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History

Egypt is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Estimates range between 20 and 23 million mines/UXO lay in the country—about a fifth of the world total. During World War II, the western desert was littered with close to 20 million mines when Britain fought the Germans and Italians during a major battle at El Alamein. Recently, Egypt and Israel combined to dump more than six million mines in the Sinai desert and in regions of the Gulf of Suez during the Arab-Israeli wars in 1967 and 1973.

Landmine/UXO Overview

Egypt has been believed to be a landmine producer and has denied signature to the Ottawa Treaty. Although Egypt agrees with the "ultimate goal" of eliminating mines, it believes in the "responsible use" of mines. The country's principle objection to the treaty is that it does not make countries that laid the landmines responsible for removing them. Both Britain and Germany have given some money towards mine clearance. Egyptian officials believe that an estimated \$200 million (U.S.) is needed to clear the country of mines. Officials also argue that AP mines are a legitimate form of self defense when used responsibly, and Egypt states that if it agrees to sign the ban on landmines, then an alternative to the weapons must be enforced.

Casualties

Significant victims and casualties have been reported in past years. During 2001, 12 victims were reported, including five deaths. This figure proves a decrease in victims, as 37 victims (14 killed/23 injured) were reported in 1999 and 33 (13 killed/20 injured) in 1998. Reports indicate that the majority of serious injuries to civilians occurred in the eastern regions, from mines planted during the war with Israel, not during the conflict during WWII.

Demining

Cairo announced the establishment of a center for combating mines and removing more than 23 million mines planted in Egypt. This center constitutes the first civilian attempt in the region to combat the danger of mines and prevent their use and manufacture. Since 1948, various Egyptian demining operations have been undertaken, resulting in approximately 20 percent of the former contaminated areas now considered clear. Seven million mines have been cleared from the western desert in the past 15 years and three million from the Sinai desert. Egypt has set the year 2006 as the target for finally ridding the area of landmines, but it is not prepared to independently pay for and carry out the huge task.

Reality Check

Over the years, thousands of detainees held in police stations in connection

with criminal investigations have been subjected to torture and ill treatment. These incidents are widespread and indiscriminate, and include women, children and the elderly.

Contact Information:

Landmine Struggle Center
196 Street 9 MAADI
Cairo, Egypt

Tel: 2-3750420/3750270
Fax: +20-2-37809891

ABOUT JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

Publisher: MAIC **Contact:** [MAIC\(a\)jmu.edu](mailto:MAIC(a)jmu.edu) **Last updated:** 01/11/2016 15:48:37



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