

AZERBAIJAN



PROFILES

Eastern Europe & the Caucasus

HISTORY: Azerbaijan declared independence from Russia in 1918, but was incorporated in the Soviet Union in 1920. It again declared independence in August 1991, following the collapse of the USSR. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region is still unresolved after 10 years and Baku has yet to settle disputes with its neighbors over oil rights in the Caspian Sea. During 1988–1994, Karabakh Armenians declared independence and seized almost 20 percent of the country's territory, creating an estimated 750,000 Azerbaijani refugees. As a result of the war, western Azerbaijan is plagued with landmines. Both sides have generally observed a Russian-mediated cease-fire since May 1994. Azerbaijan, with an estimated population of 8,000,000, adopted a new constitution in November 1995.

LANDMINE AND UXO

OVERVIEW: The disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, torn by five years of war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, has a serious mine problem. Mines affect farm work all throughout the region. The United Nations and the U.S. State Department estimate the number of mines to be 100,000. Considering the population density, the land area and the number of mines, the degree of infestation is close to that in Afghanistan. In Martakert, 78 miles of mined roads and 31 sq. miles of mine fields have been identified. Both AT and AP mines have been found.

VICTIMS AND CASUALTIES:

According to official reports 7,000 people have been injured in the conflict with 70 percent resulting from



landmines. The Ministry of Labor has allowed the ICRC to inhabit a building in Baku for prosthesis production. Rehabilitation and psychosocial programs are nonexistent.

DEMINEING: The national Agency for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Areas (ARRA) estimated it would cost 5.2 million dollars to demine 22 villages in the Fizuli region. Norway contributed 134,000 dollars in 1998. HALO Trust has trained six supervisors and 45 deminers from the local population. To date, HALO has destroyed four tons of UXO and has started mine awareness through the media. Demining by self-defense units would help increase arable land area by 20 percent.

WAR REALITY CHECK: The landmine problem was evident in the summer of 1994, when a lull in fighting allowed time for the harvest. At least 10 people were killed and many more injured by exploding mines while working in the fields, reported the Tass News Agency.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Azerbaijan National Agency for Demining (ANAD)

BELARUS

HISTORY: Belarus has had a long and devastating history that intertwines them with several different countries. The country has been filled with war and strife as far back as records can date. During the 19th and 20th centuries, Belarus was plagued with the Germans and Russians fighting in World War I, and they were severely plundered during World War II by many different foreigners. In 1918, the area now known as Belarus became a part of Russia after the Russo-German treaty, which helped end World War I. Despite the tight grip that Russia held on most of its republics, it allowed Belarus to establish individual ties with the United Nations. In 1991, after the USSR dissolved, Belarus claimed its independence and the republic's Communist party (CPB) appeared to take over. For the next few years the idea of a constitution and new leadership filled the country's atmosphere. Belarus has remained the closest country to Russia in hopes of becoming a member of the international community and has, within the last year, signed a treaty with Russia, which states that each country, Russia and Belarus, will work for greater agreement politically, economically and socially.

LANDMINE AND UXO

OVERVIEW: Belarus has been plagued with war, landmines and UXO all throughout its borders. The most predominant areas are the battlefields from World War I and II. The cities and provinces closest to these grounds are

