

Nazym Ismaylov  
Director of ANAMA  
65, Fizuli Str.  
Baku  
Azerbaijan

24 July 2007

Dear Mr Ismaylov,

I thank you for your letter informing me about the situation of mine clearance in Azerbaijan, as well as providing the latest information about your country's position vis à vis the Mine Ban Treaty. As you know, we, in the ICBL, have been following the developments in Azerbaijan for many years, and have engaged in a continuous relationship with the government. ICBL delegations visited your country in 2002 and 2005 and each time met with the Deputy Minister Azimov to discuss landmine related issues, and particularly Azerbaijan's accession to the Convention.

As you recall in your letter, people from Azerbaijan are still suffering from the consequences of the use of antipersonal landmines and other explosive ordnance during the war with Armenia. Last year, between 59 and 64 new mine/UXO casualties have been registered, a bigger figure than the precedent year. We know that daily activities of communities in affected regions, such as Fizuli and Aghstafa districts to name a few, are impeded by the presence of unexploded ordnance. This is also a concern to us.

We appreciate the positive steps that your country has undertaken to address the landmine problem on its territory, particularly the extent of clearance operations undertaken by ANAMA. We also recognize the positive, though modest, steps, Azerbaijan has made towards the Mine Ban Convention over the years. That is true that your country voted in favour of the UNGA resolution last year, however, we have never seen the voluntary transparency report that Azerbaijan claimed to be willing to do, as a sign of its commitment to the Treaty, and short of acceding to it.

On a more concerning note, it is still difficult to understand how a country which has decided to seriously tackle its mine problem, including dedication of its own budget to clearance, can be considering use of these weapons again in the future. We would also very much like to clarify your own words during a meeting in October 2006, during which you have declared that after an incident in the Aghdam region, authorities of the military base mined the area to prevent the possible entry of Armenians. The issue of potential new use by Azerbaijan, in contradiction with all previous statements, is of great concern.

We believe Azerbaijan should draw lessons from years of involvement in mine action to renounce the use of mines now, and show true leadership by acceding to the Convention and not tying its position to its neighbours'.

In a few weeks, we will again be in Baku, to participate in a regional training on cluster munitions and to meet with government authorities and various agencies in regard to the issue of cluster munitions, as well as the Mine Ban Convention. This meeting is part of the current international process to ban cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.



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The Republic of Azerbaijan has not made a public declaration of its cluster munition stockpiles or policy. It is reported that Azerbaijan inherited cluster munitions from the Soviet Union; Jane's Information Group reports that RBK series cluster bombs are in service with the air force. There is also uncertainty about the extent of the cluster munition problem in Azerbaijan. Submunition contamination has been identified in at least 162 locations in Nargorno-Karabakh and the extent of the problem in other occupied territory is unknown. Cluster munitions are among the abandoned Soviet-era ammunition stockpiles located near the village of Saloglu in the Aghstafa district.

We hope that ANAMA will be able to participate in this event and provide some useful information.

The success so far of the mine ban movement lies in the partnership between civil society and governments, created 10 years ago and sustained up until now. We value this partnership very much, and believe that it is key to ensure the full success of the Mine Ban Treaty, as well as achieving a new treaty on cluster munitions, that will prevent a new landmine-like disaster.

The ICBL strength also comes from the relationship between a small team of staff, that I personally led years ago, and a committed network of NGOs worldwide, all striving to end the suffering of civilian populations caused by landmines, and now cluster munitions, once and for all.

In your country, we have built a long and strong relationship with the Azerbaijan Campaign to Ban Landmines. We believe the Azerbaijan CBL, now a registered organisation, has always promoted faithfully the ICBL objectives and values in Azerbaijan, with the means, support and resources at their disposal, sometimes in difficult conditions. The AzCBL has been key in ensuring the success of our missions and other events in your country, including securing meetings with all stakeholders, local – including ANAMA- and international, as well as organising visits in the regions in coordination with the government.

I understand that you have recently raised the issue of your relationship with the Azerbaijan Campaign with the current ICBL Executive Director, Mrs Sylvie Brigot, and that she reiterated the willingness of the Campaign to work with you. In the light of the issues mentioned above, the ICBL delegation coming to Baku from 21 to 30 August, will be getting back to you shortly to ask for a meeting.

I thank you again for your letter and very much hope that our common efforts will lead Azerbaijan to accede to the Convention and join the new process on cluster munitions very soon, thereby showing true leadership in the region on these important humanitarian issues.

Jody Williams  
Nobel Peace Laureate

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jody Williams', with a stylized, cursive script.