

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Iran should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Iran should clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.
- Iran should report publicly on the extent and location of mined areas and prepare a plan for their clearance and destruction.
- Iran should ensure that clearance operations meet international mine action standards (IMAS), to ensure the safety of its deminers.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Iran is contaminated by anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, mainly as a result of the 1980–88 war with Iraq. The extent of the remaining mined areas is unknown, but mine contamination is concentrated in five western provinces bordering Iraq.

According to the Iran Mine Action Center (IRMAC), the initial estimation of "contamination" in Iran was 42,000km² (Ilam Province, 17,000km²; Kermanshah Province, 7,000km²; Khuzestan Province, 15,000km²; Kurdistan Province, 1,500km²; and West Azerbaijan, 1,500km²); which by February 2020 had reportedly been reduced by "90%".¹ For example, the Minister of Defence Hossein Dehghan said in 2014 that the 4,500km² of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) left by the Iran-Iraq war in the five western provinces had been reduced to 280km².² In February 2014, IRMAC reported that the five Western provinces had remaining contamination totalling 250km².³

According to online media sources, flooding that hit large parts of Iran in March and April 2019 exposed mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) remaining in western provinces of Iran.⁴ Sources report that security forces continue to

replace mines in areas close to Iran's borders in order to deter cross-border smugglers and infiltration by anti-regime groups. There are also said to be mined areas around military bases.⁵

A further complication for contamination estimates pertains to reports of continuing casualties in areas that were supposed to have been cleared, calling into question whether mine clearance has been conducted to international standards.

After the Iran-Iraq war ended, a major operation was initiated to clean up the mines. In 2012, Kermanshah Province was declared "free from landmines" and the ministries of defence and interior celebrated the occasion. However, several people were killed and injured by landmines only a few days after the announcement, which led the government to consider reclearing of the area.⁶

Iran is also believed to have cluster munition remnant contamination (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Iran for further information).

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

IRMAC was established as the national mine action centre in 2005, taking the place of a Mine Action Committee within the Ministry of Defence. IRMAC is responsible for planning, data, managing survey, procurement, and the accreditation of demining operators. It also sets standards, provides training for clearance operators, concludes contracts with demining operators, and ensures quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) of their operations. 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.⁷ Several IRMAC staff are believed to be serving or former military personnel, including its Director, while others are civilians employed by the Ministry of Defence.

IRMAC is said to have a branch in every affected province. Available demining assets, such as mechanical assets, vary from province to province.

In March 2019, Iran hosted a three-day international roundtable on "humanitarian mine action: challenges and best practices", attended by representatives from other states, national and international demining organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). The aim of the roundtable was to share knowledge and experience on mine action, challenges, and best practices.⁸

In November 2019, Iran opened its first international humanitarian demining training centre in Tehran, with the aim of offering training courses on demining to other countries in the region struggling with landmine contamination.⁹

Iran is believed to have dedicated significant resources and effort to clearing areas on its territory contaminated by mines, CMR and other ERW, but the results of survey and clearance have not been made publicly available.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

IRMAC actively maintains a national mine action database but it is not known to what extent it is comprehensive, up-to-date, and able to disaggregate anti-personnel mine contamination and clearance output from that of other explosive ordnance.

IRMAC reported that it has a Geographic Information System (GIS) web-based, information management system, which integrates information on quality, safety, and the environment.¹⁰

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

IRMAC undertakes two main types of clearance activity: shallow clearance and deep clearance.¹¹ There is no available information on quality management procedures. In the past, very high levels of casualties were recorded during demining in Iran. IRMAC reported that since its establishment, in 2005, 200 deminers have been killed or injured during clearance of mines and ERW, which equated at the time to one accident for every 15,000 mines or ERW detected.¹² A study conducted in 2007 revealed that since the end of the Iraq-Iran war in 1988, 400 deminers were killed or injured in demining accidents.¹³

After Kermanshah province was declared “free from landmines” in 2012 but several people were killed and injured by landmines only a few days after the announcement, the government considered reclearing the area. An Iranian parliamentarian commented that the clearance had not respected the minimum depth set in national standards.¹⁴

