

## KEY DATA

**ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP)  
MINE CONTAMINATION: MASSIVE  
(NO CREDIBLE FIGURE)**

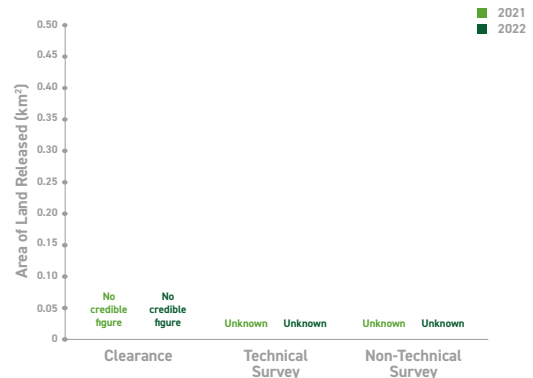
AP MINE  
CLEARANCE IN 2022  
**NO CREDIBLE  
FIGURE**

AP MINES  
DESTROYED IN 2022

**34**

(NATIONAL AUTHORITY DATA)

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Morocco should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Morocco should clear anti-personnel (AP) mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.
- Morocco should continue to submit voluntary APMBC Article 7 reports. It should provide greater detail on the extent of mine contamination and report on progress in land release according to the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).
- Morocco should establish a timeline for completing clearance of all mined areas on territory under its jurisdiction or control.

## DEMINING CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- No national mine action authority
- No national mine action centre

### NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Royal Moroccan Army (RMA)

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

### OTHER ACTORS

- United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO) Mine Action

## UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The exact extent of contamination from mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Morocco, including the area under its control in Western Sahara, on the west side of the Berm,<sup>1</sup> is not known. In the past, Morocco declared, highly improbably, that a total of 120,000km<sup>2</sup> of area was contaminated,<sup>2</sup> although the threat is undoubtedly massive. According to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), of the 2,700km-long Berm, 1,465km is significantly contaminated with landmines and ERW on both sides.<sup>3</sup>

Morocco's contamination is mostly a result of the conflict of 1975–91 between the Royal Moroccan Army (RMA) and Polisario Front forces over Western Sahara. Morocco acknowledges that it had laid mine belts during the construction of the Berm, and states that the mines were laid before the entry into force of the APMBC, and that mined areas are surveyed and mapped. Morocco has pledged to clear the mines it laid as soon as the conflict over Western Sahara is "definitely settled".<sup>4</sup>

Morocco reported in its latest voluntary APMBC Article 7 transparency report (covering 2022) that the following provinces were mine affected: Akka, Aousserd, Assa-Zag, Boujdour, Dakhla, Laayoune, Smara, Tantan, and Tata.<sup>5</sup> In its Article 7 report covering 2018, Morocco had reported that 10 localities within these provinces contain mines: Bir Anzarane, Douiek, Gerret Auchfaght, Gor Lbard, Gor Zalagat, Hagounia, Idiriya, Imlili, Itgui, and Tarf Mhkinza. It claimed these contain contamination as the result of "haphazard" mine-laying across the south of Morocco by the Polisario front in 1975–91.<sup>6</sup> In its Article 7 reports covering 2020 and 2021, Morocco also reported suspected mined areas in its far eastern corner bordering Algeria in the El-Melias corridor in Figuig province.<sup>7</sup> It is not clear when these mines were emplaced or by whom, but media reports indicate that they were laid in the 1990s as a result of border tensions between the two neighbouring States.<sup>8</sup>

Since 1975, Morocco has registered 2,743 mine and ERW victims, of whom 819 were killed. In 2022 alone, five persons were killed and 21 injured as a result of mine and ERW-related accidents.<sup>9</sup>

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## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Morocco does not have a national mine action authority or a mine action centre. The RMA carries out demining, which, it has reported, is conducted in collaboration with MINURSO.<sup>10</sup>

### ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

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It is not known what environmental policies and practices Morocco adheres to, if any, but it has reported that "normal safety and environmental protection standards have been followed" in clearing mines and ERW.<sup>11</sup>

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## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

It is not known which information management system is used in Morocco for recording mine action data.

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## PLANNING AND TASKING

It is not known how Morocco plans and prioritises its demining operations.

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1 The Berm refers to the defensive wall built by Morocco in 1982–87 to secure the north-western corner of Western Sahara. It is constituted of earthen walls some 2,700 kilometres long and three metres in height. Morocco controls the area located on the west side of the Berm.

2 Statement of Morocco, APMBBC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 25 May 2009.

3 MINURSO website, Mine Action, accessed 28 July 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3BmYLnM>.

4 Statement of Morocco, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19–21 June 2023.

5 Voluntary Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form D.

6 Voluntary Article 7 Report (covering 2018), Form D. Idiriya is spelled "Jdiriya" in the 2018 report. From 2015, the area of Glibat Jadiane, which had been listed as contaminated in earlier years, was no longer included on the list of mined areas.

7 Voluntary Article 7 Reports (covering 2020 and 2021), Form D.

8 "Fguig, mine disposal leads to rumours of conflict on the eastern borders", *Chouf TV* (Arabic), 20 February 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3rIWGvO>.

