

Landmines - 2000

Teach us to work for the welfare of all, to diminish the evils that beset us, and to enlarge our nation's virtues.
(Gates of Prayer, p. 693)

Among the horrendous remainders of armed conflict are the millions of landmines scattered in the roads and fields of countries throughout the world. These anti-personnel weapons threaten to maim and kill countless human beings and animals and are a particular and ghastly threat to children. A December 1999 study by the Campaign to Ban Landmines reveals an estimated global total of 250 million stockpiled landmines in 105 countries.

In December 1996 the United States sponsored a UN General Assembly resolution calling for a unilateral ban on landmines. It also made permanent a 1992 moratorium on the export of landmines. Nonetheless the United States did not support or sign on to a Canadian initiative, known as the "Ottawa Process," which attracted over 100 nations to participate in negotiating a comprehensive landmine ban treaty banning the use, stockpiling, manufacture, and export of anti-personnel landmines. The Mine Ban Treaty, now in effect, has 137 signatories and has been ratified by 90 countries world wide, only a handful of nations, including the United States, have not signed on.

The United States maintains an Office of Humanitarian Demining Program within the Department of State which provides assistance to countries suffering from the presence of landmines and helps to develop an indigenous demining capability.

Over the years since its first resolution on disarmament in 1921, Women of Reform Judaism has frequently advocated arms control and disarmament. In reaffirming the WRJ stance, the Executive Committee:

- 1) Calls on sisterhoods in the United States to urge the government to support and join the Mine Ban Treaty to prohibit the sale and export of land mines, new production of landmines, and to commence destruction of stockpiles of mines as well as to assist in recording and publicly listing the location of landmines,
- 2) Calls on sisterhoods worldwide to:
 - Urge their governments to fulfill the obligations of the Mine Ban Treaty or if they have not become signatories call on them to support and join the treaty.
 - Participate with coalitions in advocating the destruction and eventual elimination of all landmines.

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home