

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Libya should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Despite not yet being a state party to the APMBC, Libya has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- 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, 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), and with Chad in 1980–87, which resulted in mines being laid on Libya's borders with these two neighbours.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

The only confirmed instance of landmine use by rebels occurred in Ajdabiya, but other locations where pro-government elements laid mines included Brega, Khusha, Misrata, and the Nafusa Mountains.³ The escalation of conflict in Libya in 2014 brought new reports of mine use by armed groups fighting around Tripoli airport.⁴ There were also allegations of landmine use by non-state armed groups between 2016 and 2018.⁵ Contamination since 2015 is believed to be mainly in Benghazi, Derna (in the east of Libya), and Sirte.⁶

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.⁷ In July 2017, the engineering divisions of Operation Dignity⁸ 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.⁹

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 February 2017, national contamination data from the LibMAC Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database, reported six confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) four in Sirte and two in Misrata, totalling almost 41.5km², contaminated by anti-personnel mines, while a seventh CHA, in Sirte, of some 7.5km², was contaminated by anti-vehicle mines. A massive single SHA, of almost 223km², was suspected to contain only anti-vehicle mines.¹⁰ It is likely that further survey will drastically reduce these figures, but at the same time many further suspected areas have not been surveyed.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) advocates for survey to help quantify the scale and type of contamination, but the ongoing security situation poses major challenges to operationalising the necessary survey.¹¹ According to the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the presence of landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and unexploded ordnance (UXO) poses a persistent threat to the Libyan population and also hinders the safe return of internally displaced people and restricts access for humanitarian workers.¹²

Libya is also contaminated by cluster munition remnants (CMR) (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2019* report on Libya for further information), and ongoing conflict has left significant quantities of other explosive remnants of war (ERW) in cities across Libya.¹³

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Mine action exists in a fragmented and violent political context. Following years of armed conflict, a new United Nations-backed “unity” government, the Government of National Accord, was formally installed in a naval base in Tripoli in early 2016. It has subsequently faced opposition from two rival governments and a host of militia forces. In April 2019, Khalifa Haftar, a military commander based in the west of the country, launched an offensive to take control of Tripoli and topple the Government of National Accord. As at July 2019, the offensive was ongoing, with combat in part of the city.¹⁴

LibMAC was mandated by the Minister of Defense to coordinate mine action in December 2011.¹⁵ As at May 2019, it was operating under the UN-backed Government of National Accord. LibMAC’s headquarters are in Tripoli, in the west of the country, and it also has offices in Benghazi¹⁶ and Misrata.¹⁷ The operating costs and salaries for the LibMAC are funded by the United States Department of State and administered by ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF).¹⁸

GENDER

LibMAC is not thought to have a gender policy for mine action in place.

HI reported that it has a gender policy in place and that it planned to elaborate an implementation plan in 2019.¹⁹ It also reported that it disaggregates data by sex and age. HI’s risk education team, which also conducts community liaison, is gender balanced. While two of its project managers and two project officers are female, HI reported that unfortunately women are not currently employed in survey and clearance, as it is deemed culturally unacceptable for now.²⁰

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

LibMAC receives technical support for IMSMA from the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and UNMAS. In March 2019, 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.²¹ IMSMA is accessible to clearance organisations and data collection forms are reported to be consistent and enable collection of necessary data.²²

PLANNING AND TASKING

There is no national mine action strategy for Libya.

LibMAC does, however, prioritise survey and clearance operations and is responsible for issuing task orders. Prioritisation is, in part, informed by data collected and reported to LibMAC by operators such as the Danish Demining Group (DDG), during non-technical survey or explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), and by reports from the local community.²³ According to an international clearance operator, LibMAC generally tasks according to geographic area and the nearest available assets.²⁴

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

There is no national mine action legislation in Libya, but National Mine Action Standards (LibMAS), in Arabic and English, have been elaborated with the support of the GICHD and UNMAS, and were approved by the Government of National Accord in August 2017. The LibMAS are available on the LibMAC website.²⁵ According to an international clearance operator, the national mine action standards are aligned to the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).²⁶

HI has updated its standing operating procedures (SoPs) for mine action in Libya in line with the LibMAS.²⁷

OPERATORS

Mine action operations have been conducted by the army engineers, a police unit, and the Ministry of Interior's National Safety Authority (NSA), also known as Civil Defence.²⁸ The NSA is mandated to conduct EOD in civilian areas.²⁹ These institutions liaise with LibMAC but are not tasked or accredited by them, nor do they provide clearance reports to the Centre.