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

IRMAC combines the roles of regulator and operator, with demining teams and support staff deployed in five affected provinces. In Kurdistan province, IRMAC is conducting verification, mainly through mechanical clearance. IRMAC also responds to calls from the local community reporting landmines or items of UXO. Demining capacity in Kurdistan province is believed to stand at only around 12 personnel, a reduction on earlier capacity.¹⁵

The Iranian Army and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps assisted demining efforts to support the response to the flash flooding which affected Iran in March and April 2019.¹⁶

Commercial operators include AOM, Immen Sazan Omran Pars International, Immen Zamin Espadana, and Solh Afarinan-e Bedoun-e Marz (SABM). Three other companies, Imen Gostaran Mohit (IGM), Moshaver Omran Iran, and ZPP International, undertake quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC).¹⁷

Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), the development arm of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), contracts and monitors commercial operators conducting clearance of Iran's oil and gas producing areas which are concentrated in mine-affected areas of western and south-western Iran bordering Iraq.¹⁸

Commercial mine and ERW clearance in Iran is conducted to ensure that land is free from explosive ordnance before it is used for economic purposes or developed. It is separate to humanitarian demining of areas known or suspected to contain explosive ordnance in order to make the land safe for civilian use, which comes under the remit of IRMAC.

International operators are not believed to have been active in Iran since 2008.

According to IRMAC in 2020, more than 2 million mines and over 1 million items of ERW had been destroyed since the start of its programme 15 years earlier.¹⁹

LAND RELEASE

No data were available from IRMAC on any mine survey or clearance in 2020, as was the case in previous years. Iran is believed to have dedicated significant resources and effort to clearing mined areas on its territory, but the results of survey and clearance, and the standards to which clearance has been conducted, have not made publicly available.

IRMAC lists the challenges it faces in humanitarian clearance in Iran as: high density of contamination; minefield barriers in place; flooding in contaminated areas, which hinders access; mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) displaced by flooding; displacement of mines to bottom layers of soil (up to 6 metres); the transformation [degradation] of mines, and vegetation.²⁰

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- 1 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, available at: <http://bit.ly/38ALojt>; and presentation by Mr. Pourbagher, Deputy Director of IRMAC, National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.
 - 2 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.
 - 3 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation at IRMAC headquarters, Tehran, 9 February 2014.
 - 4 "Unexploded Ordnance Threatening Iranian Lives in Flood-Hit Areas", *IFP News*, 5 April 2019, at: <http://bit.ly/33Tsp0K>; and "Nationwide Flood Alert In Iran As Emergency Declared In Oil-Producing Province", *Radio Farda*, 31 March 2019, at: <http://bit.ly/2zjb3MJ>.
 - 5 "Landmines Still a Major Menace in Iran", *Atlantic Council*, 25 August 2016, at: <https://bit.ly/3dVTKp2>.
 - 6 Ibid.
 - 7 IRMAC PowerPoint Presentation, Tehran, 9 February 2014; and IRMAC, "Presentation of IRMAC".
 - 8 "Tehran hosts international roundtable on humanitarian mine action", *Mehr news agency*, 12 March 2019, at: <http://bit.ly/2Z4LstE>; and ICRC, "International roundtable on "humanitarian mine action: challenges and best practices", 15 March 2019, at: <http://bit.ly/2QH3cR6>.
 - 9 "1st International Humanitarian Demining Training Center opens in Tehran", *Mehr News Agency*, 12 November 2019, available at: <http://bit.ly/2C7wRzG>.
 - 10 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, Deputy Director of IRMAC, National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.
 - 11 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, 2020, p. 5.
 - 12 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, 2020; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, Deputy Director of IRMAC, National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.
 - 13 "Horrible Facts About Landmines", *ISNA news*, at: <http://bit.ly/3a7i0Uc>.
 - 14 "Landmines Still a Major Menace in Iran", *Atlantic Council*, 25 August 2016.
 - 15 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Director, Ambassadors for development without borders, September 2019.
 - 16 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for development without borders, September 2019.
 - 17 Ibid.
 - 18 Information provided by mine action expert on condition of anonymity.
 - 19 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, 2020; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, Deputy Director of IRMAC, National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.
 - 20 Ibid.