back on the very reasons why their states became parties to the MBT.

Security Rooted in Solidarity, Not Militarization

We understand the grave security concerns these countries face. However, true sovereignty and lasting peace cannot be achieved by embracing weapons that have historically harmed civilians more than they have protected nations. Security cannot be built on systems that perpetuate fear, dependency on arms industries, and cycles of violence.

Instead, we urge the international community, particularly Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to:

- **Reaffirm their commitment to human security and humanitarian disarmament**, rooted in the protection of civilians and the dignity of communities.
- Recognize that **humanitarian disarmament is not weakness, but strength**—an act of sovereignty, a refusal to adopt the colonial playbook of permanent war preparedness.
- **Stand in solidarity with survivors, communities, and countries worldwide**—including those in Southeast Asia—who are still clearing the contaminated lands and addressing the impact of these weapons decades after conflicts have ended.

Address security concerns without abandoning humanitarian principles

As peace advocates from Southeast Asia, we see the decision to withdraw from the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions as setback in international humanitarian law and the global movement toward decolonial peacebuilding.

We stand with all victims, survivors, indigenous communities, and affected communities across the world in calling for:

- A re-evaluation of defense policies that prioritize militarization over meaningful human security.
- Decolonial peacebuilding to address power imbalances, centering the voices of marginalized peoples, and prioritize healing over harm.
- Open dialogue, inclusive of survivors and civil society, to address security concerns without abandoning humanitarian principles.
- Continued international cooperation and assistance to eliminate all anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war and the legacies of colonial violence they represent.

Solidarity Beyond Borders

We extend our solidarity to civil society organizations, peace advocates, and community leaders in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland who continue to champion peace, disarmament, and human rights. Together, we can resist the forces—whether political, economic, or historical—that seek to normalize war and perpetuate colonial tools of violence.

The path to true security, sovereignty, and justice lies not in rearming with old weapons but in disarming old mindsets.

Let us not allow weapons systems such as landmines and cluster bombs to divide, control, or colonize us again.

In Solidarity,

**Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines
Nonviolence International Southeast Asia**

19 March 2025