

MEDIA PACK

POLAND: Antipersonnel Mines & the Urgent Call to Uphold the Mine Ban Convention

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Poland's Withdrawal from Landmine Ban Would Put Polish Children's Lives at Risk – Warns Nobel Peace Prize Winner

Civil Society Urges Government to Stay in the Mine Ban Convention and Demands Urgent Dialogue Before Any Further Steps

GENEVA – The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and global civil society network working for a world free of antipersonnel mines, has issued an urgent appeal to the Polish government: reject a proposed withdrawal from the Mine Ban Convention and immediately halt consideration of producing or using banned antipersonnel landmines.

Following the 18 March 2025 [joint announcement](#) by the Polish Defence Minister and counterparts from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—suggesting withdrawal from the Convention on national security grounds—and remarks by Deputy Defence Minister Paweł Bejda about [plans to initiate landmine production](#), ICBL has sounded the alarm and called for an urgent course correction.

Antipersonnel landmines are not just primitive, outdated weapons—they are humanitarian disasters in waiting. These devices cannot tell the difference between a soldier's boot and a child's step. They lie buried for decades, waiting to explode. According to the [Landmine Monitor Report 2024](#) every year, antipersonnel mines still kill or maim thousands of people—85% of victims are civilians, and 40% of them are children. “Landmines turn farmlands into death traps, fields into no-go zones, and childhoods into lifetimes of disability. Their cruelty is quiet, hidden, and permanent”- explains Kasia Derlicka-Rosenbauer, Deputy Director of ICBL.

*“As a Polish citizen, I fully understand the need to strengthen national defense, especially given the current geopolitical climate,” said **Derlicka-Rosenbauer**. “But choosing antipersonnel mines would be a step in the wrong direction—morally, strategically, and reputationally. These weapons offer only a false sense of security for too high a price—paid by Polish civilians, children, our soldiers, and by Poland's international reputation. Poland must invest in modern, effective defense that would keep the people safe—not in tools of indiscriminate destruction that violate international law.”*

ICBL has formally written to Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Poland's Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers, requesting urgent dialogue with civil society and humanitarian experts before taking any further steps in this dangerous direction.

Poland's Own History Must Not Be Repeated

Poland, one of the most heavily mine-affected countries after World War II, experienced civilian casualties from landmines well into the 1970s. Even today, unexploded ordnance is still found on Polish soil.

“To lay mines on your own land is not a show of strength—it is an act of desperation,” said **Per Nergaard**, of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), an ICBL member organization. *“It endangers your own people and environment for decades. It is a step back by nearly a century.”*

Poland [signed](#) the Mine Ban Convention in 1997, ratified it in 2012 under Prime Minister Tusk's leadership, and became a full State Party in 2013—the last EU country to do so. Its remaining Soviet-era stockpiles were destroyed by 2016.

Upholding the Convention Even When Others Don't

Some argue that the Mine Ban Convention is weakened because several countries, including Russia, remain outside it and continue to use banned antipersonnel mines. According to the [Landmine Monitor 2024](#) the only governments known to use antipersonnel mines as of last year are **Russia, Myanmar, North Korea, and Iran**.

Poland's international reputation would be irreparably tarnished by copying practices used by countries that have shown little concern for protecting civilians in conflict – warns ICBL. And add - Abandoning the Convention does not punish perpetrators—on the contrary, it plays into the hands of those seeking to weaken global norms and the rule of law. Antipersonnel mines neither deter nor effectively defend against Russian aggression. Instead, such a move would only endanger Polish civilians, particularly children, by placing hidden killers around Polish territory.

“We don't uphold international law only when others do—we uphold it regardless, or even because others don't,” said **Derlicka-Rosenbauer**.

“Would Poland consider walking out of the Geneva Conventions on the protection of civilians during war because a handful of other countries, such as Russia, continue violating them?” she asks. *“Safeguarding international humanitarian law and remaining in the Convention is not a sign of weakness. It's leadership. It's what separates Poland from the violators of humanitarian norms. If Poland walks away from this treaty, it aligns not with those defending international norms—but with those who trample them.”*

Security Cannot Come at the Expense of Humanity

The ICBL acknowledges Poland's and its neighbors' legitimate security concerns.

“There are very rational fears at this moment—but reintroducing antipersonnel mines is an irrational response. It will not keep Poland and its people safe—just as it did not keep Bosnia

and our people safe,” said **Zoran Ješić**, who lost a leg to a landmine in Bosnia and now leads UDAS, a Bosnian organization representing landmine survivors.

“Some lines must never be crossed. Antipersonnel landmines do horrible things to innocent people. Like chemical and biological weapons, they are banned for a reason: they are inhumane, indiscriminate, and continue to kill long after conflict ends,” Ješić concluded.

