

Queen Noor of Jordan

A commitment to landmine victims

by Margaret S. Busé

Her Majesty Queen Noor visited Vietnam and Cambodia in October 1999 to see firsthand the plight of the landmine problem in these countries. As the patron of the Landmine Survivors Network (LSN), she also does fundraising activities for the organization. She recently was in the United States working in this capacity in September 1999.

Queen Noor has been a long time advocate in the cause to ban landmines as well as a supporter of victim and survivor assistance. She has stated that she has been a concerned activist since her days at Princeton University during the Vietnam War. Marrying King Hussein and moving to the Middle East further influenced her commitment to this cause. Witnessing firsthand the impact of war and landmines and the human, economic and environmental damages these ravages incur further strengthened her commitment.

"I appreciated more directly the horror of landmines, and the human and economic waste they cause, after I came to live in Jordan in the 1970s. On my regular trips to the Jordan Valley I had to drive

past mine fields fenced off by barbed wire. The mine fields on our borders frightened and angered me then, and I am still infuriated today by the ongoing loss of life and limb suffered by soldiers and civilians alike."

For over 20 years, Queen Noor has been an advocate for peace and a supporter of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). It was without hesitation that Queen Noor agreed in 1997 to become a patron of the LSN at the request of founders Ken Rutherford and Jerry White.

One of Queen Noor's first efforts was to host the First Regional Meeting on Landmine Injury and Rehabilitation in the Middle East in Amman, Jordan, July 1998. In cooperation with the LSN, the ICBL, the Jordan Red Crescent Society, and the Hashemite Charitable Society for Soldiers with Special needs, over 350 participants examined landmine injury and rehabilitation in the Middle East and North Africa. The conference was successful in drawing attention to the growing needs of survivors and developing plans and tools for meaningful assistance. At the conference, the LSN submitted the Bill of Rights for Landmine Survivors on behalf of Queen Noor. The Bill of Rights advocates the rights of survivors to be fully involved in all decisions affecting their own rehabilitation.

The underlying goal of victim and survivors' assistance is and continues to be working in every way possible to end the threat of landmines. Queen Noor said, "I have a particular interest in this issue because I come from one of the most mine-infested regions of the world, where mines planted since World War II and during more recent conflicts are killing innocent men, women and children daily and endangering the agricultural and economic productivity." Queen Noor feels that the appalling suffering and waste caused by landmines far outweighs their questionable military utility.

About 10 percent of the Jordanian population live in areas that are dangerous and economically unusable because of landmines. "Scarce agricultural land and some of the most beautiful and sacred landscapes in Jordan, especially in the Jordan River Valley, re-

main scarred and forbidden because of the danger of landmines," said Queen Noor. The demining program in the Jordan Valley has cleared 146 mine fields with 64,000 mines, which has made available 3,100 acres of land that can now be used for cultivation, mineral excavation and tourism.

On a wider scale Jordan has participated in international conferences on eliminating landmines, initiated awareness programs in schools and universities, and launched a project to establish a center for the rehabilitation and training of landmine survivors. Perhaps most importantly, Jordan has signed the Ottawa Treaty and has not imported landmines since 1974.

The facts supporting landmine victims and survivors are startling, and the statistics speak eloquently. "One hundred thousand American soldiers and civilians have been injured and killed by landmines in this century alone. Thirty-four percent of American casualties in the Gulf War and 33 percent in the Vietnam War were all landmine casualties," states Queen Noor. "Some 300,000 people around the globe are living with shattered limbs and lives and the number is growing. Every month around 800 people are killed and 1200 maimed by landmines. Anti-personnel land mines harm primarily civilians. They contravene international humanitarian law because they are designed to injure rather than kill, to maximize suffering."

One of the problems that she has often mentioned is the detailed understanding of what is required to aid survivors and help them reintegrate into their community. She wants people to see the human face of the problem. The real evil does not just encompass the unimaginable cost of prosthetics but the multiple surgeries, the trauma undergone by a young child, the psychological scars and the shattered dreams. Then there are the additional costs to the community of farmland rendered useless, livestock endangered and the economy of community and family ruined. "Landmines are generally placed in rural villages in order to shatter the morale and integrity of family, clan, tribe and village. These weapons have proliferated into a source of random terror that respects neither time nor territory and does not distinguish between hostile combatants and schoolboys playing football," said Queen Noor.

The importance of landmine awareness coupled with the issues affecting victims and survivors must be disseminated. Awareness may bring the next step, action, which may result in influencing policy makers, congressmen and senators into getting the Ottawa Treaty signed and ratified. Queen Noor feels the ratification of the Ottawa Treaty will "set a moral example and honor those who have lost their lives, or the families of those who have become injured by landmines in a way that ensures it won't happen to anyone in the future." ■



Jordan's Queen Noor, a longtime supporter of victim assistance, observes a first-aid demonstration.

Bill of Rights for Landmine Survivors

Presented by Queen Noor of Jordan
July 11, 1998

Consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; based on the collective wisdom of world religions; In conformance with United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities; Recognizing that hundreds of thousands of men, women and children injured by mines urgently need care and support to resume productive lives; Believing that landmine survivors should share the same rights and protections that should be enjoyed by all persons, Landmine Survivors Network advocates:

- ◆ The right of survivors to participate fully in all decisions concerning their health and well being.
- ◆ The right to comprehensive rehabilitation and access to reliable information of physical, psychological, social and economic aspects of recovery.

- ◆ The rights of survivors, born free and equal in dignity and rights, to participate fully in their society.
- ◆ The right to education commensurate with ability.
- ◆ The right to obtain such aids, equipment, and materials that assist in education, training, movement and transportation.
- ◆ The right to an environment that allows freedom of movement and transportation in a safe and secure manner.
- ◆ The right to employment commensurate with capabilities and qualifications.
- ◆ The right of families of mine victims to necessary relief and support services.
- ◆ The right to peer support, recreation and vocational resources to promote social and economic integration.
- ◆ The right to select qualified health practitioners, voice concerns about quality care and seek redress if services or products do not meet high quality standards.