

## KEY DATA

### ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: UNKNOWN

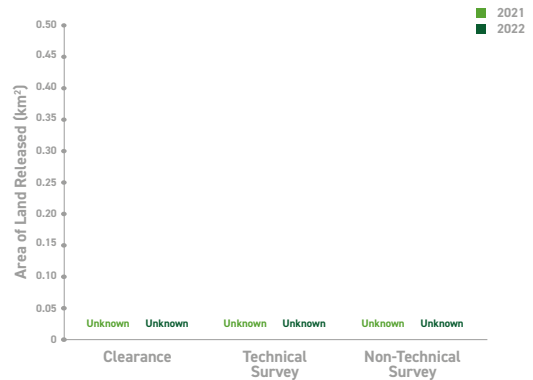
AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2022

**UNKNOWN**

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2022

**UNKNOWN**

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Available data on contamination and land release of anti-personnel (AP) mined areas in Iran continue to be extremely limited. It has been informally reported that 188 AP and anti-vehicle (AV) mines were destroyed during commercial clearance operations in 2022.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Iran should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Iran should clear AP 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.

## DEMINING CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Iran Mine Action Center (IRMAC)

### NATIONAL OPERATORS

- IRMAC
- Iranian Army
- Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
- Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC)
- Commercial operators

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

### OTHER ACTORS

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

## UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Iran is contaminated by AP and AV 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 undefined “contamination” in Iran was 42,000km<sup>2</sup> (Ilam province, 17,000km<sup>2</sup>; Kermanshah province, 7,000km<sup>2</sup>; Khuzestan province, 15,000km<sup>2</sup>; Kurdistan province, 1,500km<sup>2</sup>; and West Azerbaijan, 1,500km<sup>2</sup>); which by February 2020 had reportedly been reduced by “90%”.<sup>1</sup> There are also said to be mined areas around military bases.<sup>2</sup> One online report describes remaining contamination as being in hard-to-reach areas, stating that “one per cent of the remaining lands with war mines include impassable mountainous areas”, with some mined areas situated on slopes, in marshes, or as deep as three metres below the surface, making detection very challenging.<sup>3</sup>

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. For example, in 2012, Kermanshah province was declared “free from landmines” but several people were killed or injured by landmines only a few days after the announcement, which led the government to consider re-clearing the area.<sup>4</sup>

### OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

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Iran is also believed to have cluster munition remnants (CMR) contamination remaining on its territory (see Mine Action Review’s *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023* report on Iran for further information).

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## NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND 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 (MoD). In 2014, IRMAC reported that it was responsible for planning, data, managing survey, procurement, and the accreditation of demining operators. It was also tasked with setting standards, providing training for clearance operators, concluding contracts with demining operators, and ensuring quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) of their operations. IRMAC also coordinated 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 handled international relations.<sup>5</sup> Several IRMAC staff are believed to be serving or former military personnel, including its Director, while others are civilians employed by the MoD. It is not known if this description of IRMAC’s role and responsibilities remains accurate.

The amount of national resources Iran contributes to support the cost of IRMAC or the survey and clearance of AP mined areas is not known. Iran is believed to have dedicated significant resources and effort to clearing areas on its territory contaminated by mines, CMR and other explosive remnants of war (ERW),<sup>6</sup> but results of survey and clearance and the standards to which clearance has been conducted have not been made publicly available.

As part of an ongoing mine action programme in Iran, which also includes victim assistance and mine risk education, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports that it has undertaken technical training of mine action actors in co-operation with IRMAC, though no dates for this are given.<sup>7</sup> In 2020, the ICRC reported that it had signed a mine action partnership memorandum of understanding (MoU), with IRMAC, which included support to Iran for safe humanitarian demining.<sup>8</sup>

Iran has engaged in numerous activities to promote regional and international co-operation for mine action in recent years. 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.<sup>9</sup> In late 2022, an MoU for the development of mutual co-operation in mine action was signed between the national mine action centres of Iran and Armenia, following a visit to IRMAC from the Director of the Armenian Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE).<sup>10</sup> It was reported in June 2023 that demining would begin in the near future at the Armenia-Iran border, on the Armenian side.<sup>11</sup>

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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 “Landmines Still a Major Menace in Iran”, *Atlantic Council*, 25 August 2016, at: <https://bit.ly/3dVTKp2>.

