

Nobel Peace Laureate Campaign Welcomes Libyan Rebel Pledge Not to Use Landmines, Urging the Government for Similar Action

Geneva, 30 April 2011 —The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) welcomes the formal pledge by the Libyan National Transitional Council, not to use antipersonnel and anti-vehicle mines, and to destroy all mines in its possession.

This pledge was received by Human Rights Watch, an ICBL member organization in an official communiqué signed on 28 April 2011 by Abdulhafeeth Gogha, vice chairman of the National Transitional Council.

Under the communiqué the rebels committed that “no forces under the command and control of the Libyan National Transitional Council will use antipersonnel or anti-vehicle landmines.” The Transition Council also pledged to “destroy all landmines in their possession” and to “cooperate in the provision of mine clearance, risk education, and victim assistance.” The communiqué said further that “any future Libyan government should relinquish landmines and join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.”

“This decision will help protect civilians from the threat of these indiscriminate weapons, both now and long after this conflict,” said Kasia Derlicka, ICBL Director. “We call on the National Transitional Council to keep its word not to use landmines ever again, to immediately remove all planted mines and to destroy all mines they possess” said Derlicka. “We continue to urge Libya’s government to renounce the use of landmines and to ensure rapid clearance and destruction of all landmines.”

The pledge comes in response to recent BBC video footage showing rebel forces placed anti-vehicle landmines around the city of Ajdabiya. Human Rights Watch also received information regarding mines being transferred by ship from Benghazi to Misrata. The rebel authorities had previously stated to ICBL member organizations Human Rights Watch, Handicap International and Mines Advisory Group, as well as to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), in a meeting on 20 April that their forces would not use landmines. However, this commitment was not respected by some rebel forces. The written pledge signed on 28 April is intended to reinforce and formalize the previous oral promise. “We are pleased that this pledge has been made, but it is vital that the leadership immediately disseminate this directive internally to all its combatants to assure no use by rebel forces” said Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan of the Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor.

A total of 156 nations have joined the Mine Ban Treaty since it was adopted in 1997, while 39, including Libya, have not yet joined. Under the treaty provisions, states must renounce use of antipersonnel mines, destroy their

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stockpiles of the weapon, clear all their mined areas, and provide comprehensive assistance to landmine survivors. The treaty does not prohibit use of anti-vehicle mines, but the use of anti-vehicle mines with fuzes that can be triggered by the unintentional act of a person is banned under the treaty because they effectively act like antipersonnel mines. The anti-vehicle mines previously used by the rebel forces can be used with such “sensitive fuzes,” but it is not known if they were used in this case.

In March 2011, the ICBL condemned the use of landmines by the Libyan Armed Forces outside the town of Ajdabiya.

The ICBL is a network with members in over 90 countries and areas, working for a mine-free world, where landmine survivors can lead fulfilling lives. The ICBL received the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its efforts to bring about the Mine Ban Treaty.

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More information:

- HRW Press Release: <http://www.hrw.org/en/middle-eastn-africa/libya>
- ICBL, mine use in Libya: www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/Library/News-Articles/Universal/pr-31March
- Cluster Munition Coalition, cluster munition use in Libya: www.stopclustermunitions.org/news/?id=3161
- Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor Country Profile: www.the-monitor.org/CP/LY/2010
- Text of the “Communique by the Libyan National Transitional Council regarding Landmines”: http://www.hrwnews.org/press/hrw_ntc_landminepledge.jpg