



Press Release - For Immediate Release

## **Call for U.S. to Commit to Not Use Cluster Munitions**

April 4 is the International Day for Mine Awareness and Mine Action

(Washington DC, April 2, 2015) President Barack Obama should commit to end U.S. use of cluster munitions, said the Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. in a [letter](#) to the president on the eve of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Mine Action.

“The U.S. should renounce the use of cluster munitions under any circumstances and join the international ban as more than 100 nations have done,” said Steve Goose of Human Rights Watch, chair of the Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. “Statements by U.S. officials acknowledging the negative humanitarian impact of cluster munitions would carry much more weight if the U.S. itself renounced these weapons.”

Recently, administration officials have criticized civilian harm caused by the use of cluster munitions in Libya, South Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine. Like the United States, none of these states are party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which comprehensively prohibits cluster munitions and requires clearance of cluster munition remnants, as well as assistance to victims of the weapons. A total of 91 states have ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions while another 25 have signed.

The last publicly recorded use of cluster munitions by the U.S. was in Yemen in December 2009. There is no evidence of U.S. cluster munition use in the “Operation Inherent Resolve” military action against forces of the Islamic State or ISIL that began last year in Syria and Iraq, but U.S. policy still allows for cluster munition use. Several states parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions are participating in this operation, including the government of Iraq. These states are legally obliged by Article 21 to promote the convention’s norms by discouraging any use of cluster munitions by states outside the convention.

In addition to calling on the U.S. to cease the use of cluster munitions, in the [March 30 letter](#) the Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. has urged President Obama to review U.S. cluster munition policy with the objective of identifying and overcoming any remaining obstacles to accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions so that the U.S. can join as soon as possible.

U.S. policy on cluster munitions is laid out in the June 19, 2008 Department of Defense (DoD) directive issued by then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. The policy commits the U.S. to prohibit the use of cluster munitions in 2018, except for the small portion of its stockpiles that have a failure rate of less than one percent. The Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. [urges](#) that the policy date of 2018 for instituting a ban on nearly all cluster munitions be accelerated and calls for a reexamination of the policy's exception allowing continued use of cluster munitions resulting in a less than one percent unexploded ordnance rate.

The Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. also [calls](#) on the U.S. to start participating as an observer in regular meetings of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, starting with the First Review Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia on September 7-11, 2015.

In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly [declared](#) that 4 April of each year shall be observed as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. This year, the UN Mine Action Service has [declared](#) that the Mine Action Day will focus on "more than mines" by considering explosive weapons including cluster bombs. The U.S. is the world's largest contributor to global mine clearance and victim assistance programs, which include the clearance of cluster munition remnants and assistance to cluster munition victims.

Human Rights Watch chairs the Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. and its sister initiative, the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines. Formerly known as the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Bombs, the Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. is the national affiliate of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), the civil society engine behind the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The name changed to Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. this year after the campaign websites were revamped.

See the Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. website at [www.noclusterbombs.org](http://www.noclusterbombs.org) and follow [@noclusterbombs](https://twitter.com/noclusterbombs) on Twitter.

See the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines website at [www.banminesusa.org](http://www.banminesusa.org) and follow [@BanMinesUSA](https://twitter.com/BanMinesUSA) on Twitter.

For more information, see:

- [Letter](#) to President Obama from Cluster Munition Coalition U.S. March 30, 2015:

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