ICBL Calls for Leadership, Not Regression

The ICBL urges Poland to reject this banned weapon, remain in the Convention, and promote it in the region and globally.

“We call on Prime Minister Tusk and his government to meet with us—experts and civil society—urgently,” said **Derlicka-Rosenbauer**. *“We call on Poland to keep its commitment to protect civilians at all times, on sunny and rainy days. It is never too late to do the right thing: Stand by the rule of law. Stand for civilians. Stand firmly against landmines.”*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Why the World Banned Antipersonnel Mines

- **Illegal:** Violate international humanitarian law—cannot distinguish between combatant and civilian.
- **Civilians = Main Victims:** 85% of victims are civilians. 40% are children.
- **Enduring Harm:** Mines stay active for decades, long after wars end.
- **Limited Military Value:** Far outweighed by their humanitarian consequences.

About the Mine Ban Convention

- Adopted in 1997, also known as the Ottawa Treaty
- Bans use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of antipersonnel mines
- Built through unprecedented partnership between states, civil society (ICBL), ICRC, and UN
- Championed by Princess Diana, whose 1997 visit to Angola and Bosnia galvanized public support
- 165 countries are onboard, including every EU and NATO member except the U.S.
- Led to a dramatic reduction in global landmine casualties, production, transfer, and use; advanced clearance of mined areas (30 countries became mine-free), and increased support for landmine victims
- **Current users:** Russia, Myanmar, North Korea, Iran

Additional Quotes for Media Use

“Poland should not endanger its people with hidden killers. Bring back landmines, and we bring back suffering, fear, and loss.”

—Kasia Derlicka-Rosenbauer, Deputy Director, ICBL

“To me, as a victim of an antipersonnel mine, whose life was shattered forever from a mine—to consider producing antipersonnel mines again, and in Europe, is both incomprehensible and shocking.”

— *Zoran Ješić, Landmine Survivor, UDAS, ICBL*

“Withdrawing from the Mine Ban Convention aligns Poland with global violators—not defenders—of humanitarian law. As a Polish national, I cannot accept that.”

— *Kasia Derlicka-Rosenbauer, Deputy Director, ICBL*

“Security must not come at the expense of humanity. Landmines are NOT modern defense. They are relics of destruction. They are relics of the past.”

— *Per Nergaard, Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), ICBL*

“The ICBL worked closely with Prime Minister Tusk’s government when the decision to ratify the Convention was made. Today we call on him and his government to keep their word—to recommit, not retreat.”

— *Kasia Derlicka-Rosenbauer, Deputy Director, ICBL*

About the ICBL

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is a global coalition of hundreds of NGOs working around the world to eliminate antipersonnel landmines. Founded in 1992, the ICBL was awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for its role in achieving the Mine Ban Convention. ICBL is also named in the preamble of the Convention in recognition of its role.

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, ICBL works with landmine survivors, affected communities, demining experts, and advocates for the protection of civilians through full universalization and implementation of the Mine Ban Convention. It serves as a global watchdog on issues related to antipersonnel mines and the Convention.

Interview Opportunities

The following campaign representatives are available for interviews. Please contact us to schedule a conversation tailored to your outlet’s needs.

Kasia Derlicka-Rosenbauer

Deputy Director, International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)

Languages: Polish, English

Kasia has been involved in the work of the ICBL since 2002, first as a national campaigner and researcher in Poland, and since 2007 as staff. She previously worked for the Polish Red Cross, focusing on International Humanitarian Law and international programs, and briefly for the EU/Red Cross Office in Brussels. Kasia’s first exposure to the issue of landmines was in 1997, volunteering with the German NGO Friedensdorf International, where she cared for children from war-torn countries, many of whom were landmine survivors.

Mr. Per Nergaard

Special Advisor, Strategic Initiatives, Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), ICBL

Languages: English, Norwegian

Per Nergaard has a background in the Norwegian military, with seven years of experience in various roles, including as an officer in the Northern Brigade and instructor on landmines and mine warfare. He has served as a demining platoon leader under UNIFIL in Lebanon and has led NPA's mine action efforts in Malawi, Mozambique, and Bosnia. He now serves as Special Advisor for Strategic Initiatives at NPA.

Zoran Ješić

Head, Organization of Amputees UDAS, Bosnia and Herzegovina, ICBL

Languages: English, Bosnian, Serbian

Zoran Ješić is a landmine survivor and long-time advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. As head of UDAS, he promotes survivor inclusion and leads advocacy efforts at national and international levels.

Visual Assets


- [ICBL logo](#)
- [Photos for Media:](#) Include Minefield warning signs, demining operations, Landmine survivors & ICBL Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony

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