The deteriorating security situation resulted in the withdrawal of UNMAS and international mine action operators from Libya in mid 2014. As at February 2019, international clearance operators active in Libya included DanChurchAid (DCA), DDG, HALO Trust, HI, and GCS.³⁰ National NGO operator, Free Fields Foundation (3F), was also operational and another national operator, the Libyan Demining Group (LDG) was in the process of becoming established as at February 2019.³¹ 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,³² subsequently had their operations suspended for not fully following standards and in addition, neither organisation had secured funding.³³

UNMAS has been operating from Tunis since November 2014, from where it provides institutional and operational capacity-building, training, including in EOD, and support and advice to LibMAC, including in establishing processes for the accreditation and activities of mine action actors in Libya.³⁴ Despite the relocation of the programme to Tunisia due to poor security in 2014, UNMAS Libya continues to coordinate with national authorities and implementing partners and to carry out mine action activities and provide technical advice and advisory support on arms and ammunition management. The UNMAS Libya Programme is an integral part of UNSMIL.³⁵

Since 2015, UNMAS has trained more than 70 Civil Defence operators and military engineers in advanced EOD, 30 officers from eastern Libya in non-technical survey, and provided advanced medical first-responder training to 72 EOD operators from Benghazi and several operators addressing the threat from explosive ordnance in Sirte.³⁶ Military engineers reportedly lack mine detectors and are working with basic tools.³⁷

DCA is operational in Libya clearing ERW and providing risk education. Now in its eighth year of working in Libya, DCA has offices in Benghazi, Misrata, and Tripoli³⁸ and is operational in three areas of Libya: Benghazi; Sabha, in the south-west; and Tripoli.³⁹ DDG set up in Benghazi in December 2017 and spent the first quarter of 2018 obtaining accreditation and putting in place necessary policies and procedures before becoming operational. DDG hoped to expand non-technical survey and EOD capacity in Benghazi from the late summer of 2018. In Sabha, DDG had one non-technical survey team and one EOD team, which it was managing remotely. Security issues in the south continue to disrupt mine action operations and prevent continuous operations. In Tripoli, DDG works through its national implementing partner, 3F. 3F operates under DDG's accreditation and SoPs, and has an operational personnel of 37, composed in three EOD teams and one non-technical survey team.⁴⁰

GCS is working in partnership with Libyan NGO, 3F, to clear ERW from an ammunition storage area on a military airbase in Misrata. The area comprises 37 bunkers destroyed by NATO airstrikes in 2011.⁴¹

The HALO Trust has been present in Libya since November 2018, and, as at June 2019, had offices in Misrata and Sirte, in addition to a small administrative office in Tripoli. The HALO Trust is working in partnership with DCA in Sirte, with HALO leading on mechanical clearance and DCA providing the supporting EOD capacity, along with a joint non-technical survey team and mine risk education (MRE) team. HALO Trust and DCA have conducted a socio-economic assessment of Sirte and a field assessment for areas of possible mine and ERW contamination which potentially require mechanical clearance.⁴²

As at June 2019, HALO Trust was in the process of armouring two machines for mechanical clearance and was set to begin training of two mechanical teams and one non-technical survey team. Ongoing conflict in Tripoli and delays in registration prevented HALO from becoming operational in June, as planned, but it expected to begin clearance activities over the summer. HALO also planned to begin training of a further two mechanical teams later in 2019; to introduce additional technical assets; and to work with LibMAC to expand operations to other parts of Libya and to conduct all humanitarian mine action activities, including manual clearance and battle area clearance (BAC).⁴³

As at March 2019, HI's main office for Libya was in Tripoli, with operational offices in Misrata and Benghazi, and an administrative base being maintained by HI in Tunis.⁴⁴ In 2018, HI deployed six manual clearance personnel in Libya, and an existing EOD team planned to also conduct non-technical survey in 2019.⁴⁵ As at March 2019, HI was operational in Benghazi, Misrata, and Tripoli, but security issues had temporarily hindered its 2019 operations in Tawerga, in Misrata, forcing teams to deploy elsewhere.⁴⁶ As at March 2019, HI had no implementing partners in mine action in Libya.⁴⁷

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

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2018

There were no reports of planned mine clearance during 2018 although several operators engaged in EOD operations. No mined area was reported to have been released through survey in 2018 either.

SURVEY IN 2018

There were no other known reports of anti-personnel survey during 2018, although data from LibMAC and some clearance operators was not made available.

CLEARANCE IN 2018

There were no known reports of anti-personnel clearance during 2018, although data from LibMAC and some clearance operators were not made available.

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.⁴⁸ Security conditions continued to pose a challenge to mine action in Libya.

