April 4, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We were pleased when your administration announced in November 2009 that it was conducting a review of U.S. policy on landmines. We have appreciated the thoroughness with which the review has apparently been conducted, although we have been dismayed at the lengthy period of time involved. It is our understanding that the inter-agency deliberations have now concluded and the decision-making point has been reached.

We write now to encourage you strongly to make a decision on future U.S. landmine policy as soon as possible, and to announce that the United States will accede to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. This is a crucial humanitarian decision that should not be put off any longer, or postponed during a busy election year. We urge you to submit the treaty to the Senate this year for its advice and consent next year.

Since the policy review began, the administration has received letters of support for the Mine Ban Treaty from 68 Senators, 16 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, key NATO allies, retired senior military personnel, dozens of NGO leaders, victims of U.S. landmines, and countless concerned Americans. In total, 159 countries are party to the treaty, which comprehensively bans antipersonnel mines. Every other member of NATO supports the treaty, as does every member of the European Union, and other key allies such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

A decision to join the Mine Ban Treaty would vividly demonstrate your commitment to multilateralism, to global humanitarian endeavors, and to the protection of civilians from the ravages of war. It is a decision that would be lauded by the vast majority of the U.S. public and U.S. allies around the world.

Such a decision would also be consistent with the U.S.’s generous support for mine clearance programs around the world—a generosity that for years has been undercut by the U.S.’s insistence that it may use landmines.

In fact, the U.S. has not used antipersonnel landmines since 1991, has not exported them since 1992 and has not produced them since 1997. Surely if the U.S. military has been able to defend the country for the last 21 years without using antipersonnel landmines, it can do so in the future as well.

It is little known that the U.S. has already banned the use of all “persistent” or “dumb” mines (the typical type planted in the ground), as of last year, even in Korea. It is now time to ban “non-persistent” or “smart” antipersonnel mines as well. Nearly all U.S. allies have already banned these mines as indiscriminate weapons, and thus the U.S. would not be able to use them in coalition operations.
U.S. participation is also important to the universalization of the treaty. Even though landmine use has been significantly reduced worldwide, a few countries refuse to join—and even continue to use landmines—under the cover that they will not join if the U.S. has not joined. Past and ongoing deployment of these weapons by state armies and non-state groups continues to undermine stability and development, exacerbate human suffering, and burden many of the world’s weak and failing states.

The last steps to acceding to the treaty are now achievable, and vitally important to United States efforts to protect civilians during and after armed conflict, strengthen international norms, isolate irresponsible regimes, and fulfill promises to the international community. We add our voice to the myriad American citizens, landmine survivors, international allies, and campaigners from every corner of the globe in calling on your administration to finally join the Mine Ban Treaty now.

Sincerely,

Aniedi Okure, OP, PhD, Executive Director
Africa Faith and Justice Network

Warren David, President and Nabil Mohamad, Vice President
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Shan Cretin, General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

Timi Gerson, Director of Advocacy
American Jewish World Service

Daniel Wordworth, President and CEO
American Refugee Committee

George Cody, PhD, Executive Director
American Task Force for Lebanon

Ziad Asali, MD, President
American Task Force on Palestine

Suzanne Nossel, Executive Director
Amnesty International USA

Dr. James Zogby, PhD, President and Founder
Arab American Institute

Hassan Jaber, Executive Director
Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director  
**Arms Control Association**

Helene D. Gayle, MD, MPH, President and CEO  
**CARE USA**

Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo, President and CEO  
**Catholic Relief Services**

Vincent Warren, Executive Director  
**Center for Constitutional Rights**

Rabbi Jonathan Stein, President and Rabbi Steven A. Fox, Chief Executive  
**Central Conference of American Rabbis**

Stanley J. Noftsinger, General Secretary  
**Church of the Brethren**

Margurite Carter, President  
**Church Women United**

Rev. John L. McCullough, Executive Director and CEO  
**Church World Service**

Warren Clark, Executive Director  
**Churches for Middle East Peace**

Don Kraus, Chief Executive Officer  
**Citizens for Global Solutions**

Sarah Holewinski, Executive Director  
**CIVIC - Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict**

Amy Echeverria, Director  
**Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach**

Stephen M. Veazey, President  
**Community of Christ**

T. Michael McNulty, SJ, Justice and Peace Director  
**Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)**

John Isaacs, Executive Director  
**Council for a Livable World & Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation**

Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**
Ronald J. Sider, President
Evangelicals for Social Action

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Elizabeth MacNairn, Executive Director
Handicap International U.S.

Elisa Massimino, President and CEO
Human Rights First

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director
Human Rights Watch

Bruce E. Spivey, M.D., M.S., M.Ed., President
International Council of Ophthalmology

Mark Pitkin, Ph.D., Director
International Institute for Prosthetic Rehabilitation of Landmine Survivors, Tufts University School of Medicine

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, National Director, Office for Interfaith & Community Alliances
Islamic Society of North America

Rev. Michael Evans, S.J., National Director
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Robert Naiman, Policy Director
Just Foreign Policy

Dr. Pary Karadaghi, President and CEO
Kurdish Human Rights Watch, Inc. (KHRW)

Alison Bock, President
Landmines Blow!

Channapha Khamvongsa, Executive Director
Legacies of War

Sally Dunne, NGO UN Representative
Loretto Community

Kathleen McNeely, Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
J Ron Byler, Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Ervin R. Stutzman, Executive Director
Mennonite Church USA

Andrea Koppel, Vice President for Policy and Global Engagement
Mercy Corps

Oskar Castro, Executive Director
Military Families Speak Out

Nancy K. Kaufman, CEO
National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Hiro Sakurai, President
NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace & Security

David Krieger, President
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

Morton H. Halperin, Senior Advisor
Open Society Policy Center

Richard M. Walden, President and CEO
Operation USA

Dr. Kevin W. Prine, President and CEO
Outreach International

Raymond C. Offenheiser, President
Oxfam America

Ophelia Dahl, CEO
Partners In Health

Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, Executive Director
Pax Christi USA

Steven M. Rothstein, President
Perkins School for the Blind

Donna McKay, Executive Director
Physicians for Human Rights
Catherine Thomasson, MD, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility

Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Nora D. Sheets, Coordinator
PSALM: Proud Students Against Landmines & Cluster Bombs

Michel Gabaudan, President
Refugees International

John Maris, SVP, Programs
Relief International

Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General
Religions for Peace

Heidi Kuhn, Founder/CEO
Roots of Peace

Sr. Lucy Meissen, CPPS, General Councilor
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, MO

Sr. Maura Browne, SNDdeN, Justice and Peace Coordinator
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Nicole Lee, Esq., President
TransAfrica Forum, Inc.

William M. Abrams, President
Trickle Up

Caryl M. Stern, President/CEO
U.S. Fund for UNICEF

The Honorable Timothy E. Wirth, President
UN Foundation

Rev. Peter Morales, President
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Rev. Michael Neuroth, Policy Advocate on International Issues
United Church of Christ - Justice and Witness Ministries

James E. Winkler, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society
The United Methodist Church
Bishop Richard E. Pates, Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Joy Olson, Executive Director
Washington Office on Latin America

Susan Shaer, Executive Director
Women’s Action for New Directions

cc: Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State
Leon E. Panetta, Secretary of Defense
Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Susan E. Rice, Ambassador to the United Nations