

An affront to humanitarian norms: Project Ploughshares alarmed at U.S. decision to supply landmines to Ukraine, dismayed at Canada's silence

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Project Ploughshares strongly condemns the U.S. decision, announced exactly one month ago, to supply anti-personnel landmines to Ukraine—a move that threatens international law and undermines global efforts to protect civilians in conflict.

The deployment of landmines blatantly contravenes international humanitarian law (IHL), which prohibits the use of indiscriminate weapons that disproportionately harm civilians. It also undermines the Ottawa Treaty, a landmark international consensus against landmines.

It is disconcerting that this decision has not been denounced by Canada, given its central role as a driving force behind the Ottawa Treaty and its tradition of promoting a rules-based international order. Silence in the face of such blatant disregard for humanitarian principles is unacceptable.

Permitting landmines to be justified under claims of military necessity sets a dangerous precedent, normalizing the use of banned weapons in future conflicts. Military necessity has long been the excuse of those who deployed landmines, resulting in the very humanitarian crises the global disarmament framework sought to prevent.

Specious distinctions that point to certain types of mines as being more acceptable evade the core issue. Even modern iterations of these weapons pose serious risks to civilians during and after conflicts, exacerbating humanitarian crises by indiscriminately maiming, killing, prolonging suffering, and obstructing recovery.

This decision, alongside the erosion of IHL in other conflicts, highlights a troubling downward trend. Failing to uphold these principles emboldens further violations and weakens the global framework designed to protect civilians. Without principled leadership, this decline will normalize violations of international law, making future conflicts more indiscriminate and dangerous.

Project Ploughshares urges Canada and other nations to reject this decision and work collectively to uphold the principles that have saved countless lives and safeguarded human dignity. There is no place for these weapons in modern conflict.