

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Libya should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Libya 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.
- All parties to the conflict in Libya should ensure that forces loyal to them do not use anti-personnel mines.
- As soon as political conditions permit, Libya should enact mine action legislation, establish an interministerial national mine action authority, and adopt a national mine action strategy.
- Libya should expedite the capacity building and accreditation of mine clearance operators.
- Libya should, at the earliest opportunity possible and as soon the security situation permits, conduct a baseline survey to identify the extent of contamination from anti-personnel mines and begin systematic clearance.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Mine contamination in Libya is a legacy of the Second World War (mainly in the east and mostly anti-vehicle mine contamination), as well as subsequent armed conflict with Egypt in 1977 (pattern minefields mapped, fenced and marked), with Chad in 1978–87, which resulted in mines being laid on Libya's borders with these two neighbours, and the Libya uprising of 2011 and subsequent armed conflicts.¹ The border with Tunisia is also believed to be affected. During Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's four decades in power, mines were emplaced around a number of locations, including military facilities and key infrastructure.

Mines were used by both the government and the opposition forces during the 2011 conflict leading to Colonel Qaddafi's overthrow. According to the Libyan Mine Action Centre (LibMAC), around 30,000–35,000 mines were laid in five regions and cities, including Misrata, but were "largely cleared" after the downfall of the Qaddafi regime by volunteers with previous military experience.²

In the course of the Libyan conflict, the Qaddafi regime lost control over large parts of its conventional weapons arsenal. Weapons storage sites were accessible to opposition fighters, civilians, and soldiers alike. Since the end of the fighting, central control over the weapons arsenal has not been re-established and has led to widespread use and trafficking of arms.³ Since the overthrow of Qaddafi in 2011, Libya has remained mired in conflict as tribal and armed groups struggle for power.

Since February 2014, Libya's governance has been divided between the two entities engaged in an armed conflict, the United Nations (UN)-recognised Government of National Accord (or GNA) and the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA), led by commander Khalifa Haftar. After a long negotiation process in 2015, a political agreement was signed in December 2015 under UN supervision. Clashes in Tripoli between rival militias escalated again in 2019, and the LNA surrounded Tripoli in January 2020 launching constant artillery and rocket attacks. In June 2020, LNA

forces withdrew 600km east of Tripoli leaving behind an unknown number of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).⁴ Many of these fall within the scope of the APMBC. According to reports by Human Rights Watch, fighters aligned to Khalifa Haftar, including foreign forces, appear also to have laid mines as they withdrew from southern districts of Tripoli in May 2020.⁵

Confirmed instance of landmine use by rebels occurred in Ajdabiya; other locations where pro-government elements laid mines included Brega, Khusha, Misrata, and the Nafusa mountains.⁶ The escalation of conflict in Libya in 2014 brought new reports of mine use by armed groups fighting around Tripoli airport.⁷ There were also allegations of landmine use by non-state armed groups between 2016 and 2018,⁸ with contamination believed to be mainly in Benghazi, Derna (in the east of Libya), and Sirte.⁹

Mines of an improvised nature are suspected to have been laid during 2016 by Islamic State in areas that they controlled, such as in Sirte.¹⁰ In July 2017, the engineering divisions of Operation Dignity¹¹ continued to clear mines and booby-traps left by Islamic State fighters from Benghazi, but also warned civilians from attempting to return to their homes before clearance work was finished.¹²

According to UNMAS, after the withdrawal of LNA forces in May 2020, explosive ordnance (booby-traps, landmines, and IEDs) was scattered across southern Tripoli. UNMAS reported that sophisticated tactics were deployed to hinder demining efforts and target deminers, including placement of low-metal-content anti-personnel mines next to anti-vehicle mines and the use of anti-lift devices. In addition, UNMAS reported extensive use of booby-traps and victim-activated IEDs in civilian houses that served no military purpose but rather inflicted high civilian casualties.¹³

In June 2020, the President of the APMBC Meeting of States Parties issued a press release expressing concern at reports of the use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature

in and around Tripoli. The press release followed reports, including by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature being discovered in the Ain Zara and Salahuddin areas of Tripoli, which have maimed or killed civilians returning home for the Eid holiday.¹⁴ Other reports include evidence that LNA-affiliated forces have laid extensive tripwire-activated anti-personnel mines and booby-traps in homes and other civilian objects, and photos and videos verified by Amnesty International show Russian and Soviet-era anti-personnel landmines, including MON-50s, MON-90s, OZM-72s, and MS3s.¹⁵ HALO Trust reported that it had found ML-7/8 anti-lift devices being laid underneath OZM-72 anti-personnel bounding fragmentation mines.¹⁶

