



Journal of Mine Action

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The Golan Heights, located along the border of Syria and Israel, has housed many conflicts since 1948. Israel inhabited most of the area during the 1967 Six-Day War, and since then, some 15,000 Israelis have settled there. Several landmines have been used in these disputes with Israel, as well as in a controversy with Lebanon in 1982. Currently, Syria and Israel are still negotiating the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the area.

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Landmine / UXO Overview

In other regions of Syria, the severity of the landmine threat is unclear, but it is believed there are roughly 100,000 mines dispersed throughout the land. Reports indicate that there are approximately 67,000 mines residing along Jordan's border and an unknown number of landmines along Turkey's border.

So far, Syria has not signed the Ottawa Treaty because the government feels they need the landmines for protection against Israel. There are no records that indicate whether Syria produces or exports landmines, but Jordan claims to own AP mines from Syria. It is also believed that Syria is stockpiling a large supply of AP mines of unknown origin.

Casualties

Several individuals have suffered from landmine-related accidents in the Golan Heights and other infested areas of Syria, but an exact number is unknown at this time. The Syrian government provides free medical service to its civilians, and landmine victims are provided with various emergency care and rehabilitative services. Various organizations that support landmine victims and other disabled civilians are based in Damascus.

Demining

The UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) conducted landmine clearance in the Golan Heights from November 1999 to May 2000. In addition, the Russian Army performed a series of demining activities, but there are no records that indicate where these activities were conducted or how much area was cleared. Throughout 2000, numerous mine awareness activities were conducted including an art exhibit displaying artwork by landmine victims in Syria.

Reality Check

Recently, Syrian officials have been criticized for oppressing civil rights activists and preventing them from meeting without government consent. Human rights activists have accused Syria of violating various human rights laws by ordering their people to keep quiet about any issues going on in the country. Currently, the European Union is investigating the situation and negotiating an agreement

with Syria in order to guarantee human rights.

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