



For immediate release

New Zealand to support mine clearance in the West Bank

Defence contribution to mine action headquarters in New York is withdrawn

(Wellington: 29 October 2011) The New Zealand Campaign Against Landmines (CALM) welcomes the government's decision to contribute \$2.8 million to mine clearance efforts in the West Bank of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is disappointed that at the same time a long-standing contribution of New Zealand defence personnel to the United Nations mine action headquarters in New York has been terminated.

“We welcome this bold initiative by New Zealand to help remove landmines and unexploded ordnance from the West Bank and return land to productive use,” said Mary Wareham, coordinator of the New Zealand Campaign Against Landmines (CALM). “It comes at a cost, however, as New Zealand has cut its much-respected contribution of defence personnel to coordinate mine action efforts around the world.”

This week, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Murray McCully, confirmed that a total of \$2.8 million will be provided to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to establish a mine action programme in the West Bank. It is anticipated that New Zealand will take on “a leadership role” in the project, which seeks to free up West Bank land for agricultural production.

McCully also confirmed that New Zealand has withdrawn its contribution of New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) military personnel serving with UNMAS in its New York headquarters. Since 1995, a total of eight NZDF personnel have served with UNMAS, the main UN coordination body on mine action, including survey, clearance, risk awareness, stockpile destruction, and advocacy in support of the international treaties banning antipersonnel landmines and cluster bombs.

The Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) are affected by uncleared landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), but the precise extent of contamination is not known. At least 15 minefields have been identified, all in the West Bank on the border with Jordan. According to Landmine Monitor, there has been no recent mine clearance in the West Bank due to lack of funds. Other challenges include a lack of maps or records of minefields, no accurate information on mine and UXO victims, limited mine clearance capacities within the Palestinian Authority, and restrictions placed upon access to Israeli-controlled military areas within the West Bank.

The Mine Ban Treaty comprehensively prohibits antipersonnel mines and provides a framework for mine action and victim assistance. In one month's time, the Treaty's Eleventh Meeting of States Parties meeting will take place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 28 November–2 December 2011. Representatives from at least 100 countries, including New Zealand, are expected to attend. A total of 157 countries have joined the Treaty, most recently Tuvalu on 13 September 2011. The Palestinian National Authority is not able to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty while Israel refuses to join it.

Cambodia is one of the most mine-affected countries in the world and there are approximately 44,000 survivors of landmines and UXO in the country. CALM is undertaking a fundraising initiative ahead of the meeting for to raise funds to construct accessible housing for landmine survivors in Cambodia. A variety of unisex bags hand-made from local materials by women landmine survivors in Kandal Province, Cambodia are being sold to help raise the funds, which will be provided to Jesuit Service Cambodia in November 2011.

The New Zealand Campaign to Ban Landmines is a long-standing member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. CALM is a sister campaign to the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition (ANZCMC). On 25 October, CALM and the ANZCMC wrote to NZDF chief Lt. Gen. Richard Rhys Jones, urging the NZDF and government to reconsider the decision to terminate the NZDF contribution of personnel serving in UNMAS.

CALM and the ANZCMC are governed jointly by a working group comprised of the following groups: Amnesty International Aotearoa NZ, Caritas Aotearoa NZ, Christian World Service, Engineers for Social Responsibility NZ, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War NZ, National Council of Women NZ, National Consultative Committee on Disarmament, Oxfam NZ, Peace Movement Aotearoa, Soroptimist International NZ, United Nations Association NZ, United Nations Youth Association NZ, UNICEF NZ, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Aotearoa.

For more information see the CALM website at www.calm.org.nz or contact Mary Wareham, CALM. Tel. (021) 996-905.

For more information, see:

- McCully announcement (2 Aug. 2011): <http://bit.ly/s78fUg>
- ANZCMC/CALM Letter to NZDF (21 Oct. 2011): <http://bit.ly/uDYOjU>
- Cambodian Bags Fundraiser: <http://bit.ly/pQhoey>
- Monitor profile on Occupied Palestinian Territories: <http://bit.ly/ujX3yn>