9 Voluntary Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form G.

10 Voluntary Article 7 Report (covering 2018), Form D.

11 Ibid.

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Morocco is not believed to have a gender policy in place for its demining operations.

## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

Morocco appears to use only manual demining techniques, which is not efficient given the size and type of terrain being released.

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Morocco has not adopted national mine action legislation or standards, but has reported that “normal safety and environmental protection standards have been respected” in the clearance of mines and ERW<sup>12</sup> and that demining by the RMA conforms to international rules and techniques.<sup>13</sup>

### OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

All mine clearance in Morocco is conducted by the RMA. In June 2022, Morocco indicated that 13 demining units had been continuously deployed each year since 2007 until March 2023, and that 1,258 limited interventions were undertaken since 2014 through to 31 March 2023.<sup>14</sup> By “limited interventions” it is understood that Morocco refers to explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) spot tasks.

In 2010, Morocco had declared it had employed 10,000 deminers, although only 400 detectors were at their disposal at that time.<sup>15</sup> This raised serious questions both about the procedures being used and the accuracy of clearance figures being reported, which are not credible. Morocco reports that demining takes places in the framework of a vast annual programme that aims to release suspected areas of contamination.<sup>16</sup>

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Morocco has not reported in detail on its release of mined areas in recent years, nor given any indication of implementing land release methodology. The figures it does provide are not credible with respect to physical clearance and should be taken as an indication of land released or declared as clear of contamination rather than land actually released by clearance.

In its voluntary Article 7 report covering 2022, Morocco reported “clearance” of a total area of 95.24km<sup>2</sup> with the destruction of 34 AP mines, 23 anti-vehicle (AV) mines, and 174 items of ERW.<sup>17</sup> In 2021, Morocco stated it had “cleared” 217km<sup>2</sup> and destroyed in the process 1,289 AP mines, 281 AV mines, and 564 items of ERW.<sup>18</sup> Neither claim for the extent of physical clearance is credible.

Morocco reported that as at 31 March 2023, a total of 6,161km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land has been cleared. During the process, 49,391 AP mines, 47,475 anti-vehicle mines, and 21,886 items of ERW have been destroyed. The year starting from which these figures are reported was not made clear, but it was understood to be since 1975.<sup>19</sup>

An eight-year view into Morocco's reporting on its clearance outputs (see Table 1) reveals a big fluctuation in the number of AP mines destroyed per year, with two peaks of over one thousand AP mines destroyed in two years (2015 and 2021).

12 Voluntary Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form D.

13 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2021), Form B.

14 Statement of Morocco, APMBC Intersessional meeting, Geneva, June 2022; and Information Leaflet, *Strong Commitment for Population's Safety – All Against Antipersonnel Mines and Remnants of War* (covering 1975 to 2023), Kingdom of Morocco, undated.

15 Statement of Morocco, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 23 June 2010.

16 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2021), Form B.

17 Voluntary Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form D.

18 Voluntary Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form D.

19 Information leaflet, *Strong Commitment for Population's Safety – All Against Antipersonnel Mines and Remnants of War* (covering 1975 to 2023), Kingdom of Morocco, undated.

**Table 1: Eight-year summary of Morocco's reported AP mine clearance**

Year	Area released (km <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed
2022	95	34
2021	217	1,289
2020	171	22
2019	301	23
2018	313	232
2017	232	69
2016	283	288
2015	275	1,345
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>3,302</b>

In his October 2022 report to the UN Security Council on the situation in Western Sahara, the UN Secretary-General indicated that the RMA had reported the release of 134km<sup>2</sup> of land west of the Berm between 1 September 2021 and 31 July 2022, with the destruction of 770 items of ERW and 52 AP and anti-tank mines.<sup>20</sup> This compares with 145km<sup>2</sup> of land west of the Berm reported by the RMA as released between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021, with the destruction of 1,104 items, including 31 landmines.<sup>21</sup> No further details were provided. MINURSO continues to promote enhanced cooperation between the RMA and MINURSO mine action.<sup>22</sup>

Morocco initiated major demining efforts in 2007, following an increase in the number of incidents. In April 2016, Morocco reported plans to clear mines from along the Berm. The units to be deployed were reportedly those trained by the US Marines.<sup>23</sup>

Morocco has stated on numerous occasions its determination to comply voluntarily with the provisions of the APMBC, including completion of stockpile destruction of AP mines and demining. It has submitted annual voluntary APMBC Article 7 reports over the past decade and attends APMBC meetings as an observer. It has not, however, indicated when it might complete mine clearance. In a statement at the APMBC Intersessional Meetings in June 2023, Morocco repeated its commitment to the APMBC.<sup>24</sup> It indicated that its accession to the APMBC is a strategic objective, which has been "momentarily delayed" pending "the resolution of the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara".<sup>25</sup>

20 Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, UN doc. S/2022/733, 1 October 2022, para. 48.

21 Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, UN doc. S/2021/843, 1 October 2021, para. 46.

22 Ibid.

23 "Morocco to Deploy Highly Qualified Team to Remove Sahara Landmines", *Sahara Question*, 25 March 2016, at: <http://bit.ly/2Llu9d4>.

24 Statement of Morocco, Intersessional Meetings, 22 June 2023.

25 Statement of Morocco, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 23 June 2010.