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Contents

Focus

Iran



Notes

History

Features

Home to many great ancient empires and witness to centuries of invaders, Iran supported monarchies until 1925, when Reza Shah Pahlavi, a Cossack military commander, gained power and reformed the country (modeled after the newly formed Turkish Republic of Ataturk). His son, Mohamad Reza Shah, initiated further reform by granting more rights to women. This final Shah was overthrown by the Islamic Revolution in 1979, which replaced Iran's trend towards secularization with a government run by fundamentalist clerics.

Staff

Call

Journal

Home

Landmine / UXO Overview

Iran's landmines have been concentrated near its borders with Iraq, Afghanistan and along the Persian Gulf. The U.S. State Department reports that the Iranian government acknowledges deploying over 16 million landmines during the Iran-Iraq War (1980—1988). Iran cites border protection as the country's need for landmines. The first known conference on Iran's landmine situation was held in Tehran in February 2000 and organized by the NGO High Center of Research and Informatics (HCRI).

AP mines produced by Iran have been found in other countries. However, in December 1997, a representative of Iran's government said that the republic does not currently export anti-personnel mines. Iran has also imported large quantities of mines, especially from the United States before 1979. Apparently, in Iran production of landmines is not prohibited. Like its other Mideast neighbors, Iran retains a stockpile of mines, though the exact number and types of mines are not known.

Casualties

According to Human Rights Watch, thousands of Iranian civilians have become victims of landmines since the Iran-Iraq War, especially farmers and shepherds. The medical Engineering Research Center estimates that there are about 300 mine and UXO casualties in Iran every year. The Landmine Monitor reports that HCRI conducted a survey of mine victims in a western province near Iraq. There, HCRI determined that over a 10-year period, landmines caused 394 deaths and 688 injuries. About one-fourth of the fatalities were in the group determined to be at greatest risk: young people under the age of 20.

Demining

According to Iranian officials in the year 2000 more than 880,000 mines and UXO, and 30,000 hectares of land were cleared. Since 1988, over 250,000 hectares of mined land and 9 million mines and UXO have been cleared.

Reality Check

In Iran, under Islamic law, women are stoned to death by their families and communities when husbands accuse their wives of infidelity, which they often do

as a way to get out of a marriage. According to the New England International & Comparative Law Annual, more than 1500 women have been stoned to death in Iran since 1979. Armed moral police monitor the population and enforce Islamic law as interpreted by Iran's theocracy.

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