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## Yemen

Country Profile

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# Journal of Mine Action

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### History

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Yemen's history dates back over 3,000 years. Ancient kingdoms gained wealth through trade, and when the Greeks and Romans discovered that they could travel to India by boat, Yemen's ports became extremely wealthy. In the seventh century, the Persian-controlled government of Yemen converted to Islam. A long line of colonialism began when Portugal invaded Yemen in 1513, followed by England in 1839 and the Ottoman Turks in 1849. The 1950s brought numerous border conflicts and thus, landmines. Soon, an internal revolution began within Yemen, and a civil war was waged throughout the nation. In 1990, Yemen was united as the Unified Republic of Yemen; however, this was not the end of conflict. Yemen faced more border disputes with neighboring Saudi Arabia and Eritrea, and another civil war broke out in 1994.

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### Landmine / UXO Overview

The Yemen government states that it never manufactured or exported AP mines; however, it did import mines from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Italy to use in conflicts between 1962 and 1994. Because of this, most of Yemen's agricultural land, as well as land close to water and electricity sources, is affected by landmines and UXO. More specifically, 1,207 mine-affected communities in 274 districts in 18 of 19 governates have been identified, and presently, fences and warning signs around many designated minefields are missing. The government stated that between 1997 and 1999, 59,000 stockpiled AP mines were counted, and since then, they have located 20,000 more.

### Casualties

Over 2,000 Yemenis have been killed and 3,600 injured by landmines since 1992. A survey completed by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) throughout four districts discovered 1,326 citizens who were disabled by landmines. According to the 2001 Landmine Monitor Report, there were at least twelve mine casualties in 2000, and three mine incidents by mid 2001, . These victims were mostly middle-aged and without prosthetics, financial resources or adequate healthcare facilities. Recently, however, some advancements have been made to improve victim assistance. For example, in 1999 the Ministry of Public Health established a Rehabilitation Department, and in 2000 Handicap International (HI) began training staff members at a new rehabilitation center.

### Demining

Demining is conducted by a unit of the Engineering Department of the Ministry of Defense (EDMD) and the Mine Clearance Unit of the Regional Mine Action Center (MCURMAC). However, the EDMD consists mainly of both outdated equipment and techniques and demines on an on-call basis. The MCURMAC has been more successful. They are trained and equipped by the United States, and in their first

operation in June 1999, they cleared land in Aden to use for grazing. In 2000, 4,286 anti-personnel mines were destroyed in stockpiles. 447 anti-vehicle and 4,897 UXO were cleared from a 666,445 m<sup>2</sup> area of land, according to the 2001 Landmine Monitor Report. In December 1999, a celebration was held to honor this first step in making Yemen mine free. The Yemeni government also implemented a Demining Action Program managed by the United Nations that aims to make Yemen completely mine free by 2025.

### Reality Check

Yemen has accomplished many small goals in its effort to become mine free. For instance, in 1999 the Yemeni government spent approximately \$1.7 million (U.S.) on its Mine Action Program. Many other nations have also contributed funds, such as Great Britain, which recently donated \$285,000 to the Mine Action Program. In addition, numerous medical advancements have been made, and UNMAS recently selected Yemen to be the first mine-affected country to have a Level One Survey.

Regarding humanitarianism, however, Yemen has much to accomplish: converting to any religion other than Islam is punishable by death.

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