Between late May and early July 2020, UNSMIL reported 138 casualties, including two clearance personnel, due to the newly laid mines and other explosive devices.¹⁷ According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), most people at risk from explosive hazards and in need of assistance are in Tripoli, representing 39% of all those in need. Those with the most severe needs are in Benghazi, Derna, Misrata, and Sirte.¹⁸

As an observer to the Eighteenth Meeting of States Parties (18MSP) to the APMBC in November 2020, Libya expressed its willing to accede to the APMBC and announced the formation of a committee that is tasked to assess and evaluate the needed steps in this regard.¹⁹ Back in 2011, the rival leader of LNA, commander Khalifa Haftar, had publicly pledged not to use anti-personal mines,²⁰ a pledge he did not fulfil in the years that ensued.

There is no accurate estimate of the extent of anti-personnel mine contamination across Libya, as many suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) have not been surveyed. As at April 2021, national contamination data from the LibMAC database, reported a total contamination of 287km² of anti-personnel mines, 61km² of confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) and 226km² of SHAs, distributed over seven localities.²¹ LibMAC data from 2017 indicate that the SHA of 223km² in Sirte is suspected to contain only anti-vehicle mines.²² It is likely that further survey will drastically reduce these figures.

Moreover, the contamination data of Sirte do not reflect the clearance that has been ongoing in 2017–20 and are therefore believed to be outdated. LibMAC reported that it plans to conduct additional non-technical surveys to better understand the recent contamination of 2020 in Tripoli and to immediately start its clearance, whereas additional technical surveys are needed to reduce the identified SHAs in the other localities.²³

A wide range of munitions have been used. Found in 2020 in Tripoli were a tripwire-activated anti-personnel mines; anti-handling or anti-lift devices on anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines; and a number of IEDs. Anti-personnel mines, mainly the tripwire victim-activated type, have been mostly used as booby traps in urban settings.²⁴ According to Danish Church Aid (DCA), conventional minefields are rare in the west and central coastal area of Libya, but as of writing, non-technical survey revealed up to four SHAs that are believed to contain anti-personnel mines in Southern Tripoli. The data provided by LibMAC indicate mostly mixed contamination and is not disaggregated by contamination type.

Explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination seems to be the major preoccupation of the demining agencies due to the presence of devices in populated areas and inside residential homes. Since 2011 and through October 2020, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) reported having cleared more than 1 million items of ERW and approximately 54 tonnes of small arms ammunition.²⁵

In 2020, 687,802m² of newly discovered anti-personnel mine contamination was reported in greater Tripoli and added to the LibMAC database.²⁶ Of this, DCA discovered 178,506m² in 28 CHAs through non-technical surveys,²⁷ and HALO Trust discovered 132,797m² through 12 non-technical survey tasks.²⁸

Libya is also contaminated by cluster munition remnants (CMR) (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Libya for further information), and ongoing conflict has left quantities of other ERW in cities across Libya.²⁹

Table 1: Anti-personnel mined area by locality (at end 2020)³⁰

Locality	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total SHAs/CHAs	Total area (m ²)
Al Jifarah	0	0	1	5,280	1	5,280
Al Jufrah	0	0	1	408,572	1	408,572
Benghazi	16	12,382,269	4	1,564,907	20	13,947,176
Jabal Nafusa	1	0	1	604,139	2	604,139
Misratah	3	3,387,431	0	0	3	3,387,431
Sabha	2	3,990,067	0	0	2	3,990,067
Sirte	3	40,747,944	1	222,934,834	4	263,682,778
Greater Tripoli	41	654,576	14	131,990	55	786,566
Totals	66	61,162,287	22	225,649,722	88	286,812,009

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Mine action exists in a fragmented and violent political context. Following years of armed conflict, a new UN-backed “unity” government, the GNA, was formally installed in a naval base in Tripoli in early 2016. It has subsequently faced opposition from the LNA rival government and a host of militia forces. In April 2019, Khalifa Haftar, the LNA military commander, launched an offensive to take control of Tripoli and topple the GNA. Fighting continued throughout 2020 until June when the GNA managed to drive the LNA forces out of Tarhouna, its last stronghold in the west of Libya, putting an end on the months-old offensive to take Tripoli. The warring parties reached a ceasefire agreement to halt hostilities in October 2020, albeit with frequent interruptions. This culminated in the election of an interim government following the UN-sponsored five-day Geneva talks in February 2021 with a roadmap leading to National elections in December 2021.

