

**H.E. Mr. Kristen Michal**

Prime Minister of Estonia  
Chancellery of the Prime Minister  
Rahukohtu St 3, 15161, Tallinn  
ESTONIA

*Geneva, 25 March 2025*

*Subject: Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – urgent meeting request*

Dear Prime Minister Michal,

I am writing on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a global civil society network dedicated to a world free of anti-personnel mines and co-laureate of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize. We are deeply alarmed by the 18 March announcement by Estonia's Minister of Defence—made jointly with his counterparts from Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland—recommending withdrawal from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) on national security grounds.

This recommendation appears inconsistent with other recent public statements by senior Estonian defense officials. In December 2024, the Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces confirmed that anti-personnel mines are not needed “to achieve our military objectives and successfully defend the country.... and that viable alternatives are available.” Just last week, the Minister of Defence stated that Estonia does not see the need to use, acquire, or produce anti-personnel mines, and that the government would continue to follow military advice. In light of these assessments, it is difficult to understand why Estonia would consider taking such a drastic and dangerous step.

We respectfully urge your government to immediately halt any further steps toward withdrawal and instead engage in meaningful consultations with civil society, humanitarian experts, and international partners, including the ICBL. Given the well-documented danger AP mines pose to civilians, and the damage withdrawing from an instrument of international humanitarian law would have, a decision of this gravity must not be rushed. It requires careful, transparent deliberation with those who understand the full humanitarian, legal, and strategic consequences.

Withdrawing from the Mine Ban Convention would not only reverse Estonia's long-standing commitment to civilian protection and international humanitarian law, but also send a troubling signal to the global community—one that risks aligning Estonia with the few states that disregard international norms, such as Russia, Myanmar, North Korea and Iran – the only governments currently known to use antipersonnel mines. It would also isolate Estonia within the EU and NATO, where all other member states, with the sole exception of the United States, remain parties to the Convention.

We recognize the serious security challenges Estonia faces. But the global consensus is clear: anti-personnel mines are indiscriminate, outdated, and ineffective in modern defense. Their

use endangers not only civilians, but also a nation's own soldiers—during and long after conflict. Modern technologies such as surveillance systems, armed drones, and electronic sensors offer far more effective and humane alternatives for securing borders and deterring aggression. These are the systems Estonia should continue investing in—not weapons the international community has condemned and outlawed.

Prime Minister, withdrawing from the Mine Ban Convention would seriously undermine international humanitarian law and could open the door for other states to do the same—undermining a global norm that has saved countless lives. As Estonia has made clear it has no intention of actually producing, acquiring, or using AP mines, it is even less clear why such a damaging step would be taken.

We respectfully request an urgent opportunity to meet with you and other key decision-makers in Tallinn to discuss this matter further. We believe such dialogue is essential before any irreversible steps are taken.

Please note that similar letters have also been addressed to the Minister of Defence, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the President of Estonia.

We sincerely hope Estonia will reaffirm its commitment to the Mine Ban Convention and demonstrate continued leadership in upholding international humanitarian principles in the region and globally.

Sincerely,



Tamar Gabelnick  
Director, ICBL

Cc: H.E. Ms. Riia SALSA-AUDIFFREN, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations, Geneva