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In 1962, Algeria successfully overthrew the French government and voted for independence after an eight-year Liberation War. Upon signing their constitution in 1972, Algeria became a socialist country under the leadership of the National Liberation Front (FNL). In 1992, Muslims began rebelling against the government, leading to several armed disputes over the next seven years. Currently, Algeria is working to clear its lands of UXO from previous disputes.

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Landmine / UXO Overview

The full extent of Algeria's landmine problem has never been assessed, but the government reports an estimated 1.3 million mines (913,000 in the east and 420,100 in the west). Many of these mines were left from the Liberation War, when roughly 20 types of mines were laid. The border area of Tunisia and Morocco contains a reported density of one landmine per meter left behind by French troops, and the Northern Coastal areas contain mines left by German and Italian troops in WWII.

In December 1997, Algeria signed the Ottawa Convention Treaty requesting an immediate response from other countries. To exhibit its dedication to banning landmines, Algeria has formed a National Algerian Committee Against Anti-personnel Landmines that will enforce a mine action program and encourage support of the Mine Ban Treaty.

Casualties

There are few records regarding the number of mine victims and casualties in Algeria, and when an incident occurs, it is hard to determine whether newly manufactured AP mines or previously existing landmines/UXO caused it. However, many accidents have occurred in regions formerly inhabited by militant groups. A large portion of the National Algerian Committee Against Anti-personnel Landmines' efforts will go towards rehabilitating mine victims in order to integrate them back into society.

Demining

No comprehensive data on demining activities in Algeria is available, but the government reports conducting both mine clearance and mine awareness programs. A group of explosive ordnance disposal experts run by the National Security Police has been formed to handle landmines and other UXO in urban regions of the country. The U.S. government is considering assisting in mine clearance in Algeria, which was requested in December 1999.

Reality Check

During the seven years of rebel attacks against the Algerian government, an

estimated 75,000 lives were lost, causing many to wonder whether the government was fully protecting its citizens. In response to concerns expressed by various human rights organizations, the United Nations investigated these prevalent acts of massive violence. The United Nations declared that the Islamic activists were mostly responsible, and they encouraged the government to enhance its humanitarian and democratic policies.

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