


 IRAN

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Iran should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Iran should seek international assistance to develop a functioning civilian mine action programme.

CONTAMINATION

Iran is contaminated by anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, mainly as a result of the 1980–88 war with Iraq. Mine contamination is concentrated in five western provinces bordering Iraq, although the true extent of remaining hazards is unknown.

Minister of Defence Hossein Dehghan said in 2014 that the 4,500km² of mine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination left by the Iran-Iraq war in the five western provinces had been reduced to 280km².¹ In contrast, Iran's mine action authorities have consistently reported that the war left 4,200km² of contamination. In February 2014, the Iran Mine Action Center (IRMAC) reported the five Western provinces had remaining contamination that totalled 250km². However, two anti-vehicle mine incidents in early 2014 confirmed reports of contamination in the Lut desert spanning central and eastern Iran where police reportedly placed mines as a measure against drug traffickers.²

¹ Ministry of Defence, "Commander Dehghan in the ceremony of World Mine Awareness Day: In Iran 28,000 hectares of land are landmine-contaminated", 8 April 2014.

² "Mine Explosion Killed a Desert Explorer in Birjand", *Islamic Republic News Agency*, 4 January 2014; and "Four tourists hit a landmine in Lut: one was killed", *Iranian Students' News Agency*, 25 March 2014.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In 2015, the mine action programme in Iran was not functioning effectively.

IRMAC was established in 2005, taking the place of a Mine Action Committee in the Ministry of Defence, and serves as the national mine action centre, responsible for planning, data, managing survey, and procurement. It coordinates mine action with the General Staff of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Interior, the Management and Planning Organisation of Iran, and other relevant ministries and organisations, and handles international relations.

IRMAC's future appeared uncertain in 2014 amid debate on institutional reforms. IRMAC's statement that 99% of contaminated land had been cleared led to proposals to transfer the mandate for the remaining work to the Ministry of Interior. As of April 2016, it was not clear if, to what extent, and when, these changes would materialise and IRMAC's website was no longer functioning. According to a mine action source, clearance operations were slowing in 2015 due to these uncertainties.³

Operators

Mine clearance in Iran is conducted by the Iranian Army.

LAND RELEASE

Iran has not reported publicly on its release of mined areas in 2015 or on demining in the two previous years. The hope has been expressed that, with the removal of international sanctions, Iran will have more access to demining assets and materials.⁴

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Iran is not a state party or signatory to the APMBC but nonetheless has obligations under international human rights law to protect life, which requires clearance of mines as soon as possible.⁵

3 Telephone interview with mine action sector operator, provided on condition of anonymity, 5 April 2015.

4 M. Samimi, "Iran's Landmines: A Never-Ending Nightmare", *LoBeLog*, 5 February 2016, at: <https://lobelog.com/irans-landmines-a-never-ending-nightmare/>.

5 Iran is a state party to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 6(1) of which stipulates that: "Every human being has the inherent right to life".