

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States of America  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
Fax: 202-456-2461



August 28, 2013

Dear Mr. President,

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Cluster Bombs urges your administration to refrain from using any form of cluster munition in possible military actions in Syria. The *New York Times* and others have reported that possible Syria strike plans include use of Tomahawk cruise missiles launched by the U.S. Navy. We are especially concerned because, as you know, Tomahawk cruise missiles can carry a variety of different kinds of warheads, and in particular, the Delta model carries a weapons payload of 166 BLU-97 cluster submunitions.

Cluster bombs indiscriminately kill and maim innocent civilians—the same civilians in Syria the U.S. is trying to protect. The humanitarian toll of this weapon far outweighs any military utility. Your own administration has recognized the inexcusable impact of these weapons. In October 2012, Ambassador Rice said that cluster bomb use by Syrian government forces was an example of “atrocities” by the Syrian regime. In May 2013, the United States also voted for a UN General Assembly resolution that strongly condemned Syria’s use of cluster munitions. It would be hypocritical for the United States to now use these same weapons in Syria.

In the last reported use of a cluster munition by the U.S. on December 17, 2009 in Yemen, one or more Tomahawk cruise missiles loaded with BLU-97 bomblets struck the hamlet of al-Majala in southern Abyan province. The strike killed at least 41 civilians and at least four more civilians were killed and 13 wounded by unexploded bomblets after the attack. Four years later, the site of the attack remains contaminated by cluster munition remnants. We understand that in January 2012, a boy took one of the unexploded bomblets home, where it exploded, killing his father.

Cluster munitions used by the Syrian regime have already caused numerous civilian casualties. While Syria’s reported use of chemical weapons is unjustifiable, it does not legitimate the use of another indiscriminate weapon that will kill and maim yet more civilians.

Moreover, any use of cluster munitions by the U.S. in Syria would require condemnation from some of the U.S.’s closest allies who have joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions. That convention comprehensively bans any use of the weapon, and requires States Parties to discourage any use by others. States Parties have declared on many occasions that any use of cluster munitions should be condemned.

In conclusion, we ask that your administration explicitly rule out any use of cluster munitions in a military intervention in Syria.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zach Hudson".

Zach Hudson  
USCBL Coordinator

cc: Secretary John Kerry      Secretary Chuck Hagel      Gen. Martin E. Dempsey

USCBL · c/o Handicap International · 6930 Carroll Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912 · PH: 301/891-2138 · FAX: 301/891-9193

## STEERING COMMITTEE

### COORDINATOR

Handicap International  
6930 Carroll Avenue  
Suite 240

Takoma Park, MD 20912

Phone: (301) 891-2138

Fax: (301) 891-9193

[uscbl@handicap-international.org](mailto:uscbl@handicap-international.org)

[www.banminesusa.org](http://www.banminesusa.org)

American Task Force for Lebanon

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Victims in Conflict

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