

LANDMINES TREATY - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

NEWS: NATO members Poland, Finland, and the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) have announced plans to **withdraw from the Ottawa Convention, which bans anti-personnel landmines.**

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

About the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, 1997

- The Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, also known as the **Ottawa Convention** or **Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty**, is a landmark international agreement that seeks to eliminate the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines worldwide.
- A core component of the treaty is its commitment to assist victims of landmines, many of whom suffer life-altering injuries such as limb loss or permanent disability.
- The treaty was formally adopted on **18th September 1997** during a Diplomatic Conference in Oslo and officially came into force on **1st March 1999**.
- As of **March 2025**, the treaty has been ratified by **165 States**, reflecting wide global support for a landmine-free world.

About Anti-Personnel Landmines

- Anti-personnel landmines are designed to be **buried in the ground** and detonate **automatically when triggered by human presence**, such as when a person steps on or moves near the device.
- These landmines are intended to **disable or kill enemy troops** and, in some cases, **damage or disable armored vehicles**.
- However, their indiscriminate nature has made them highly controversial, with **more than 80% of their victims being civilians**, according to data from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Scope and Obligations of the Treaty

- The Ottawa Convention applies specifically to **anti-personnel landmines** and does **not extend to anti-vehicle or anti-tank mines**, which remain legal under the treaty.
- Countries that become signatories to the treaty are **obligated to destroy all stockpiles** of anti-personnel landmines **within four years of joining**, as part of their legal commitment.
- The treaty also emphasizes **mine clearance efforts, victim assistance, international cooperation, and transparency reporting** as key pillars of implementation.

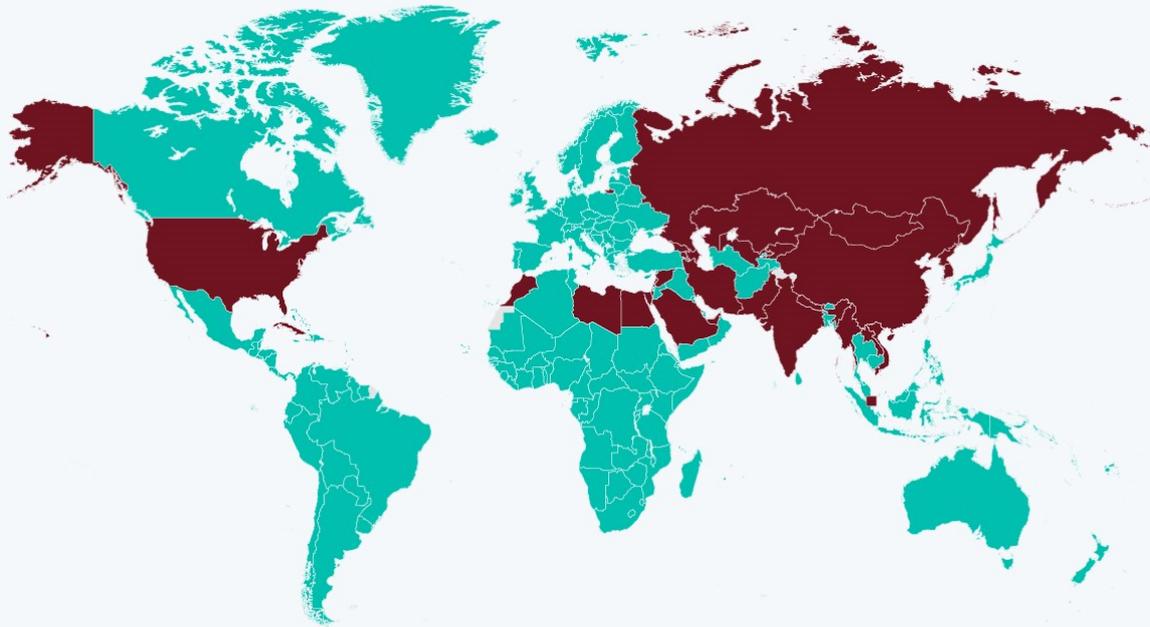
Countries Not Party to the Treaty

- Major military powers such as **India, the United States, Russia, China, and Pakistan** have neither signed nor ratified the treaty, often citing national security considerations.
- These countries argue that landmines are still necessary in certain contexts, particularly for **defensive operations** along **porous borders** or in regions facing **insurgency and conflict**.

Major Powers Among Non-Signatories of Mine Ban Treaty

Countries which have/have not signed and ratified the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty of 1999

■ Parties to the treaty ■ Non-signatories



Source: International Campaign to Ban Landmines



statista

India's Position on Landmines

- India maintains that its **unique security challenges**, including **disputed borders** and **ongoing cross-border terrorism**, necessitate the continued use of landmines.
- India supports the **humanitarian goals** of the treaty but has not joined due to its need for an **effective and affordable defense tool**, particularly in sensitive border areas.

Recent Developments: Countries Withdrawing from the Treaty

- Several **European nations bordering Russia**—including **Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states**—have recently announced plans to **withdraw from the Ottawa Convention**, citing emerging security concerns.
- **Norway remains committed** to the treaty, emphasizing the need to preserve the **international stigma against landmine use**, despite changing geopolitical dynamics.

Reasons Behind the Withdrawals

- A key reason cited is the **growing threat posed by Russia**, especially after its invasion of Ukraine. These countries believe that landmines could serve as a **critical defensive measure** in the event of further escalation or invasion.
- Some governments argue that staying in the treaty puts them at a **strategic disadvantage** compared to countries that **retain the right to use or produce landmines**.
- There is growing concern that if the current **Russia-Ukraine conflict pauses**, Russia could **rebuild its military strength** and potentially threaten neighboring NATO states, prompting them to reevaluate their defense strategies.

Impact of Exiting the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention

- The withdrawal of multiple countries weakens the **global consensus and normative pressure** against the use of landmines, potentially eroding progress made over the last two decades.
- The situation is compounded by the **significant reduction in U.S. funding** for mine clearance, which once accounted for **40% of global support** (approximately \$300 million per year), according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.
- Civilian casualties are on the rise; for example, **Ukraine recorded 1,286 civilian deaths or injuries due to landmines by August 2024**, making it the **most heavily mined country** in the world, according to United Nations reports.

- Countries leaving the treaty regain the **legal freedom to produce, stockpile, transfer, and deploy** landmines, reversing decades of humanitarian gains.
- **Poland has already announced** plans to restart landmine production, and **Lithuania may follow suit**, potentially also withdrawing from the **2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions**.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)

- The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a separate but related international treaty that prohibits the **use, transfer, production, and stockpiling of cluster munitions**.
- Cluster munitions are **explosive weapons** that release **multiple smaller bomblets**, often across a wide area, making them particularly dangerous to civilians and difficult to remove post-conflict.
- Like the Ottawa Convention, the CCM aims to **minimize civilian harm** and **prevent future injuries**, especially in post-conflict zones where unexploded submunitions remain a long-term hazard.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/which-countries-are-quitting-a-key-landmine-treaty-and-why-9925686/>