

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

Volume 16
Issue 2 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 28

July 2012

Jordan Declared Minefield Free

CISR JOURNAL

Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)

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Recommended Citation

JOURNAL, CISR (2012) "Jordan Declared Minefield Free," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 16 : Iss. 2 , Article 28.

Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol16/iss2/28>

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Jordan Declared Minefield Free

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After nearly two decades of landmine removal, Jordan is the first country in the Middle East to declare itself "free of minefields." In the aftermath of this event, nongovernmental organizations and mine-action groups are working with landmine survivors to change negative perceptions of people with disabilities.



CISR Director, Ken Rutherford receives a plaque of recognition on behalf of CISR for its support of Jordan's landmine-abatement efforts.
Photo courtesy of CISR.

In 1998, Jordan became one of the first countries in the Middle East to sign and ratify the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction* (also known as the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMB). On 24 April 2012, Jordan celebrated its minefield-free status with dignitaries worldwide, nongovernmental organization leaders and landmine survivors at the King Hussein bin Talal Convention Centre near the Dead Sea. Under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Mired bin Raad, Jordan began clearance work in 1993, five years before signing the APMB.

As a result of the 1948 partition of Palestine, the Arab-Israeli conflict (1967–1969), the 1970 civil war and the 1975 confrontation with Syria, anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, explosive remnants of war, unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance contaminated Jordan's northern and western

borders. Between 1948 and December 2010, Jordan's National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation recorded 909 casualties (120 killed and 789 injured).¹ Following the conflicts, NCDR spent almost 20 years removing more than 300,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines² from more than 500 minefields covering an area of 60 million square

meters (23 square miles).³

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In compliance with the APMBC and NCDR's National Mine Action Plan, Jordan set May 2012 as its deadline for the country to become free of minefields. Operations were completed ahead of schedule on 21 March 2012.² At the ceremony celebrating Jordan's minefield-free status, Crown Prince Haakon of Norway said, "Jordan has shown courage, responsibility and persistence in turning the dream of a mine-free Jordan into reality in a region where landmines still represent a threat to people's life and hinder social and economic development."⁴

During the ceremony, Jordan's Crown Prince Hussein bin Al Abdullah, representing his father, His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, thanked various sponsors and donors who helped the NCDR in its work, including Norway, Norwegian People's Aid and Jordan's Royal Engineering Corps. Crown Prince Hussein also recognized James Madison University's Center for International Stabilization and Recovery as an important partner of the Jordanian people in clearing the country of landmines, assisting its victims, and for providing mine-risk education to Jordanian youth about the risks of ERW and UXO. CISR Director Ken Rutherford attended the ceremony and received a plaque from Crown Prince Hussein in recognition of CISR's work in helping Jordan achieve its minefield-free status.⁵

In recognition that residual risk could remain in mine-affected areas, Jordan, with support from NPA, continues to carry out verification exercises to ensure fulfillment of the APMBC requirements.⁶ Additionally, landmine survivor Kamel Saadi,

Director of the Jordanian NGO Life Line for Consultancy and Rehabilitation, acknowledged the hardships faced by those who suffer injuries and disabilities due to mines.³ In deference to those at the ceremony who had suffered the effects of ERW, the NCDR chairman, Prince Mired, said, "The achievement that we are here to celebrate has most meaning for our brave soldiers... We salute you for your spirit and your unparalleled perseverance to continue with your lives in a dignified and productive manner. We renew our promise to you that we will try our utmost in the future to cater more and more to your needs."³

These words of encouragement were indicative of many who hoped that achieving a minefield-free homeland for Jordan would soon spread to other landmine and ERW-plagued areas. "Becoming mine-impact free was not an easy task—there still are many years of hard work ahead for Jordanian survivors and their communities—but it is a huge step in securing peace and stability..." noted Rutherford.⁵

~ Paige Ober, CISR staff



Contact Information

Center for International Stabilization and Recovery
 James Madison University
 MSC 4902
 Harrisonburg, VA 22807 / USA
 Email: cisr@jmu.edu
 Website: <http://cisr.jmu.edu>

Endnotes

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