LibMAC was mandated by the Minister of Defence to coordinate mine action in December 2011.³¹ Operating under the UN-backed GNA, LibMAC’s headquarters are in Tripoli, in the west of the country, and it also has offices in Benghazi³² and Misrata.³³

Other national entities conduct mine and ERW clearance, but these are not accredited by LibMAC.³⁴

ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF) regularly executed salary payments for 22 LibMAC staff in 2020 and covers all costs related with LibMAC’s daily functioning. Funded by the United States Department of State, ITF provided US\$797,767 of capacity support to the LibMAC in 2020.³⁵

According to the UN Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) of 2020, Libyan national capacity to mitigate the threat of explosive hazards is insufficient to address the growing threat. With the existing managerial and coordination capacity in place, governmental and non-governmental actors have a solid base for growth, yet are lacking sufficient numbers of qualified personnel, equipment, and technical expertise to scale up to meet demand.³⁶ The UN raised US\$7.5 million for the mine action sector in Libya in 2020.³⁷

UNMAS deployed to Libya in March 2011. When major hostilities resumed between rival political factions in 2014 and again in April 2019, the UN temporarily relocated the majority of its staff to Tunisia and, as of early 2021 was in the process of returning to Libya. During periods of evacuation, UNMAS has been operating remotely from Tunisia.³⁸

UNMAS prioritises the capacity enhancement of Libyan mine action actors, supports the LibMAC in accreditation processes for mine action organizations and facilitates coordination with international stakeholders and implementing partners. Since 2015, UNMAS has trained more than 70 National Safety Authority (NSA) operators and military engineers in advanced explosive ordnance disposal (EOD); trained 30 officers from eastern Libya in non-technical survey; and trained several operators to address explosive ordnance threats in Sirte. UNMAS also increased capacity through the provision of EOD equipment to national actors and assisted LibMAC in developing the Libyan Mine Action Standards (LibMAS) that are now being implemented.³⁹

In 2017/18, the United States Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA) and the United Kingdom financed the training of 70 IED operators in Sirte, conducted by the company JANUS, and with participants from the NSA and the military engineers.⁴⁰

In 2020, HALO Trust delivered non-technical survey training to eight members of LibMAC and three of the Free Fields Foundation (3F) staff in June. In addition, one member of LibMAC staff attended a three-day course of Information Management (IM) in Tunis in January 2020.⁴¹ In 2019, The HALO Trust worked closely with LibMAC to build their capacity to quality assure and accredit mechanical clearance. HALO Trust ran a workshop in the LibMAC Tripoli office, covering all aspects of mechanical clearance. In addition, HALO provided translated quality assurance forms for quality assuring task sites and for accrediting the armouring of mechanical assets; and also conducted armour testing of different materials to provide a baseline of information for LibMAC.⁴²

The Danish Refugee Council’s (DRC’s) Humanitarian Disarmament and Peacebuilding sector (formally known as Danish Demining Group (DDG)), planned to provide capacity development in gender and diversity mainstreaming in mine action to LibMAC in 2021.⁴³

LibMAC and UNMAS co-chair a monthly Implementing Partners meeting. The meetings were held in-person in Tunis then moved online since the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁴

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

LibMAC does not have a gender and diversity policy for mine action in place. As at April 2021, 13% of the LibMAC employees were women and 50% of managerial/supervisory positions were filled by women. No women were employed in operational positions. LibMAC disaggregates mine action data by sex and age.⁴⁵

The HALO Trust reported that its Libya programme seeks to comply with HALO’s general gender and diversity policy. However, due to rigid gender norms that largely impede women’s free movement and ability to work in a mixed-gender office setting, particularly reinforced in areas with strong Islamist influence such as Sirte, HALO has reported that the recruitment of women, including for

non-operational roles, has proved difficult.⁴⁶ In 2020, six of HALO’s ninety-four Libyan employees and five of the fifteen senior management team members were women (two of five were internationals, while three of the remaining ten were national staff). No women were employed in operational roles.⁴⁷

