

H.E. Ms. Evika Siliņa
Prime Minister of Latvia
Chancellery of the Prime Minister
Riga, Latvia

Geneva, 25 March 2025

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

Dear Prime Minister Siliņa,

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 to express our deep concern over the Latvian government's recent consideration of withdrawing from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).

We urge you and your government to immediately halt this process and instead engage in meaningful consultation with experts, civil society, and international humanitarian organizations, including the ICBL. Any decision to withdraw from the Convention should not be rushed or politically driven without transparent and inclusive dialogue. The consequences of such a move would be severe—not only for the population of Latvia, but for the entire international community working to protect civilians from the indiscriminate harm caused by landmines.

Withdrawing from the APMBC would mark a grave step, reversing decades of progress in humanitarian disarmament and placing Latvia in the company of a small handful of states that continue use these barbaric weapons, including Russia, Myanmar, and North Korea. It would send a deeply troubling message that International Humanitarian Law is only useful in times of peace and can be cast aside when security needs change. Such an approach undermines international humanitarian norms and damages Latvia's reputation as a defender of international law.

We fully recognize the legitimate security concerns Latvia faces in the current regional context. However, the international community long ago determined that some means of warfare are so devastating that their use must be prohibited forever. Antipersonnel mines, like chemical and biological weapons, fall into this category. They have been rejected for their inability to distinguish between soldiers and civilians, and for the enduring harm they inflict long after conflicts end. Returning to such outdated Cold War-era weapons would not project strength, but rather desperation, especially in an era where modern military technologies offer more effective and targeted alternatives for national defense.

Studies by military experts have consistently shown that antipersonnel mines offer minimal strategic value in modern warfare. Minefields cannot stop a determined adversary unless constantly monitored and actively defended, and their presence often reduces tactical flexibility. Meanwhile, state-of-the-art surveillance systems, drones, sensors, and electronic warfare tools provide far more sophisticated and humane options for protecting borders, deterring aggression, and defending one's territory. These are the systems Latvia should be investing in—not weapons that pose grave risks to civilians and Latvian troops alike.

Moreover, withdrawing from the Mine Ban Convention would create operational and political complications within NATO and the European Union. Latvia may be isolated among its EU and NATO peers—all of whom, with the sole exception of the United States, remain parties to the Convention. It is also worth noting that no NATO country currently produces anti-personnel mines, and any acquisition of new stocks would likely rely on obsolete, 30-year old U.S. munitions that are reaching the end of their shelf-life. Introducing or restarting domestic production would require significant investment, all for a banned, widely stigmatized, and internationally condemned weapon.

Prime Minister, Latvia's continued commitment to the Mine Ban Convention is essential. A withdrawal would severely damage its international standing, erode the norms that protect civilians during conflict, and risk setting a dangerous precedent for other states to follow. We urge you to lead with principle and foresight—not haste. Latvia must not take this decision without a transparent, informed, and inclusive process involving civil society, and humanitarian experts.

We respectfully request an urgent meeting with you and other key decision-makers in Riga to discuss this matter in greater depth. Please note similar letters were sent also the President, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense.

We strongly hope Latvia will decide to uphold its obligations under the Mine Ban Convention and reject any proposal to return to weapons that the world has rightly condemned.

Sincerely,



Tamar Gabelnick
Director, ICBL

CC:

H.E. Mr. Ivars Pundurs, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Latvia to the United Nations, Geneva