

Jordan

by Anthony Morin [Mine Action Information Center]

Landmines, unexploded ordnance, and explosive remnants of war have plagued the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as a result of several periods of conflict. The Jordanian government and its opponents first planted landmines during the conflict immediately following Israeli independence, then later as a result of the 1967–1969 Arab-Israeli conflicts, again during the subsequent period of civil war in 1970, and lastly as a defensive measure during the 1975 altercation with Syria. Having imported its last mine in 1974, Jordan has since emerged as a regional leader for mine action in the Middle East and has proudly engaged in “spreading both the spirit and letter of the global landmine campaign.”¹

Extent of Contamination

The distribution of landmines is largely concentrated along the northern border with Syria, the western border with Israel, and within the Jordan Valley. Although these contaminated areas are now controlled by the Jordanian military and are essentially blocked from the public, their presence still has a significant impact on the social, economic and environmental resources of local communities.²

According to the Royal Corps of Engineers, Jordan’s primary demining authority, when humanitarian demining started in 1993, there were an estimated 60 million square meters (23 square miles) of suspected hazardous areas contaminated with approximately 304,653 mines. Between 1993 and 2005, over 100,000 mines and 10,000 pieces of UXO were removed and destroyed, resulting in the reduction of more than 25 million square meters (9.6 square miles). The remaining 35 million square meters (13.5 square miles) of SHAs are believed to affect the lives of as many as 500,000 people, or roughly 8 percent of Jordan’s total population. Landmines, UXO and ERW have been to blame for restricting access to some of the country’s most valuable agricultural lands, as well as for greatly inhibiting the development of much needed economic infrastructure in the form of irrigation and hydroelectric power projects, housing construction and cultural heritage tourism sites.³

National Mine-action Program

Jordan signed the Ottawa Convention⁴ on 11 August 1998, ratified it on 13 November 1998, and officially became a State Party with the treaty’s entry into force on 1 May 1999. In April 1993, the government destroyed its stockpiles, consisting of 92,342 anti-

personnel mines.² In accordance with Article 5, Jordan is required to destroy all mines located within its jurisdiction no later than 1 May 2009.² If provided proper funding to allow the expansion of its demining capacity, the Jordanian government believes that it will be able to comply with its international mandate.

The establishment of the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation in 2000 first marked national implementation of the Ottawa Convention. As Jordan’s primary national mine-action authority, the NCDR is responsible for the organization and implementation of integrated mine-action goals, strategies and programs, including mine clearance, mine-risk education, survivor and victim assistance, and policy-universalization activities.¹ In 2005, the NCDR published its first National Mine Action Plan. This five-year plan functions as a strategic planning framework designed to cultivate an integrated national approach to mine action, primarily through capacity development.

Casualties and Survivor Assistance

From 1993 to April 2006, 533 landmine/UXO casualties were reported with 111 killed, 418 injured and four circumstances unknown. These casualties included 212 civilians, 132 military personnel, 172 deminers, and 13 peacekeepers. Although static and reliable figures are difficult to obtain prior to 1993, the government has estimated that the actual number of total casualties dating back to 1967 could be as high as 800.³

Landmine survivors and victims have had access to basic health and rehabilitation services since the 1960s. There has been a need, however, for more specialized rehabilitative services. The National Rehabilitation Centre for Amputees was designed to fill that void; however, it has never fulfilled its function, because the NCRA does not have the funding or equipment needed to perform its role.

Despite this drawback, the Jordanian government has been active in its support of various survivor/victim assistance initiatives, including the development of national, long-term SVA policies and other programs that address disability policy and law; health and social welfare research and data collection; first aid and primary healthcare; hospital-medical care; rehabilitation; and socioeconomic reintegration.³

Outlook for the Future

In March of this year, the 2008 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Law was endorsed by Royal

decrees. The new law follows much the same rhetoric as the mine ban prohibitions under the Ottawa Convention. The law forbids the handling and use of landmines in the country as well as their import, export and transfer within the kingdom. Only the Jordan Armed Forces and those with a special written order from the Minister of Defense have permission to handle these weapons.⁵

In response to decreasing clearance rates and a looming 2009 Ottawa Convention deadline, Jordan has elected to expand its clearance activities to include civilian demining organizations. Furthermore, during the Intersessional May 2006 Standing Committee meetings in Geneva, Jordan outlined a new three-step approach for reaching its 2009 deadline. Although encouraging, such a plan seems too optimistic; recent trends show a steady decline in funding that threatens the country’s ability to sustain and increase its clearance rates. Therefore, a new timeframe is expected to span to 2011.⁵ Jordan has remained determined to uphold its commitment, and it hosted the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention in November 2007. With any luck, the international attention that accompanied the meeting will result in increased donations. ♦

See Endnotes, page 113



Anthony Morin has worked as a Student Research Assistant for the MAIC since April 2006. He is a senior at James Madison University pursuing a bachelor’s degree in justice studies with minors in Asian studies and political science. After graduating, he will serve as the 2008–2009 Frasere-Kruzel-Drew Humanitarian Demining Fellow at the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement. He later plans to attend graduate school and pursue a career in international humanitarian affairs.

Anthony Morin
Student Research Assistant
Mine Action Information Center
E-mail: maic@jmu.edu
Web site: <http://maic.jmu.edu/>