In his February 2018 report on the work of UNSMIL, the UN Secretary-General stated that explosive ordnance "continue to pose a significant, indiscriminate threat to the civilian population" and urged UN Member States "to expand their funding to activities in priority areas equipment".⁴⁹

- 1 Interview with Col. Turjoman, Director, LibMAC, in Geneva, 7 February 2019.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Human Rights Watch, "Landmines in Libya: Technical Briefing Note", 19 July 2011, at: bit.ly/1lPLaFE.
- 4 Human Rights Watch, "Libya: New evidence of landmine use", 5 November 2014.
- 5 Landmine Monitor, "Libya: Mine Ban Policy", last updated 9 October 2018, at: bit.ly/2Kj5mn8; email from Lutz Kosewsky, DDG, 22 February 2017; and telephone interview with Darren Devlin, DDG, 20 June 2018.
- 6 Interview with Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, in Geneva, 7 February 2019.
- 7 "Libya forces de-mine and clear Sirte after liberation from Isis militants", *The Independent*, 11 August 2016.
- 8 Khalifa Haftar launched Operation Dignity to take Benghazi under his forces' control from what he described as Islamist militants and terrorists in May 2014. See, e.g., "Operation Dignity in east Libya declares full control of Benghazi", *Libyan Express*, 5 July 2017, at: bit.ly/2tXKhJb.
- 9 Landmines in Africa blog, July 2017, at: bit.ly/2YoeCAw.
- 10 Emails from Abdullatif Abujarida, LibMAC, 20 February and 9 March 2017.
- 11 Email from Lance Malin, Chief, UNMAS Libya, 11 September 2018.
- 12 "Lives and Limbs Shattered by Libya Mines", *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 5 April 2018.
- 13 UNMAS, "Programmes: Libya", accessed 16 May 2019, at: bit.ly/2WMTzTk.
- 14 "Global action is needed to end the fighting in Libya", *Financial Times*, 11 July 2019, at: on.ft.com/2XXRLdM.
- 15 LibMAC website, accessed 16 May 2019, at: bit.ly/2JqVr0S.
- 16 Email from Jakob Donatz, Associate Programme Officer, UNMAS, 21 June 2018.
- 17 Email from Roman Turšič, Head of Implementation Office Libya/Afghanistan, ITF, 26 February 2017; and interview with Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, in Geneva, 10 January 2017.
- 18 Email from Roman Turšič, ITF, 26 February 2017.
- 19 Email from Catherine Smith, HI, 12 March 2019.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Telephone interview with Darren Devlin, Programme Manager Libya, DDG, 20 June 2018; and email, 4 July 2018.
- 24 Email from Catherine Smith, HI, 12 March 2019.
- 25 LibMAC website, accessed 16 May 2019, at bit.ly/2JFlhfE; Report of the Secretary-General on the UNSMIL, UN doc. S/2018/140, 12 February 2018, p. 12; and UNMAS, "Programmes: Libya", accessed 16 May 2019.
- 26 Email from Catherine Smith, HI, 12 March 2019.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Interview with Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, in Geneva, 10 January 2017.
- 29 Email from Diek Engelbrecht, UNMAS Libya, 20 July 2013.
- 30 Interview with Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, in Geneva, 7 February 2019.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Email from Catherine Smith, HI, 22 February 2017.
- 33 Interview with Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, in Geneva, 7 February 2019.
- 34 UNMAS, "Programmes: Libya", accessed 16 May 2019, at: bit.ly/2WMTzTk; and emails from Lyuba Guerassimova, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 28 February 2017 and Dandan Xu, Associate Programme Management Officer, UNMAS, 12 July 2017; and Report of the Secretary-General on UNSMIL, UN doc. S/2018/140, 12 February 2018, p. 12.
- 35 Email from Jakob Donatz, UNMAS, 21 June 2018.
- 36 UNMAS, "Programmes: Libya", accessed 16 May 2019.
- 37 "Mine still claim legs and lives in Libya's Benghazi, months after war ceased", *Reuters*, 21 January 2018.
- 38 DCA website, accessed 16 May 2019, at: bit.ly/2vYatmb.
- 39 Telephone interview with Darren Devlin, DDG, 20 June 2018; and email, 4 July 2018.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 GCS website, "GCS successfully collects 200 tons of explosive remnants of war in Libya", accessed 16 May 2019, at: gcs.ch/libya.
- 42 Email from Liam Chivers, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 10 June 2019.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Emails from Catherine Smith, HI, 12 March and 11 June 2019.
- 45 Email from Catherine Smith, HI, 12 March 2019.
- 46 Emails from Catherine Smith, HI, 12 March and 11 June 2019.
- 47 Email from Catherine Smith, HI, 12 March 2019.
- 48 PowerPoint presentation by Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, at the UN National Programme Director's Meeting, Geneva, 8 February 2017.
- 49 Report of the Secretary-General on UNSMIL, UN doc. S/2018/140, 12 February 2018, p. 16.