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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

## **Nobel Peace Prize-winning global campaign strongly condemns new use of landmines by Myanmar's Armed Forces**

(Geneva, 22 September 2017) The International Campaign to Ban Landmines strongly condemns the use of antipersonnel landmines by Myanmar's armed forces in recent weeks along the country's border with Bangladesh. It demands that the government of Myanmar (Burma) immediately stop using these indiscriminate weapons and join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. The ICBL calls on all parties to the conflict in Myanmar to respect the prohibition of antipersonnel mines.

"There can be no justification for using such indiscriminate weapons, which are harming and killing civilians fleeing their homes," said Steve Goose of Human Rights Watch, chair of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

According to eyewitness accounts, photographic evidence, and multiple reports, antipersonnel mines have been laid between Myanmar's two major land crossings with Bangladesh, resulting in casualties among Rohingya refugees fleeing government attacks on their homes.

According to information collected by Landmine Monitor, the ICBL's research wing, local researchers interviewing and assisting refugees as they crossed into Bangladesh saw an Army truck arrive on the Myanmar side of the border on 28 August from which soldiers unloaded three crates. They saw the soldiers take antipersonnel landmines from the crates and place them in the ground.

According to the researchers, the mines were emplaced within Taung Pyo Let Yar village tract of Maungdaw Township, adjacent to border pillar No. 31 in Bangladesh. This area demarcates the beginning of the land border between Bangladesh and Myanmar, as south of this area the border follows the Naf River.

After witnessing mine-laying between 10am and 3pm, the witnesses told Landmine Monitor that they saw Myanmar Army trucks arrive during the night, where more crates were unloaded containing landmines that the soldiers emplaced. The activity was visible under the lights the soldiers used for their work.

The local researchers told Landmine Monitor that the new landmine use continued over the following days, progressing [northeast] along the border within the townships of Mee Taik, Nga Yant Chaung, Hlaing Thi, Bauk Shu Hpweit, and In Tu Lar. This stretch lies between the two main land crossing routes between Myanmar (Maungdaw township) and Bangladesh (Bandarban District). Mine laying was last seen to the east of In Tu Lar township. It is not known if the mine laying is continuing as parts of the border area are inaccessible.

On 9 September, [Amnesty International reported](#) that their researchers spoke to several eyewitnesses who said they had seen Myanmar military forces, including military personnel and Border Guard Police, laying antipersonnel mines near Myanmar's border with Bangladesh, resulting in at least six casualties. Pictures obtained by Amnesty clearly show PMN-1 type antipersonnel mines in the ground, but it is not possible to determine if it was the PMN-1 manufactured by Myanmar (named MM-2) or the one manufactured by China (named Type 58).

On 5 September, news agency [Reuters reported](#) that two Bangladeshi sources told a Reuters reporter that locals informed them that three to four groups were seen working near the border's barbed wire fence "putting something into the ground." They said the items were subsequently determined to be landmines.

Bangladesh is a State Party to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and there is no evidence to indicate that it has laid antipersonnel mines on its side of the border. On 13 September, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, Shahidul Haque, [reportedly stated in an interview](#) that the Bangladesh government has "reliable information" that Myanmar military forces have "laid land mines across a section of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border."

Previously, in April 2017, [a media report stated](#) that the Bangladesh government had announced an agreement between Border Guard Bangladesh and Myanmar Police Force to remove landmines from along the border of the two countries. Under demilitarization agreements along the border, Bangladesh has repeatedly objected during flag meetings between military officers of the two countries to past evidence and allegations of new mine use on the Myanmar side of the border.

Multiple witness accounts indicate that landmines have been newly laid along the border. According to reporting by Landmine Monitor and others, Myanmar government forces have laid antipersonnel landmines over the past 20 years, including along the border with Bangladesh. *Landmine Monitor 2015* reported that in March 2015, villagers from Pyin Soe village in eastern Paletwa township of Chin State, near the border with Bangladesh, said that they were warned by soldiers from Myanmar government forces not to go beyond a stream near their village as the soldiers had laid mines on the other bank. *Landmine Monitor* previously reported that in June 2013, a Bangladesh news outlet alleged that Myanmar government had laid landmines within 70 yards of the border, along pillars 39 and 40, and 100 yards of the border, along pillars 37 and 38.

In September 2016, Myanmar's deputy Minister of Defense, Major General Myint New, [reportedly told the Myanmar parliament](#) that the army continues to use landmines in the country's internal armed conflict.

Various non-state armed groups in Myanmar have used landmines over the past two decades. They are not believed to be responsible for the mines newly laid on the country's border with Bangladesh.

At the opening of the United Nations Human Rights Council on 11 September, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid bin Ra'ad Al Hussein, [told delegates](#) that he was "appalled by reports that the Myanmar authorities have now begun to lay landmines along the border with Bangladesh."

The ICBL calls on Myanmar's military forces to mark and clear the minefields, in order to prevent more civilian casualties. Myanmar has no national mine clearance center or mine clearance programs.

Myanmar is not one of the 162 countries that are party to the Mine Ban Treaty. Myanmar is one of the few countries to abstain from voting in favor of an annual UN General Assembly resolution supporting the Mine Ban Treaty.

The country profile for Myanmar/Burma in the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor can be found [here](#). Regularly updated information on Myanmar/Burma can be found at [burma.icbl.org](http://burma.icbl.org).

**Ends**

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**See also:**

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