September 8, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned leaders of major health associations, are concerned that antipersonnel landmines continue to terrify, threaten, maim, and kill civilian populations during and after times of armed conflict. We urge you to support a US ban on these inherently indiscriminate weapons.

Antipersonnel landmines injure and kill thousands of people each year. Hundreds of thousands more suffer from the agricultural, economic, and psychological consequences of living in mine-affected communities, mostly in the world’s poorest countries.

As health professionals see first-hand, landmines kill, amputate, and blind men, women, and children. They propel shrapnel, vegetation, and contaminated soil and debris into soft tissue and bone, often producing severe infection. Inadequate hospital and surgical care further endanger landmine survivors. Rehabilitation, both physical and psychological, is scarce to nonexistent in many mined areas.

Humanitarian demining and victim assistance efforts by the United States are laudable. However, they are not sufficient to prevent the continuing mortality and maiming caused by the weapon. The 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, now joined by eighty percent of the world’s nations and nearly all US allies, prohibits the use, production, trade, and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines. The treaty, serving as an efficacious vaccine against the landmine scourge, has led to a dramatic decline in mine-related casualties worldwide. Recently, 68 US Democratic, Republican, and Independent Senators sent a letter to you stating their support for the treaty.

Many senior retired US military leaders have also voiced support for the treaty, citing the danger mines pose to our own troops as well as the lack of need for mines on the modern battlefield. As long as our government remains outside the international norm banning antipersonnel landmines, we give political cover to nations that continue to use the weapon.

Given your administration’s current landmine policy review, the US now has the opportunity to lead by example on this issue and cooperate with the community of nations by joining the Mine Ban Treaty. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

*The following health associations:*

*Continued on next page*
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine  
*D. Craig Brater, MD, President*

American Academy of Facial & Plastic Reconstructive Surgery  
*Daniel E. Rousso, MD, President*

American Academy of Ophthalmology  
*Randolph L. Johnston, MD, President*

American Academy of Pediatrics  
*Judith S. Palfrey, MD, FAAP, President*

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
*John J. Callaghan, MD, President*

American Academy of Urgent Care Medicine  
*Franz Ritucci, MD, President*

American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons  
*Ira D. Cheifetz, DMD, President*

American College of Physicians  
*J. Fred Ralston, Jr., MD, FACP, President*

American College of Women's Health Physicians  
*Charlea Massion, MD, President*

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
*Richard N. Waldman, MD, President*

American Medical Association  
*Cecil B. Wilson, MD, President*

American Nurses Association  
*Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR, President*

American Public Health Association  
*Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (Emeritus), Executive Director*

American Medical Student Association  
*John Brockman, President*

Health Volunteers Overseas  
*Julia Plotnick, MPH, RN, FAAN, Chair*

International Council of Ophthalmology  
*Bruce E. Spivey, MD, MS, MEd, President*

*Continued on next page*
International Eye Foundation  
*Victoria M. Sheffield, President & CEO*

International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation  
*John Dark, MB, FRCS, President*

National Physicians Alliance  
*Valerie Arkoosh, MD, MPH, President*