HALO’s approach to community liaison, including door-to-door risk education prior to clearance, targeted risk education task sites, and specific events to reach out to women in particular, is designed to reach out to women and men equally. This is especially important given that women are largely absent from public life. In particular, the introduction of pre-clearance focus group discussions with

women and men separately helps to ensure that subsequent community liaison/risk education activities are targeted to the needs of all beneficiaries.⁴⁸ The change in the primary location of operations from Sirte in 2019 to Tripoli in 2020, where risk education is already being widely carried out by other organisations, decreased the need for HALO Trust to do targeted pre-clearance community liaison events in 2020.⁴⁹

With regards to diversity, in Sirte, HALO Trust recruits equally among the tribes and seeks to consult all ethnic groups during survey and clearance processes. HALO makes task prioritisation recommendations based on humanitarian need, although all task orders are issued under the authority of LibMAC.⁵⁰ The HALO Trust disaggregates relevant mine action data by gender and age.⁵¹

DRC has a gender and diversity policy in place, but, as at April 2021, its implementation plan was still under development. DRC consults women and children during survey and community liaison activities. This is achieved by composing all-female survey teams to reach women in community settings where this cannot be done by mixed-gender teams, which is specifically the case in Sabha. In 2020, 13 of the total 77 employees of DRC Libya programme were women. Of these, 5% of survey and 6% of managerial/supervisory positions were filled by women.⁵²

DCA's Libya programme has an active policy of employing females into programme roles to increase their financial independence and teach them transferable skills that they may use beyond their current employment with DCA. Gender mainstreaming and mainstreaming of marginalised groups are written in the programme's core policies. DCA has a gender mainstreaming built-in each all its projects, including its target groups, and ensures that female adults and children constitute at least 50% of beneficiaries. DCA also employs all-female teams to be able to engage with female-headed households.

In terms of diversity, DCA works closely with marginalized persons and communities, for example, by working with ERW victims to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. DCA conducted the very first, and only to date, "signed/sign language" EORE training for hearing-impaired persons. Moreover, DCA employs nurses, female teachers, and university lecturers in community liaison and EORE teams to achieve better outreach to women and children during survey and community liaison activities. In 2020, 25% of DCA employees in Libya were women, but as at April 2021, the rate was increased to 29% by recruiting all-female non-technical survey teams. Seven of the fifteen managerial/supervisory positions were filled by women.⁵³

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

LibMAC receives technical support for the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) from the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and UNMAS. In March 2019, Humanity and Inclusion (HI) reported that LibMAC had recently announced details of a new effort to bring the IMSMA database up to date and ensure the data are reliable.⁵⁴ With support from the GICHD, LibMAC planned to transition from IMSMA to IMSMA Core in mid-2020.⁵⁵ As at April 2021, the transition has yet been completed.⁵⁶

IMSMA is accessible to clearance organisations and data collection forms are reported to be consistent and enable collection of necessary data.⁵⁷ Operators have internal quality control systems prior to submitting of data to LibMAC for further quality control. The HALO Trust reported that the LibMAC regularly updates the IMSMA database to a high standard.⁵⁸

Since early 2019, The HALO Trust has been working closely with LibMAC to cover mechanical clearance in the Libyan IMSMA database. The planned transition to IMSMA Core will allow data entry for mechanical clearance.⁵⁹

PLANNING AND TASKING

There is no mine action strategy currently for Libya.⁶⁰

LibMAC does, however, have a national short-term operational plan.⁶¹ LibMAC prioritises survey and clearance operations based on humanitarian, security and development indicators,⁶² and is responsible for issuing task orders. DRC reported that, at times, task orders are issued to different NGOs in the same locations simultaneously.⁶³

The reported information from the national authorities and the operators on task prioritisation differ widely and each operator seems to have set its own prioritisation system that is coordinated with the LibMAC. According to DRC, the coordination meetings between the operators and LibMAC have been put on hold during 2020 due to the COVID-19 restrictions, which had a detrimental effect on operational planning.⁶⁴

According to DCA, mine action operators liaise with the municipal councils, community leaders and security

providers to build a picture of priority areas for survey and follow-on clearance. Operators then apply for task orders through the LibMAC. Due to the small number of clearance teams and personnel in Libya, the priority is responding to callouts, particularly from returning internally displaced persons (IDPs). Therefore, much of the clearance is reactive EOD spot tasks in order to minimise the immediate threat to human life. Outside of that, DCA prioritises residential areas, educational facilities, medical facilities and water, and electricity supply sites.⁶⁵

