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Jordan

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Landmines began to impact Jordan during the 1948 war with Israel. Then, more landmines were emplaced during the 1967 Six-Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbors, Jordan, Egypt and Syria. Defensive minefields were laid along parts of Jordan's northern border with Syria in the 1970s. Military records indicate Jordanian and Israeli forces laid a total of 305,000 mines during these wars. Through various governmental and humanitarian organizations, Jordan has made great progress toward alleviating the landmine problem.

Jordan does not manufacture landmines; it bought mines from other countries but stopped importing mines in 1974. Of its anti-personnel mine stockpile, 98 percent are of U.S. manufacture, with the remaining developed in Belgium, Britain, Egypt, Russia and Syria. The majority of landmines are located in two discrete areas in the west (Jordan River Valley and Wadi Araba) and the north on the border with Syria.¹

Mine Action

Jordan signed the Ottawa Convention² on Aug. 11, 1998, and ratified it on Nov. 13, 1998. The document entered into force on May 1, 1999. Jordan emerged as a visible supporter of a landmine ban in the region, viewing landmines not only as dangerous, but also as an economic threat. The land in the river valley is the country's most fertile farmland, but the presence of mines severely impedes the production of food crops. The mines also hinder growth in the tourism industry.



The main demining agency is the Jordanian army's Royal Engineers Corps. According to the *Landmine Monitor Report*, the REC cleared 202 minefields between 1993 and August 2005.¹ In June 2004, it was estimated that approximately 200,856 mines remained in the country. Demining efforts are primarily focused on 300 minefields in the river valley so the land can be used for food production.

Other organizations are also working to aid the demining effort in Jordan. The National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation works to "ensure continuity and support for demining operations and rehabilitation projects."³ The organization works on various projects ranging from mine risk education to mine clearance. Currently, NCDR is working to establish the National Center for Amputees, which will start rehabilitation and reintegration of victims by early 2006. In August 2003, the U.N. Development Programme established a country team that is working to develop a national mine action strategy to support developmental plans and the reintegration of victims into society, as well as increase awareness among affected communities.

Clearance Plan and Difficulties

Jordan has been following a three-phase plan to reach the Ottawa Convention-mandated deadline of being mine-free⁴ by May 2009. The first phase of the plan was completed in 2005, covering the Jordan Valley and Eastern Heights. Phase Two is slated for completion in 2007, covering the Jordan-Syria border. Phase Three will cover the remaining areas in the western region and Wadi Araba.¹ While the country appears to be on track to meet this deadline, several obstacles threaten to delay completion.

Funding is a major problem for demining operations. According to Mohammad Breikat from NCDR, "Acquiring funds is a hardship because the mine problem in Jordan is not as serious as the problem in other

countries."⁵ Thus, funds from international donors are targeted more toward countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. Lack of funding causes a shortage in medical aid, safety gear and ground detection equipment, and hinders rehabilitation programs.

Survivor Assistance

Landmine survivors are entitled to medical care and rehabilitation under Jordan's standardized healthcare system. Unfortunately, there is limited local outreach for physiotherapy and rehabilitation services. Complex cases are transferred to national institutions in Amman for prostheses and rehabilitation services. Al-Bashir Hospital is the primary provider of such services to civilians, and due to its role as a referral hospital for all of Jordan, there is a waiting list for services. The facilities and equipment are also dilapidated. The military King Hussein Medical Center, with the attached Farah Rehabilitation Center also provides rehabilitation and prosthetic care services for Jordanians with military insurance.

The Landmine Survivors Network has been active in Jordan since April 1999 in five locations. LSN's community-based outreach workers assess survivors' needs, offer psychological and social support, and educate families about the effects of limb loss. The organization assists survivors in accessing services that provide mobility devices, health services or vocational training.

Achieving Mine-Safe Status

Currently, Jordan is conducting a Landmine Impact Survey to create a database of the types and locations of mines, as well as the social and economic impacts experienced by those affected. Mine action organizations will use the database to assist in mine-clearing efforts, public education campaigns and victim assistance programs. Plans to develop a non-governmental entity to accelerate demining are also underway. These activities, along with the work of organizations like NCDR, should enable Jordan to reach the 2009 deadline.

Endnotes

1. E-mail interview. Yasin Majali. National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation. Sept. 8, 2005.
2. *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction*. Ottawa, Canada. Sept. 18, 1997. http://www.un.org/Depts/mine/UNDocs/ban_trty.htm. Accessed Oct. 10, 2005.
3. *Landmine Monitor Report 2004*. <http://www.icbl.org/lm/2004/jordan>. Accessed Aug. 29, 2005.
4. Editor's Note: Some countries and mine action organizations are urging the use of the term "mine free," while others are espousing the term "mine safe" or "impact free." "Mine free" connotes a condition where all landmines have been cleared, whereas the terms "mine safe" and "impact free" refer to the condition in which landmines no longer pose a credible threat to a community or country.
5. E-mail interview. Mohammad Breikat, National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation. Sept. 8, 2005.

References

1. Frahler, Kristen. "Jordan's Military in Mine Action." *Journal of Mine Action*. June 2004. <http://maic.jmu.edu/journal/8.1/focus/frahler/frahler.htm>. Accessed Aug. 29, 2005.
2. Trevelyan, James. "Technology Needs: Mine Clearance." *Journal of Mine Action*. April 2004. http://maic.jmu.edu/journal/5.3/focus/James_Trevelyan/James_Trevelyan.htm. Accessed Aug. 29, 2005.

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