

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Iran should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as a matter of priority.
- Iran 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.
- Iran should report publicly on the extent and location of CMR and prepare a plan for their clearance and destruction.

### UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

The extent of CMR contamination in Iran is not known. Some contamination is believed to remain from the Iran-Iraq war in 1980–88,<sup>1</sup> when cluster munitions were widely used in Khuzestan and to a lesser extent in Kermanshah. Iraqi forces are believed to have air-dropped cluster bombs in 1984 against Iranian troops.<sup>2</sup> They used mostly French- and Russian-made cluster munitions in attacks on oil facilities at Abadan and Mah-Shahr, and Spanish-made cluster munitions in attacks on troop positions at Dasht-e-Azadegan. A United States (US) Navy aircraft used 18 Mk-20 Rockeye bombs in attacks on Iranian Revolutionary Guard speedboats and an Iranian Navy ship on 18 April 1988.<sup>3</sup> Air Force explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams cleared many unexploded submunitions after attacks but contamination remains around Mah-Shahr and the port of Bandar Imam Khomeini, according to a retired Iranian Air Force colonel.<sup>4</sup>

#### OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR AND LANDMINES

Iran also has areas containing anti-personnel mines (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Iran for further information).

### NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Iran Mine Action Centre (IRMAC) was established as the national mine action centre in 2005, taking the place of a mine action committee within the Ministry of Defence. IRMAC is responsible for planning, data, managing survey, procurement, and the accreditation of demining operators. It also sets standards, provides training for clearance operators, concludes contracts with demining operators, and ensures quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) of their operations. It coordinates mine action with the General Staff of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Interior, the Management and Planning Organisation of Iran, and other relevant ministries and organisations, and handles international relations.<sup>5</sup> Several IRMAC staff are believed to be serving or former military personnel, including its Director, while others are civilians employed by the Ministry of Defence.

IRMAC is said to have a branch in every affected province. Available demining assets, such as mechanical assets, vary from province to province.

In March 2019, Iran hosted a three-day international roundtable on "humanitarian mine action: challenges and best practices", attended by representatives from other states, national and international demining organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). The aim of the roundtable was to share knowledge and experience on mine action, challenges, and best practices.<sup>6</sup>

In November 2019, Iran opened its first international humanitarian demining training centre in Tehran, with the aim of offering training courses related to humanitarian demining to other countries in the region struggling with landmine contamination.<sup>7</sup>

Iran is believed to have dedicated significant resources and effort to clearing areas on its territory contaminated by mines, CMR and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), but the results of survey and clearance have not been made publicly available.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

IRMAC actively maintains a national mine action database but it is not known to what extent it is comprehensive, up-to-date, and able to disaggregate CMR contamination and clearance output from that of other explosive ordnance.

IRMAC reported that it has a geographic information system (GIS), web-based, integrated information management system, which integrates information on quality, safety, and the environment.<sup>8</sup>

The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) also maintains a mine action database recording the results of its own clearance contracts.<sup>9</sup>

## LAND RELEASE

### OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

IRMAC combines the roles of regulator and operator, with demining teams and support staff deployed in the five affected provinces. In Kurdistan province, IRMAC is conducting verification, mainly through mechanical clearance. IRMAC also responds to calls from the local community reporting items of explosive ordnance. Demining capacity in Kurdistan province is believed to stand at around 12 personnel, a reduction on earlier capacity.<sup>10</sup>

The Iranian Army and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps assisted demining efforts to support the response to the flash flooding which affected Iran in March and April 2019.<sup>11</sup>

Commercial operators include AOM, Immen Sazan Omran Pars International, Immen Zamin Espadana, and Solh Afarinan-e Bedoun-e Marz (SABM). Three other companies, Imen Gostaran Mohit (IGM), Moshaver Omran Iran, and ZPP International, undertake QA/QC.<sup>12</sup>

Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), the development arm of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), contracts and monitors commercial operators conducting clearance of Iran's oil and gas producing areas which are concentrated in mine-affected areas of western and south western Iran bordering Iraq.<sup>13</sup>

Commercial mine and ERW clearance in Iran is conducted to ensure that land is free from explosive ordnance before it is used for economic purposes or developed. It is separate to humanitarian demining of areas known or suspected to contain explosive ordnance in order to make the land safe for civilian use, which comes under the remit of IRMAC. In a number of countries, commercial demining is applied to areas whether or not there is firm evidence of a threat from explosive ordnance.

International operators are not believed to have been active in Iran since 2008.

There is no available information on quality management procedures. In the past, very high levels of casualties were recorded during demining in Iran. IRMAC reported that since its establishment, in 2005, 200 deminers have been killed or injured during clearance of mines and ERW, which equates to one accident for every 15,000 mines or ERW detected.<sup>14</sup>

According to IRMAC, more than 2 million mines and over 1 million items of ERW have been destroyed since the start of its programme.<sup>15</sup>

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

No data were available on CMR survey or clearance in 2020, as was the case in the previous year.

As at August 2020, 18 submunitions had been discovered in the first seven months of the year, during ERW clearance of some 7km<sup>2</sup> in a commercial clearance project in Khuzestan province in the south-west of Iran.<sup>16</sup> As part of the project, the Pasargad Energy Development Company (PEDC) had a demining department and subcontracts a demining operator and QA/QC for the work.<sup>17</sup>

1 Statement by Gholamhossein Dehghani, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, CCM Second Meeting of States Parties, Beirut, 13 September 2011.

2 Iran Cluster Munition Ban Policy, Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, 4 September 2020, at: <http://bit.ly/3uRJDbQ>.

3 Cluster Munition Monitor 2015, p. 34.

4 Interview with Air Force Colonel (ret.) Ali Alizadeh, Tehran, 8 February 2014.

5 IRMAC PowerPoint Presentation, Tehran, 9 February 2014; and IRMAC, "Presentation of IRMAC".

6 "Tehran hosts international roundtable on humanitarian mine action", Mehr news agency, 12 March 2019, at: <http://bit.ly/2Z4LsIE>; and ICRC, "International roundtable on "humanitarian mine action: challenges and best practices", 15 March 2019, at: <http://bit.ly/2QH3cR6>.

7 "1st International Humanitarian Demining Training Center opens in Tehran", Mehr News Agency, 12 November 2019, available at: <http://bit.ly/2C7wRzG>.

8 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, available at: <http://bit.ly/38ALojt>; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, Deputy Director of IRMAC, National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.

9 "Iran", Landmine and Cluster Monitor, at: <https://bit.ly/2Qp4S5P>.

10 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Director, Ambassadors for development without borders, September 2019.

11 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for development without borders, September 2019.

12 Ibid.

13 Information provided by mine action expert on condition of anonymity.

14 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, available at: <http://bit.ly/38ALojt>; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, Deputy Director of IRMAC, National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.

15 Ibid.

16 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for development without borders, August 2020.

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