HALO Trust's prioritisation criteria for non-technical survey are: number of conflict events, population density, critical infrastructure, duration of active fighting in a given area, recorded mines removed and explosive ordnance accidents. For technical survey and clearance, HALO's criteria are: access, land use, number of beneficiaries, and direct evidence (of contamination).⁶⁶

The Tripoli ERW Hazard Mapping and Information Management Project uses open-source data collation and geolocation techniques to map potential ERW contamination along the Tripoli frontlines by collecting information on active fighting incidents, weapons systems and ammunition used, and ERW-related accidents and displacement. The online data collection portal, linking to a live database that is shared with LibMAC and other stakeholders, is used to track historical data starting from 4 April 2019 up to the present. Mapping ERW contamination along the frontlines enables LibMAC to coordinate and direct specialist clearance capacity as well as risk education teams to the most highly contaminated areas.⁶⁷

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

There is no national mine action legislation in Libya, but LibMAS in Arabic and English, have been elaborated with the support of the GICHD and UNMAS, and were approved by the GNA in August 2017. The LibMAS are available on the LibMAC website.⁶⁸ According to international clearance operators, the national mine action standards are aligned to the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), reproducing it word-for-word in many parts.⁶⁹ As at April 2021, the LibMAS have not been updated since their approval in 2017.

While the LibMAS are broad and not overly restrictive, some additional guidance on how implementing organisations should adapt to local circumstances and conditions may be beneficial. For example, this should cover what they should consider as direct versus indirect evidence in the context of clearance in urban areas. This could help to standardise how evidence is considered by the various operators.⁷⁰

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Mine action operations have been conducted by the army engineers, a police unit, and the Ministry of Interior's NSA also known as Civil Defence.⁷¹ Military engineers reportedly lack mine detectors and are working with basic tools and even their bare hands.⁷² The NSA is mandated to conduct EOD in civilian areas.⁷³ These institutions liaise with LibMAC but are not tasked or accredited by them, nor do they provide clearance reports to the Centre.

Table 2: Operational non-technical survey (NTS) and technical survey (TS) capacities deployed in 2020⁷⁴

Operator	NTS teams	Total personnel	TS teams
3F	2	6	0
Libya Peace Organization	2	6	0
HALO Trust ⁷⁵	5	12	0
DCA ⁷⁶	4	44	0
DRC	2	6	0
Totals	15	74	0

Table 3: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2020⁷⁷

Operator	Manual clearance teams	Total deminers*	Dog teams (dogs and handlers)	Mechanical assets/machines
DCA	7	77	0	0
HALO Trust	0	0	0	3
Totals	7	77	0	3

* Excluding team leaders, medics, and drivers.

The deteriorating security situation resulted in the withdrawal of UNMAS and international mine action operators from Libya in mid 2014. International clearance operators active in Libya include DCA, DRC, and HALO Trust.⁷⁸ HI's survey and clearance operations stopped in April 2019 and the project formally ended in June of that year.⁷⁹ The National NGO operator, 3F, continued to be operational in 2020. Another national operator, the Libyan Demining Group (LDG), was in the process of becoming established in 2019,⁸⁰ but, as at April 2021, had not been accredited by LibMAC.⁸¹ Local organisations Peace Organization from

Zintan and World Without War (3W), from Misrata, which had been trained by HI in 2016 and received accreditation for non-technical survey,⁸² subsequently had their operations suspended for not complying with standards and, in addition, neither organisation had secured funding.⁸³ In 2020, LibMAC reported having accredited two additional local operators: The Safe Trust NGO (*Al-Thiqa al-Amna*) and the Communication NGO (*Al-Tawasol*).⁸⁴

DCA is operational in Libya clearing residential, commercial, education, medical, and agricultural sites of mines and

ERW, and providing training in clearance, search, and EOD, to help strengthen the capacity of national authorities. DCA also conducts risk education.⁸⁵ Now in its eleventh year of working in Libya, DCA currently has offices Benghazi, Misrata, Sirte, and Tripoli. Its office in Al-Bayda was closed since the end of its programme in Derna in October 2020. In 2020, DCA deployed manual clearance teams in Benghazi, Derna, Sirte, and Tripoli. DCA increased both survey and clearance capacity in 2020 as it expanded to address the ERW contamination in the south of Tripoli and expected to increase its clearance teams from two to four in Tripoli in 2021 under additional funding.⁸⁶

