

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Armenia should commit to never again use cluster munitions.
- Armenia should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as a matter of priority.
- Armenia should comply with its obligations under international human rights law to clear cluster munition remnants (CMR) on territory under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- Armenia should expedite the adoption of national mine action legislation.
- Armenia should elaborate a strategic plan for mine action, including for CMR survey and clearance.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

A six-week armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region broke out in September 2020 and ended with Azerbaijan regaining control over most of its internationally recognised territories except for a part of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the course of the fighting, both Armenia and Azerbaijan are reported to have targeted

cluster munitions against each other's territory, as well as in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia's Humanitarian Centre for Demining and Expertise (CHDE) reported new cluster munition-contaminated area within Armenia's jurisdiction and control as a result of the recent hostilities, the extent of which has not yet been determined.

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Prior to the 2020 conflict with Azerbaijan, Armenia had one confirmed hazardous area (CHA) of CMR contamination in Kornidzor, Syunik province,¹ the size of which was not reported. The CHDE reported based on direct evidence of new explosive ordnance (EO) contamination, including M095 cluster munition, in Gegharkunik, Syunik, and Tavush provinces bordering Azerbaijan as a result of the recent conflict. According to CHDE, artillery, including BM-21 rocket launchers, were used to bomb the Armenian settlements bordering Azerbaijan. As at July 2021, the extent and precise nature of the contamination had yet to be determined though the CHDE was planning to conduct non-technical surveys to clarify the situation.²

In November 2020, Amnesty International documented one Grad rocket strike by Azerbaijan that landed in Armenia, in the village of Davit Bek in Syunik province. The report did not confirm whether that rocket contained submunitions but said that some Azerbaijani attacks were carried out using cluster munitions.³

The HALO Trust could not confirm the presence of new CMR contamination in Armenian territories as the area had not yet been surveyed. But HALO expected new EO contamination in Kornidzor in Syunik province and said that there have been reports of submunitions being identified in certain areas, including in Davit Bek.⁴

Human Rights Watch documented repeated use of LAR-160 cluster munition rockets and M095 dual-purpose submunitions by Azerbaijan in a civilian neighbourhood in Hadrut and Stepanakert in the autonomous Nagorno-Karabakh region⁵ that remained under effective Armenian control. Amnesty International also recorded four strikes in Stepanakert, five in Martuni, and two in Martakert in Nagorno-Karabakh, all of which were carried out by Azerbaijan forces. Some of these attacks involved the use of cluster munitions.⁶ (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2021* report on Nagorno-Karabakh for further information).

OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR AND LANDMINES

Armenia is also contaminated with anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW). (See Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Armenia for further information).

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The CHDE was established by the Armenian government in 2011 as a civilian, non-commercial State body responsible for conducting survey and clearance and identifying contaminated areas. In 2014, the CHDE was designated as Armenia's national mine action authority (NMAA).⁷

In 2013, in conformity with a government decree, the CHDE began developing national mine action legislation. The CHDE began drafting the law in 2015⁸ with the support of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

office in Yerevan.⁹ In 2019, the CHDE expected to submit the draft mine action law to the new Parliament of Armenia for discussion before the end of the year.¹⁰ As at April 2021, however, no progress towards the adoption of the mine action law had been reported.¹¹

In 2020, the government allocated AMD208 million (approx. US\$400,000) to cover the costs of the CHDE and AMD130 million (approx. \$250,000) for survey and clearance operations.¹²

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The CHDE does not have a gender policy and associated implementation plan but has reported that gender has been mainstreamed in Armenia's draft national mine action strategy. During community liaison activities, all groups affected by contamination are consulted, including women and children. The CHDE is said to offer equal employment opportunities for both men and women. Two of the department heads within the CHDE are female and, of a total of 47 employees, 17 are women (36%), most of whom occupy senior or specialist roles. In addition, two women work in the non-technical survey teams, though there are no women deminers.¹³

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

With support from the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), the CHDE set up and manages the national Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.¹⁴ The CHDE had been planning to install IMSMA Core in 2019, but as at April 2021, this had been delayed for an unspecified amount of time due to the outbreak of COVID-19. In 2020, the CHDE elaborated quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) forms using KoboCollect Software to improve data collection in the field. IMSMA Core will allow the direct import of data into the database using KoboCollect forms.¹⁵

PLANNING AND TASKING

The draft National Strategic Plan on Mine Action was presented for the approval to the Armenian Government in 2018, but as at April 2021, the plan was being reconsidered due to the emergence of new challenges (primarily the contamination resulting from the 2020 conflict).¹⁶ The main objectives of the original draft Plan were to address, as a priority, anti-personnel mines in CHAs that have a humanitarian impact, and increasing community safety in support of the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁷

Tasking for clearance is based on CHDE criteria. Priority is given first to contaminated areas that are up to 1km away from a population centre, then to those near agricultural land, and finally to contaminated areas that negatively affect the environment. These are mostly located in the mountains. To optimise efficient deployment of resources, clearance plans are typically drawn up on a community-by-community basis.¹⁸

Armenia's annual work plan of 2021 envisaged the following activities: battle area clearance (BAC) of 45,000m² of CMR and EO contamination in Kornidzor area of Togh community (Syunik province); technical survey and clearance of 15,000m² of EO contaminated land in Davit Bek of Kapan community (Syunik province); and non-technical survey in Gegharkunik, Syunik, and Tavush provinces. The CHDE noted that survey and clearance foreseen in Gegharkunik, Syunik, and Tavush provinces will identify and target the new contamination resulting from the 2020 conflict with Azerbaijan.¹⁹

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

In 2013, with the assistance of FSD, the CHDE developed the Armenian National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and submitted them for government approval. The NMAS were approved by the government in April 2014.²⁰ In 2018, amendments were made to the NMAS for mine risk education, accreditation of demining organisations, and mine detection dogs (MDDs). No amendments were made to the NMAS in 2020. According to CHDE, reviews of the NMAS are conducted following the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and international best practice.²¹

The CHDE has been developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for several years.²² SOPs on manual mine clearance, BAC, marking of hazardous areas, and medical support were elaborated by 2018.²³ In 2020, the CHDE elaborated SOPs on Information Management (IM), non-technical survey, technical survey, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and quality management (QM).²⁴

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Armenia only conducted BAC and EO clearance in 2020, all of which was all performed by the Foundation for Demining and Demolition, a national non-governmental organisation. The CHDE deployed one non-technical survey team of three personnel while the Foundation for Demining and Demolition deployed three clearance teams totalling 18 deminers.²⁵

The CHDE had been planning to add one manual clearance team, one mechanical demining team, and one non-technical survey team to its demining capacity for 2020. The envisaged increase did not happen, though, and survey and clearance capacity remained constant. Plans by the CHDE to acquire mechanical clearance equipment also did not materialise due to changes in domestic law, which have impeded procurement.²⁶ Currently all clearance is conducted manually following the failure of six MDDs to obtain accreditation in 2017 following which they were "demobilised".²⁷ The CHDE has foreseen an increase in capacity in 2021 of one new non-technical survey team and one to two demining teams.²⁸

QM is conducted in accordance with IMAS and the NMAS. QA is conducted by dedicated officers who make regular field visits to inspect cleared land.²⁹ QC is conducted once clearance of the land has been completed, prior to handover.³⁰

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE

In 2020, the Foundation for Demining and Demolition conducted BAC on a total area of 66,746m², of which 3,850m², containing EO and CMR contamination, was cleared in Kornidzor in Tegh municipality, Syunik province with one item of ERW detected and destroyed. In addition, 62,896m² was cleared of EO in Mayakovski community of Kotayk province.³¹

In 2019, an area of 56,580m² was cleared and 16,271m² was cancelled during BAC operations in Armenia. Davit Bek, which had been fully cleared and handed over to the community in 2019, is now suspected to be re-contaminated with EO and CMR as a result of the 2020 conflict.³²

PROGRESS IN 2021

As at July 2021, CHDE conducted technical surveys and EOD tasks in Syunik province destroying more than 30 submunitions as a result. The CHDE was also conducting non-technical survey of the new cluster munition-contaminated areas in Gegharkunik, Syunik, and Tavush to ascertain the extent and type of contamination.³³

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| 1 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, Head of Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance, CHDE, 26 July 2021. | 16 | Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020 and 26 April 2021. |
| 2 | Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April and 26 July 2021. | 17 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019. |
| 3 | Amnesty International, "In the Line of Fire", 2021, at: https://bit.ly/3zHXp3H , pp. 13 and 18. | 18 | Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017. |
| 4 | Email from Miles Hawthorn, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 18 June 2021. | 19 | Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021. |
| 5 | Human Rights Watch (HRW), Azerbaijan: Cluster Munitions Used in Nagorno-Karabakh, 23 October 2020, at: https://bit.ly/3bT3QXE . | 20 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019. |
| 6 | Amnesty International, "In the Line of Fire", 2021, p. 13. | 21 | Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019 and 26 April 2021. |
| 7 | Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015; and Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020. | 22 | Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016. |
| 8 | Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016. | 23 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018. |
| 9 | Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017. | 24 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021. |
| 10 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019. | 25 | Ibid. |
| 11 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021. | 26 | Ibid. |
| 12 | Ibid. | 27 | Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019, 25 June 2020, and 26 April 2021. |
| 13 | Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020 and 26 April 2021. | 28 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021. |
| 14 | Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014. | 29 | Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015. |
| 15 | Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020 and 26 April 2021. | 30 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018. |
| | | 31 | Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021. |
| | | 32 | Ibid. |
| | | 33 | Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April and 26 July 2021. |