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Landmines Returning to Europe Risks Lives, Limbs and Security

(2 July 2025, Ottawa, Canada) Mines Action Canada, a member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, joins the global condemnation of the withdrawal of five European countries from the Ottawa Treaty prohibiting antipersonnel landmines.

On June 27, 2025, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania officially deposited their instruments of withdrawal from the [Ottawa Treaty](#) with United Nations headquarters starting a six month waiting period before these three states officially leave the Treaty. This action followed rushed processes to approve the withdrawal by each country's parliament. Poland and Finland have also announced their intention to withdraw from the Ottawa Treaty and are currently undertaking national parliamentary actions to approve that decision.

These five European Union member states stated that they are withdrawing from the Treaty due to security concerns stemming from Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Security concerns for these countries are legitimate - however, landmines are a weapon of the past. They have been banned by 166 states because of their humanitarian impact and because of their lack of military utility.

"We know that anti-personnel landmines have an over 80% civilian casualty rate. They are indiscriminate weapons from the 1900s that cannot address the security concerns of the 2020s," said Erin Hunt, Executive Director. "In this century, landmines are a weapon of choice for those like Russia and ISIS who want to terrorize civilians or a weapon of desperation for non-state actors with no other options. The Baltic countries are neither of those."

The withdrawals have been criticized heavily by [the States Parties to the Ottawa Treaty](#), by civil society led by [the International Campaign to Ban Landmines](#), by [the International Committee of the Red Cross](#), by the [United Nations Secretary General](#), by [former world leaders and foreign ministers](#) including former Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy who led the Ottawa Process to negotiate the Treaty, and by [Nobel Laureates](#).

On June 29, 2025, Ukrainian President Zelensky signed a decree announcing it would also leave the Ottawa Treaty. The issue will now be sent to Ukraine's parliament, however, withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty is not possible if a State Party is engaged in armed conflict.

Russian use of anti-personnel landmines has killed and injured at least 1,379 Ukrainians between February 2022 and late 2024. To address that harm, Canada provided over \$30 million towards landmine clearance and risk education in Ukraine in 2024 with a total investment since 2022 surpassing \$50 million Canadian dollars. Ukraine's desire to add additional anti-personnel landmines to its territory will increase the civilian casualties for decades to come and increase its need for demining support long term.

“The moves by Ukraine, Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, will put the citizens at increased risk of death or injury for decades to come because it is impossible to use an indiscriminate weapon responsibly. Beyond the physical harm to their citizens, the countries are harming the rules-based international order and providing cover to Russian efforts to weaken international humanitarian law. Weakening the limits to warfare will not make anyone more secure,” continued Hunt. “It seems these European countries are saying that decades-old global norms about what is acceptable in armed conflict apply to other countries but not to them. However, the adage that even wars have limits applies to all states.”

Mines Action Canada calls on the Governments of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Finland and Ukraine to reverse course and stay in the Ottawa Treaty. Alliances and modern technology can lead to more effective self-defence strategies than resorting to a weapon banned in the 1990s. Also, Mines Action Canada calls on Canada to speak up and engage with our allies in defence of the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines. This Canadian success story has saved countless lives over the past 25 years and must stay strong to prevent future harm.

- End -

For Interviews

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Background

Mines Action Canada is Canada’s campaign against landmines and other indiscriminate weapons. MAC envisions a world in which individual and communal rights and dignities are no longer ravaged by the devastating impact of armed conflict.

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, ICRC and UN
- 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