DRC set up in Libya since 2011 and has three offices in Benghazi, Sabha and Tripoli. Its offices in Misrata and Zwara were closed at the end of 2020. DRC was operational in both Benghazi and Sabha in 2020.⁸⁷ In Sabha, DRC had two non-technical survey teams and two EOD teams, which it was managing remotely.⁸⁸ In addition, DRC had one BAC team, two EOD teams, one NTS team and one EORE team in Benghazi in 2020.⁸⁹ Security issues in the south continue to disrupt mine action and prevent continuous operations. In Tripoli, DRC works through its national implementing partner, 3F, and in 2021 planned to establish its own mine action teams.⁹⁰ 3F operates under its own accreditation and standing operating procedures (SOPs), and has an operational contingent of 37, composed in two EOD teams and two non-technical survey teams.⁹¹ In 2020, DRC conducted two non-technical surveys in Benghazi and one in Sabha. DRC also conducted one EOD task in Benghazi and another in Al-Shati.⁹²

The HALO Trust has been present in Libya since November 2018, and has offices in Misrata, Sirte, and Tripoli. Its first operational footprint in Libya was the deployment of two mechanical clearance teams in Sirte in October 2019. The operation has been suspended since June 2020 due to the escalation of conflict in the area of Sirte.⁹³ HALO first deployed survey personnel in Tripoli in July 2020 following the cessation of fighting in southern Tripoli in the summer of that year. HALO was able to use data gathered during an information management project that mapped reports of conflict events, to prioritise areas for survey. In July 2020, HALO trained eight personnel in non-technical survey and deployed two non-technical survey teams. In November 2020, HALO trained and deployed three additional non-technical survey teams.⁹⁴ As at April 2021, HALO Trust was training and preparing to deploy two technical survey/clearance teams and three additional mechanical clearance teams in Tripoli. The mechanical clearance teams will use a 22.5 SDLG excavator, a 17.5 tonne SDLG front loader, and a CAT backhoe loader. HALO intended to deploy 13 manual personnel and 16 mechanical personnel in 2021, subject to accreditation by LibMAC.⁹⁵ As of writing, HALO was not yet accredited to conduct clearance or EOD tasks.⁹⁶

The HALO Trust and DCA worked in partnership in Sirte under a joint three-year European Union (EU) Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (ICSP) contract, which started in February 2019. Under this contract, HALO provides three mechanical clearance assets and two mechanical clearance teams (MCTs) while DCA conducts EOD tasks. In January 2020, the first EU-funded MCT was deployed in Sirte. The first of three mechanical clearance assets, a medium-range front-loader, was procured and upgraded locally in Libya in January 2020.⁹⁷ The deterioration of the

security situation that ensued led the HALO Trust to suspend its operation in Sirte in June 2020. Consequently, HALO did not provide the second of the mechanical clearance assets. An additional EU-funded 17.5 tonne front end loader that was originally meant for Sirte was redirected to Tripoli in late 2020. HALO Trust intends to resume its operations in Sirte if security permits.⁹⁸

Humanitarian access to Libya for survey and clearance operations, remains challenging for all operators. HALO, for example, experienced delays in the granting of multiple-entry visas and limited movement between locations due to ongoing conflict and changing frontlines. In Libya, the provision of security is highly localised; tribe-affiliated armed groups, with oftentimes shifting allegiances, control cities and towns down to neighbourhood level. This in turn requires humanitarian actors to have a good knowledge of armed group dynamics on the one hand while liaising with many interlocutors on the other. The risk of arbitrary detention of national staff is high, either due to tribal background or due to suspected affiliation with opposing armed groups.⁹⁹

HALO is mitigating security risks to its staff by maintaining working relationships with key interlocutors in both eastern and western Libya, including LibMAC, ministries, and municipal authorities. Community liaison in Benghazi, Misrata, Sirte, and Tripoli is key to ensuring community acceptance. In Sirte specifically, HALO recruits equally among the tribes. International staff are sometimes needed to cut across tribal lines when negotiating access.¹⁰⁰

