

Peace Activist and a Driving Force in the Campaign against to Ban Landmines --- Jody Williams

Facts about Williams:

- ❖ ¹When Jody Williams was studying international politics in the 1980s
- ❖ She became involved in aid work in war-torn El Salvador.
- ❖ Landmines were a constant threat to the civilian population.
- ❖ She was given responsibility for providing artificial limbs for children who had lost arms and legs.
- ❖ From 1991 on, Jody Williams was a driving force in the launching of an international campaign against landmines.
- ❖ By 1997, thanks to her strength and organizational talent, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) had 1,000 organizations from 60 countries on its list of members.
- ❖ The Ottawa Convention, which was signed by 120 states and entered into force in 1999, will always be associated with the names of Jody Williams and the ICBL.
- ❖ It banned the use, production, sale and stock-piling of anti-personnel mines.
- ❖ In addition it contained provisions concerning mine clearance and the obligation to provide humanitarian assistance.

Background study about the strategy taken to ban the landmines:

- ❖ ²American Political activist Jody Williams recognized by her efforts to eradicate antipersonnel landmines and **she received Nobel Prize in 1997**.
- ❖ Her hard work was further rewarded when over 100 countries signed a ground-breaking treaty to ban landmines in December of 1997.
- ❖ In the year 1991, Williams was approached by representatives of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and Medico International (a German humanitarian organization) who wanted her to coordinate an international campaign against antipersonnel landmines.
- ❖ ³The Landmines are different from other conventional weapons.
- ❖ ⁴At the time, there were estimated to be over 100 million such weapons scattered across 80 countries. They were killing or wounding approximately 70 people (mainly civilians, many children) per day, or 26,000 a year.
- ❖ Years after the conflicts that used them were over, the devices remained active.
- ❖ The problem with land mines is that wars end, peace treaties are signed, armies march away, the guns grow silent—but the land mines stay.
- ❖ She became the **founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)**, which was formally launched in October of 1992.
- ❖ The Primary Goal of the organization was **to get an international treaty signed that would stop the production, sales and stockpiling of the weapons**, along with that getting rid of the existing one.

¹ <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1997/williams/facts/>

² <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/social-sciences-and-law/social-reformers/jody-williams>

³ <https://www.pressenza.com/2009/09/jody-williams-x-landmines-are-killing-after-warxx/>

⁴ <https://humanrights.ca/story/jody-williams-and-the-campaign-to-ban-landmines>

- ❖ ⁵The work of ICBL includes,
 - a) educating the public about the impacts of anti-personnel landmines and mobilizing citizens to take action
 - b) building a coalition of support among hundreds of NGOs around the world
 - c) Pressuring governments to end their role in the use and production of landmines and to support a complete ban of the weapon.
- ❖ ⁶Williams' colleagues predicted that it would take at least 30 years to accomplish that aim, but Williams was still willing to try.
- ❖ Based out of her homes in Putney, Vermont and Washington, D.C., with no staff, Williams fell to work with a fierce determination.
- ❖ Rising before dawn each day, she first relied primarily on facsimile machines, and later e-mail, to get the word out.
- ❖ Contacting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with human rights, disarmament, and Third World development, she sought their unified support on the land mine issue.
- ❖ Further, she met with government and NGO leaders around the world, and spoke about the problem at such venues as the European Parliament and the Organization for African Unity.
- ❖ Her efforts began to snowball as converted NGOs began to convince their governments to take action and the numbers of the convinced continued to grow.
- ❖ Williams stepped down from her role as coordinator of the ICBL and became a campaign ambassador for the organization.
- ❖ She also joined the ICBL's coordination committee and began a post as senior editor of the group's *Landmine Monitor Report*.
- ❖ This Report watches over the implementation and compliance of the Mine Ban Treaty that she spearheaded.
- ❖ Indeed, under Williams' watch, the ICBL grew to include more than 1,300 NGOs in 85 countries.
- ❖ ⁷As awareness grew, citizens petitioned their own governments to cease using, producing and exporting the weapon.
- ❖ As a unique campaign that brought together people and organizations from around the world to push for change.
- ❖ The ICBL provided a new model for ways in which ordinary citizens can be active and effective for a cause, even impacting international law.
- ❖ As support increased among individuals, NGOs and governments around the world, the Canadian Government took a lead role in ensuring these efforts resulted in a formal treaty.
- ❖ The Canadian Government first hosted a conference in Ottawa in 1996 and named as Ottawa Process.
- ❖ They bringing countries together to discuss a pro-ban strategy.
- ❖ At the end of the conference, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy issued a challenge to those in attendance to negotiate a treaty within one year to completely ban landmines and to then return to Ottawa to sign it.
- ❖ On December 3 and 4, 1997, the Mine Ban Treaty² was signed in Ottawa by 122 nations.

⁵ <https://humanrights.ca/story/jody-williams-and-the-campaign-to-ban-landmines>

⁶ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/social-sciences-and-law/social-reformers/jody-williams>

⁷ <https://humanrights.ca/story/jody-williams-and-the-campaign-to-ban-landmines>

- ❖ The international agreement prohibits the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, while additionally outlining mine removal efforts and calling for assistance to victims of landmines.
- ❖ The Treaty has been very effective, with widespread implementation and compliance from nations around the world.
- ❖ As a result, millions of landmines have been removed and destroyed, new landmines are now rarely produced and there are fewer victims of explosions every year.
- ❖ Williams attributed much of her success to cooperation and hard work.