

Press Release



President of convention banning anti-personnel mines expresses concern about new use of mines by Syria

Geneva, 7 November 2011 – The president of the international treaty banning anti-personnel mines has called on Syria “to stop laying landmines and to remove these indiscriminate weapons.”

H.E. Gazmend Turdiu, who presides over the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, or *Ottawa Convention*, which bans the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, made his comments after reports surfaced pointing to the Syrian military planting landmines in an area facing two Lebanese villages – Knaysseh and Al-Hnayder.

On 1 November, Lebanon’s *The Daily Star* quoted civilians saying: “The Syrian Army has warned us about the landmines since many children play around that area,” which shows, once again, that the use of landmines affects the most vulnerable populations.

“Children are particularly vulnerable to these weapons,” said Gazmend Turdiu. “They are far more likely to die from the resulting injuries.”

According to press reports the planting of landmines in that area is preventing civilians to access and use the lands for agricultural purposes, placing an additional burden on the affected communities.

A 1 November news report by the Associated Press in Lebanon indicates a man lost a foot during a landmine explosion in the area. “This unfortunate situation could be repeated with more civilians falling victim to these unacceptable weapons,” said Gazmend Turdiu.

Neither Syria nor Lebanon have acceded to the Ottawa Convention, which sees that States accept that they shall never, under any circumstances, use anti-personnel mines, and shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, including the social and economic reintegration, of landmine victims.

This is the third time this year that the president of the AP Mine Ban Convention has voiced his concern on the rising use of landmines by States outside the treaty. Earlier this year, the Convention’s President reminded the 157 States that are part of the Convention of the commitments made during the landmark 2009 *Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World*: “In Cartagena, States accepted that they will condemn and continue to discourage in every possible way any production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines by any actors.”

“With a few exceptions, the international community has accepted that the insidious, indiscriminate nature of anti-personnel mines means they must be eradicated,” said Gazmend Turdiu. “We should all be deeply concerned.”

The President’s comments come as the States Parties of the Convention prepare to meet from 27 November to 2 December in Phnom Penh, in the world’s largest annual gathering of landmines experts and diplomats. Over 1,000 delegates representing more than 100 States and dozens of international and non-governmental organizations are expected to take part.

AP Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was adopted in Oslo in 1997, opened for signature in Ottawa the same year and entered into force in 1999.

To date 157 States are parties to the Convention, 153 of them no longer hold stocks. Over 44.5 million landmines have been destroyed by the States Parties. 34 of 50 States that at one time manufactured anti-personnel mines are now bound by the Convention's ban on production. Most other parties have put in place moratoria on production and / or transfers of mines.

Demining has resulted in millions of square metres of once dangerous land being released for normal human activity.

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For interviews or more information regarding any aspect of the Convention kindly email: ISU@APMineBanConvention.org or contact Laila Rodriguez at +41 (0) 22 906 1656. Connect with the Convention through our [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) or [Twitter](#).