3 “The ominous legacy of war still takes victims”, *Iranian Labour News Authority*, 22 May 2020, at: <https://bit.ly/3S1UfBk>.

4 “Landmines Still a Major Menace in Iran”, *Atlantic Council*, 25 August 2016.

5 IRMAC PowerPoint Presentation, Tehran, 9 February 2014; and IRMAC, “Presentation of IRMAC”.

6 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), “Experts from over 15 nations attend round-table on humanitarian mine action”, Press release, 15 March 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3N7Ca4e>; and ICRC, “Weapon Contamination” accessed 9 February 2023 at: <https://bit.ly/30TC55t>.

7 ICRC, “Weapon Contamination”.

8 F. Arabpour (Weapon Contamination Coordinator, ICRC delegation in Tehran), “ICRC Mine Action activities in the I.R. of Iran”, Presentation to the 23rd International Meeting of National Mine Action Program Directors and United Nations (UN) Advisors, Geneva, 11–14 February 2020, at: <https://bit.ly/43EjVZD>.

9 “1st International Humanitarian Demining Training Center opens in Tehran”, *Mehr News Agency*, 12 November 2019, available at: <http://bit.ly/2C7wRzG>.

10 “Iran, Armenia ink MoU on humanitarian demining cooperation”, *Iran Press News Agency*, 19 September 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3WyeHJj>.

11 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 6 June 2023.

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

It is not known whether Iran has a national mine action standard (NMAS) on environmental management and/or a policy on environmental management. It is also not known how, if at all, the environment is taken into consideration during planning and tasking of survey and clearance of mines in order to minimise potential harm from clearance. It has been reported, however, that Iran's Ministry for the Environment does impose some relevant regulations around environmental practices in mine action.<sup>12</sup>

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The extent to which gender and diversity are mainstreamed into mine action in Iran is not known.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

It is not known to what extent IRMAC is able to disaggregate AP mine contamination and clearance output from that of other explosive ordnance. It has been reported that IRMAC's database is comprehensive and accurate and that operators provide regular activity reports to IRMAC on both humanitarian and commercial mine action projects.<sup>13</sup> However, Mine Action Review has not been able to obtain further information on this from IRMAC.

In 2020, IRMAC reported that it has a geographic information system (GIS), web-based, integrated information management system, which integrates information on quality, safety, and the environment.<sup>14</sup> In 2022, IRMAC launched an application for smartphones, which is reported to contain all data from historical and current clearance operations and intended to provide mine action organisations with a comprehensive view of contaminated and cleared areas identified by IRMAC. The application is also said to contain information about explosive accidents and is updated on a regular, even daily, basis. The application is available to operators and interested parties upon request.<sup>15</sup>

## PLANNING AND TASKING

It is not known whether Iran has a national mine action strategy or an annual work plan for the survey and clearance of AP mines or agreed and specified criteria for the prioritisation of tasks.

## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Iran reportedly has NMAS in place.<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing no information was available on quality management (QM) procedures for humanitarian demining in Iran, although it was reported in 2023 that a subsidiary of IRMAC performs QA and QC of commercial demining.<sup>17</sup>

IRMAC undertakes two main types of clearance activity: shallow clearance and deep clearance.<sup>18</sup> After Kermanshah province was declared "free from landmines" in 2012 but several people were killed and injured by landmines only a few days later, an Iranian member of parliament commented that the clearance had not respected the minimum depth set in national standards.<sup>19</sup>

12 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April 2023.

13 Email from Reza Amaninasab, Director, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 23 March 2023.

14 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, available at: <http://bit.ly/38ALoJt>; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, IRMAC, 23rd International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and UN Advisers, Geneva, 11–14 February 2020.

15 Emails from Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 23 March 2023; and Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April and 6 May 2023.

16 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 6 June 2023.

17 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April 2023.

18 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, 2020, p. 5.

19 "Landmines Still a Major Menace in Iran", *Atlantic Council*, 25 August 2016.

## OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

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In 2023, it was reported that IRMAC continued to undertake humanitarian demining.<sup>20</sup> However, as of writing, no up-to-date information was available on Iran's current survey and clearance capacity.

IRMAC combines the roles of regulator and operator and, in 2019, was reported to have demining teams and support staff deployed in five affected provinces. In Kurdistan province, IRMAC was conducting verification, mainly through mechanical clearance. IRMAC also responds to calls from the local community reporting landmines or items of unexploded ordnance (UXO). In 2019, demining capacity in Kurdistan province was believed to stand at only around 12 personnel, a reduction on earlier capacity. Available demining assets, such as mechanical assets, vary from province to province.<sup>21</sup>

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.<sup>22</sup> At the time of writing no information was available as to whether the Army or Revolutionary Guard Corps currently conduct clearance activities.

In 2022, commercial operators included Immen Zamin Spadana, Immen Gostaran Mohit (reportedly working in western and south-west Iran), and Zamin Pak Persia (reportedly working in western Iran).<sup>23</sup> Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), the development arm of the National Iranian Oil Company, 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.<sup>24</sup>

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. In a number of countries, commercial demining is applied to areas whether or not there is firm evidence of a threat from explosive ordnance.

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

## DEMINER SAFETY

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There were no accidents as a result of AP mine survey or clearance activities in Iran in 2022 according to one source.<sup>25</sup> In the past, exceedingly high levels of demining accidents have been reported. In 2020, IRMAC stated that since its establishment in 2005, 200 deminers had been killed or injured during clearance of mines and ERW, equating to one accident for every 15,000 mines or ERW detected.<sup>26</sup>

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Only limited information is available on land release activities in Iran in 2022 and it is not known if any AP mined areas were released through survey or clearance. Reports suggest that some survey and clearance took place, with 188 landmines destroyed during commercial clearance activity. At the time of writing it had not been possible to verify this information with IRMAC or to confirm whether this was both AV and AP mines.

It is not known if any AP mined areas were added to the national database in 2022. Nor is the extent to which nationally coordinated AP mine survey and clearance have taken place in Iran since Mine Action Review initially reported on the issue in 2016.

## SURVEY IN 2022

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It has been reported that both non-technical and technical survey took place in the provinces of Khuzestan and Ilam in the south-west of Iran 2022.<sup>27</sup>

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20 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April 2023.

21 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for Development without Borders, September 2019.

22 Ibid.

23 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 6 May 2023.

24 Information provided by mine action expert on condition of anonymity.

25 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 21 August 2023.

26 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, 2020; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, IRMAC, National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.

27 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 6 May 2023.

## CLEARANCE IN 2022

It has been reported that two mine action projects of approximately 32km<sup>2</sup> were underway in western Iran in 2022, of which more than half had been cleared. No data were available regarding humanitarian clearance of this area. However, it was reported that commercial clearance activity had resulted in the destruction of 188 landmines as well as 13 submunitions and 1,690 items of UXO, with the majority of these items found in 2022.<sup>28</sup>

## PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Iran is believed to have dedicated significant resources and effort to clearing areas on its territory contaminated by mines, CMR and other ERW,<sup>29</sup> but results of survey and clearance have not been made publicly available. 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.<sup>30</sup>

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 UXO displaced by flooding; displacement of mines to bottom layers of soil (up to 6 metres); the transformation [degradation] of mines, and vegetation.<sup>31</sup>

It has been reported that a new, major commercial project for release of land containing AP mines was due to commence in June 2023 in the Sohrab oil field development in the south-west of Iran.<sup>32</sup>

## PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

It is not known to what extent Iran is making provision for a sustainable capacity to address previously unknown AP mine contamination following completion (i.e. residual contamination).

28 Emails from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April, 6 May, and 6 June 2023.

29 ICRC, "Experts from over 15 nations attend round-table on humanitarian mine action", Press release, 15 March 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3N7Ca4e>; and ICRC, "Weapon Contamination", accessed 9 February 2023.

30 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, 2020; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, IRMAC, National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.

31 Ibid.

32 Emails from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April, 6 May, and 6 June 2023.