



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 11, 2024

Lithuania's Dangerous Step Back: Plans to Abandon Cluster Munition Ban

As Lithuania plans to withdraw from the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, we express deep concern and strongly urge Lithuania to reconsider this move. No State Party has ever withdrawn from the Convention since its adoption in Dublin on May 30, 2008. Lithuania's move will set a detrimental precedent for the convention and for international humanitarian law more broadly.

On July 3, the Government of Lithuania approved the proposal from the Ministry of National Defense to withdraw from the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). The draft law is presented at the Parliament on July 11 and is still to be approved by the President. Lithuania began considering withdrawal from the Convention last year after the United States started supplying Ukraine with cluster munitions in July 2023.

This decision would represent a major step backwards for the Convention and the global stigma against cluster munitions. All States parties must strongly denounce Lithuania's decision and urge the country to remain in the Convention.

"No country has ever withdrawn from the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Lithuania's withdrawal sets a dangerous precedent and will have profound implications, further undermining the rule of law and the norms against these indiscriminate weapons. 95% of the casualties of cluster munitions are civilians This decision comes amid a gradual erosion of international standards in recent years: one year ago, the United States decided to provide Ukraine with cluster munitions. Banned weapons like landmines and cluster munitions have been used



in current conflict extensively and civilians are increasingly falling victim to indiscriminate violence in armed conflicts."

HI advocacy Director Anne Héry

A weapon outlawed for a reason

The arguments presented by Lithuania—that we are living in exceptional times, that cluster munitions can be a good deterrent against a potential foe, and that they have great military utility—are inadmissible. These weapons have been banned because of their catastrophic humanitarian consequences. The Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions is intended to be respected by states not only during peacetime but also during periods of tension and wartime.

Cluster munitions can be fired from the ground by artillery, rockets, missiles, and mortar projectiles, or dropped by aircraft. They open in the air, dispersing multiple submunitions or bomblets over a wide area, without distinguishing between civilian populations and militaries or between civilian and military infrastructure. Moreover, many submunitions fail to explode on initial impact - up to 40% of them - leaving duds that can indiscriminately injure and kill like landmines for years.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions, which Lithuania ratified in March 2011, provides the optimal framework to address and prevent the severe consequences of cluster munitions. The latest Cluster Munition Monitor Report 2023 reveals that an overwhelming 95% of cluster munition casualties are civilians, both at the time of use and for many years afterward. Children account for 71% of casualties from cluster munition remnants.



Civilians always bear the brunt of cluster munitions for decades

LAOS - Lithsouda, a 19-year-old from Soplap in Houaphan province, Laos, lost his right eye and the fingers of his right hand in 2009 when he accidentally triggered a buried cluster bomb, launched in the sixties, while building a fire. His family made significant sacrifices to get him to a hospital. HI has since come to his aid.



Worrisome development since 2022

Cluster munition attacks killed or wounded at least 987 people in 2022, according to the 2023 Cluster Munition Monitor, of whom 890 were in Ukraine. Russia has used cluster munitions repeatedly in Ukraine since February 2022. Use from Ukrainian forces have also been reported. In July 2023, the United States began transferring to Ukraine an unspecified quantity of its stockpiled.

The Myanmar military and Syrian government forces used cluster munitions in 2022, causing further civilian harm. None of these countries have signed or ratified the international convention against cluster munition.

A strong international convention

As of today, 124 states have committed to the convention's strong and comprehensive norms, with two new states joining last year. This represents over 60% of the world's nations.

Lithuania actively participated in the Oslo Process aimed at banning cluster munitions and was among the first countries to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo on December 3, 2008. Lithuania is a state party to the Oslo Convention since 2011.

The country does not possess cluster munitions and has never produced, stockpiled, transferred, or used such weapons.