

AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION ON LANDMINES

The American Baptist Churches USA has long been opposed to the arms race, seeking the goal of disarmament. It has called for curbs on the trade of conventional arms, and opposed the development of new weapons, because of the related costs, dangers and catastrophes that are consequences thereof, and because of the expenditure of human and natural resources.

Between 60 and 70 million anti-personnel landmines are presently scattered around the world, affecting more than 80 countries. A U.S. State Department report calls the spread of landmines "the most toxic and widespread pollution facing mankind."

In today's conflicts landmines are used routinely against civilians and kill and maim more than 40 people every day or 15-20,000 people each year, even after the conflict has ended. Most of the casualties are civilians and most live in countries that are now at peace.

The majority of landmine victims are the rural poor, for whom there is no alternative to survival but to face the risks involved in coexisting with landmines. Children are especially vulnerable to landmines because they often do not grasp the danger landmines pose or because they mistake exposed landmines for toys.

Moreover, the presence of landmines prohibits the safe return of refugees to their homes to begin productive lives. It also hinders war-torn countries in rebuilding after a conflict because much needed resources must be diverted to clearing mines and treating victims.

One of the most heavily mined countries is Cambodia, where one out of every 236 people is estimated to be a landmine victim. Other severely affected countries are Afghanistan, Angola (where there are ten to twenty million landmines), Burundi, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Chechnya, Colombia, Iraq, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Opposition to anti-personnel landmines is growing. The U.S. Congress has enacted an export moratorium on anti-personnel landmines.

In December 1994, The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution, sponsored by the United States, which called for international efforts toward the eventual elimination of anti-personnel landmines.

In 1997 the Land Mines Treaty (Ottawa) was completed.

Therefore, the General Board of the American Baptist Churches:

1. Calls for a complete ban on the use, production, stockpiling, sale, transfer and export of anti-personnel mines.
2. Declares its solidarity with the people in mine-affected countries, who are living with the daily suffering caused by landmines, as well as with our ecumenical and international partners and all others, who seek to promote awareness of the danger of landmines and to urge their governments to work

toward a ban on the production, importation and use of landmines.

3. Supports the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, a global network of more than 350 religious, humanitarian, development, medical, arms control, and environmental organizations which work locally, regionally and internationally to raise public awareness about the landmine crisis and advocate with government for a complete ban on landmines.
4. Affirms the efforts of the U.S. Government in addressing the issue and, with other concerned countries, in taking steps toward resolving the crisis; and
5. Urges the U.S. Government to sign the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and to work to strengthen relevant U.N. mechanisms to make such a ban effective
6. Urges the U.S. Government to respond generously with contributions to the Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, established by the United Nations, which provides for funds for landmine awareness, clearance and eradication programs along with assistance to victims.
7. Calls for American Baptists to pray for victims of landmines and their families, and for the safety of those involved in the dangerous process of de-mining.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - June 1997

135 Yes, 1 No, 0 Abstentions

(General Board Reference - #8206:6/97

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - March 2003

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 2007

American Baptist Policy Statement on Military and Foreign Policy
American Baptist Policy Statement on Peace

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

American Baptist Resolution on Arms Reduction