The deteriorated security situation in Sirte since January 2020 has made operations difficult for the HALO Trust, however it was able to continue operations under a remote management model until the front line shifted from Tripoli to Sirte in June 2020. From that point onwards, HALO suspended operations in Sirte due to the presence of armed actors unfamiliar with its work. HALO continues to monitor the situation and intends to restart its operations in Sirte as soon as the security situation permits. HALO also faced minor issues of access and acceptance during non-technical survey activities in Tripoli. This is in part due to HALO personnel passing through unfamiliar checkpoints. HALO expects that access will improve over time as awareness increases and teams deploy for survey and clearance creating more visibility and acceptance. HALO has no access problems in Benghazi.¹⁰¹

The level of insecurity in Libya have not significantly affected operations of DCA in 2020. DCA lost approximately four weeks of operations time in Sirte following the change in front lines in January 2020.¹⁰² For DRC, the security situation in Libya has posed little to no challenges to the implementation of survey activities, and it continued to enjoy good access in its area of operations.¹⁰³ HI conducted EOD spot tasks in 2019 in Tawerga, but was hindered by security issues. It stopped survey and clearance operations in April 2019 and the project formally ended in June 2019, although its victim assistance work in Libya continues.¹⁰⁴

A number of other Libyan civil society organisations are also reported to carry out mine action operations, but they are not accredited by LibMAC.

DEMINE SAFETY

On 6 July 2020, two humanitarian mine clearance workers of 3F were killed in a trip-wire activated mine during clearance operation in southern Tripoli.¹⁰⁵ It is not known whether the accident was effectively investigated or whether lessons learned were concluded.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2020

Three anti-personnel mines were destroyed in EOD spot tasks by DCA in 2020.¹⁰⁶ No land was released through non-technical survey, technical survey or clearance in 2020.

Land release data was not made available by LibMAC in 2020.

A total of 687,802m² of newly discovered anti-personnel mine contamination was reported in Greater Tripoli and added to the LibMAC database.¹⁰⁷ Of which, DCA discovered 178,506m² in 28 CHAs through non-technical surveys,¹⁰⁸ and HALO Trust discovered 132,797m² through 12 non-technical survey tasks.¹⁰⁹

SURVEY IN 2020

No land was released through non-technical survey, technical survey, or clearance in Libya in 2020. The non-technical surveys to map the new contamination in Tripoli were concluded in March 2021 and as at April 2021, preparation for survey and clearance was underway.¹¹⁰

In 2020, LibMAC personnel opened 81 tasks, mostly for non-technical survey activities performed by international and national operators in south parts of Tripoli after LNA withdrawal, in Tawargha and in Benghazi. LibMAC also conducted 69 Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Control (QC) missions. LibMAC personnel were engaged in activities related to an unintended explosion in the former Military Academy in Misrata on 6 May 2020, where they performed survey missions and risk education tasks.¹¹¹

CLEARANCE IN 2020

Three anti-personnel mines were destroyed in EOD spot tasks by DCA in Benghazi in 2020.¹¹² DCA planned to clear two minefields in its area of operations in 2021.

HALO Trust did not have EOD trained teams in 2020. HALO's rubble removal work in Sirte uncovered items of UXO, which were marked and handed over to DCA's EOD teams for disposal. In Tripoli, HALO reports EOD spot tasks to LibMAC who then assigns it to other EOD accredited organizations.¹¹³ As at May 2021, only DCA and 3F had been accredited to conduct EOD tasks in Tripoli.¹¹⁴

In June 2020, it was reported in online media sources that demining experts from the Turkish Armed Forces had started to clear landmines and IEDs planted by Khalifa Haftar's forces in south Tripoli, Tarhouna, and other areas. This was based on information from Libya's Foreign Ministry.¹¹⁵

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LibMAC describes the following challenges to implementation of mine action operations: the high level of contamination; ongoing conflict and the continued presence of Islamic State; the difficulty in convincing internally displaced persons to delay their return until the ERW threat is addressed; security and access to priority areas; the limited ERW and EOD capacity in Libya; the vast geographical area; and limited governmental and international support.¹¹⁶ Security conditions continued to pose a challenge to mine action in Libya.

In its statement as an observer to the APMBC 18MSP in November 2020, Libya listed the exceptional circumstances in which it is going through in addition to the lack of human, logistical, and technical capacities as the main challenges hindering Libya's progress in operationalising its mine action programme.¹¹⁷

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