

Statement on the Landmine Ban  
by former Commander-in-Chief of the Tat Ma Daw (Burma  
Army) General Thura Tin Oo,  
given to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines,  
Rangoon,  
27 February 2011



*“During my time as Defense Chief of Staff and former Chief of Staff of all armed forces under Ne Win I was confronted not only with his desire for landmines, but also for chemical weapons. Ne Win used to tell me of these things even though they were secretive items delegated to others to whom he had given his orders to be carried out.*

*In the case of chemical weapons, we in the general staff disapproved of their development. We disapproved because these were weapons which should not be further developed. They were a type of warfare used in WWI. None the less, Ne Win advanced his aims to develop the weapon. However, we did not oppose landmines since our enemies had been using mines in the operations fronts of the northeast of Lashio area and in the southeast region of the country. I had also been in Kayah State in my service term.*

*Since mines could not be systematically controlled, all parties became involved in using mines in armed conflict, but this became a problem for the local villagers and communities in the conflict areas and for their livestock.*

*Mine use had not been rampant in the northeast areas of the country, where ceasefire groups have been in existence. However, during the present time it has become a problem in the southeastern areas where both KNU and DKBA are operating. A day or two ago there was again news of civilians of the area becoming victims of mines, and for calls of stopping the use, production and destroying the mines of the Tat Ma Daw. Likewise those waging war from the other side should not produce, buy or use mines at any rate. From both ends I see this as an issue to be followed up by each party involved in mine use. The military should ban use of mines. I give my opinion on the part of civilians.*

*The general public has been suffering from the dangers of mines. Minefields should be systematically mapped for retrieval after use. But civilians and communities in the area have been suffering due to limits placed on them and their daily survival or finding food [due to the presence of unmarked and unclaimed mines].*

*In 1996 if we could have done it, there should have been a landmine ban for the entire country from the CRPP representing the peoples parliament.*

*The Tat Ma Daw, with the responsibility of protecting the life and property of the people of the country should agree with this objective. During my assignment, the motto of the Tat Ma Daw was that ‘the citizens are the mother and father of the Tat Ma Daw’. Unfortunately nowadays the ‘Tat Ma Daw is the mother, as well as the father’ in slogan and trend. Concern for the populace is not felt nowadays, and practice is not in line with*

*Tat Ma Daw policy. Porters are put in the forefront to detonate mine on purpose. Use of porters and forced labor is not in line with the policies of the Tat Ma Daw. This is the time these practices should be stopped. Modern technology has influenced the Tat Ma Daw and it is no longer safe guarding the populace, their homes or their properties, but is instead destroying the people's productive means, including draft animals and the like in mined areas.*

*I strongly recommend that landmines must be banned by the Tat Ma Daw, as well as those fighting against them. The good example to be followed is that of our neighboring countries, Thailand and Bangladesh who respect humanitarianism, humanity is given great love and respect and they treasure human beings. We have heard that those two countries have banned landmines in their territories. Therefore governments should halt the use of landmines. Looking on Thailand, a Buddhist country like our own, and Bangladesh, an Islamic country with a humanitarian mind, we a Buddhist majority country should stop mines from being used. Mines must be banned according to both humanitarianism and religion in a civilized world.*

*Modern warfare has advanced and changed and it is not suitable to be using outdated methods such as planting mines. But waging war is not productive when disagreements should be discussed, negotiated and agreed upon to obtain our goals. This is the way to look for answers and solutions. Fighting this war has been destructive for all sides and has not provided a productive outcome for the citizens or their daily livelihoods.*

*On my own, as vice-chairman of the NLD, I support the ban on landmines. In 1996, after Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's first release, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) came to the NLD and asked for our policy. Our Executive Committee decided to support a complete ban on landmines. We have since produced statements detailing our official stand and have delivered them to the ICBL. I hereby reaffirm our aim to wipe out landmines from Myanmar.*

*When we (NLD) have the opportunity to contribute to the country's future we will ban landmine use by both the Tat Ma Daw and any other entity in the country. This is our plan and this is what we strongly urge now.*

*Waging war is not a good thing. Finding a solution and mutually sorting out the answers to problems big or small can clear the way together.*

[This is an unofficial translation by the ICBL and we take all responsibility for any errors contained within. Please refer to U Tin Oo's video speech for quotation, which can be found [HERE](#)]