

### KEY DATA

**CLUSTER MUNITION  
CONTAMINATION:  
NOT REPORTED**

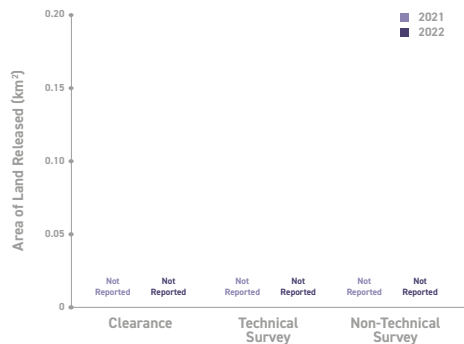
SUBMUNITION  
CLEARANCE IN 2022

**NOT REPORTED**

SUBMUNITIONS  
DESTROYED IN 2022

**13**

### LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Available data on contamination and land release of cluster munition-affected areas in Iran continue to be extremely limited. There is some evidence to suggest that several submunitions were found in 2022 during commercial clearance operations.

## 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.

## CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT

- Iran Mine Action Centre (IRMAC)

### NATIONAL OPERATORS\*

- IRMAC
- Iranian Army
- Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
- Commercial operators

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

### OTHER ACTORS

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

\* This is based on information from earlier years. It is not known if the information remains accurate.

## UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

The areas of Iran most significantly affected by weapons contamination, including mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), are believed to be in the five western provinces of West Azerbaijan, Ilam, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and Khuzestan.<sup>1</sup> However, the extent of cluster munition remnant (CMR) contamination in Iran is not known.

Some contamination is believed to remain from the Iran-Iraq war in 1980–88,<sup>2</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>3</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. Iraq also reportedly used Ababil-50 surface-to-surface cluster munition rockets during the later stages of the 1980-88 war.<sup>4</sup> 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>5</sup>

Air Force explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams cleared many unexploded submunitions after attacks but, as at 2014, contamination remained around Mah-Shahr and the port of Bandar Imam Khomeini, according to a retired Iranian Air Force colonel.<sup>6</sup> Commercial operator, SafeLane Global, was operational in Iran in 2009 when it was called BACTEC.<sup>7</sup> SafeLane Global noted on its website that cluster munitions used against oil facilities during the Iran-Iraq conflict left an ERW threat stating that: "while the Iranian government and its partners have made good progress, cluster munition contamination is still considered a possibility in some areas".<sup>8</sup>

The extent to which Iran is undertaking or planning survey to establish a baseline of CMR contamination is not known. It is also not known to what extent Iran disaggregates areas identified as contaminated by weapon type, for example unexploded submunitions from other ERW.

### 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. In 2014, IRMAC reported that it was responsible for planning, data, managing survey, procurement, and the accreditation of demining operators. It was also tasked with setting standards, providing training for clearance operators, concluding contracts with demining operators, and ensuring quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) of their operations. IRMAC also coordinated 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, while also managing international relations.<sup>9</sup> At the time of writing, Mine Action Review had not been able to establish if this description of IRMAC's role and responsibilities remained up to date.

The amount of national resources Iran contributes to support the cost of IRMAC or the survey and clearance of CMR-contaminated areas is not known. However, Iran is believed to have dedicated significant resources and effort to clearing areas on its territory contaminated by other ERW and mines.<sup>10</sup> The results of survey and clearance have not been made publicly available.

As part of an ongoing mine action programme in Iran, which also includes victim assistance and mine risk education (MRE), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports that it has undertaken some technical training of mine action actors in co-operation with IRMAC, though no dates for this are given.<sup>11</sup> In 2020, the ICRC reported that it had signed a mine action partnership memorandum of understanding (MoU), with IRMAC, which included support to Iran for safe humanitarian demining.<sup>12</sup> Land release of cluster munition-contaminated areas was not specifically mentioned.

1 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), "Weapon Contamination", accessed 9 February 2023 at: <https://bit.ly/30TC55t>.

2 Statement by Gholamhossein Dehghani, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), Second Meeting of States Parties, Beirut, 13 September 2011.

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

4 Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Special Five-Year Review. Cluster Munition Monitor 2015", accessed 24 May 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/43r2c7Z>, p. 35.

5 Ibid., p. 34.

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

7 Email from Åsa Gilbert, Business Development Manager, SafeLane Global, 19 July 2023.

8 SafeLane Global, "Iran", accessed 13 February 2023 at: <https://bit.ly/3MJFAC6>.

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

10 ICRC, "Experts from over 15 nations attend round-table on humanitarian mine action", Press release, 15 March 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3N7Ca4e>; and ICRC, "Weapon Contamination".

11 ICRC, "Weapon Contamination".

12 F. Arabpour (Weapon Contamination Coordinator, ICRC delegation in Tehran), "ICRC Mine Action activities in the I.R. of Iran", Presentation to the 23rd International Meeting of National Mine Action Program Directors and United Nations Advisors, Geneva, 11–14 February 2020, at: <https://bit.ly/43EjVZD>

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>13</sup>

In late 2022, an MoU for the development of mutual co-operation in mine action was signed between the national mine action centres of Iran and Armenia, following a visit to IRMAC from the Director of the Armenian Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE).<sup>14</sup> It has been reported that demining will begin in the near future at the Armenia-Iran border, on the Armenian side, for the development of a market.<sup>15</sup>

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

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It is not known whether Iran has a national mine action standard (NMAS) on environmental management and/or a policy on environmental management. It is also not known how, if at all, the environment is taken into consideration during planning and tasking of survey and clearance of CMR in order to minimise potential harm from clearance. It has been reported, however, that Iran's Ministry for the Environment does impose some relevant regulations around environmental practices in mine action.<sup>16</sup>

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## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The extent to which gender and diversity are mainstreamed into mine action in Iran is not known.

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## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

It is not known to what extent IRMAC is able to disaggregate CMR contamination and clearance output from that of other explosive ordnance. It has been reported that IRMAC's database is comprehensive and accurate and that operators provide regular activity reports to IRMAC on both humanitarian and commercial mine action projects.<sup>17</sup> However, Mine Action Review has not been able to obtain further information on this from IRMAC.

In 2020, 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>18</sup> In 2022, IRMAC launched an application for smartphones, which is reported to contain all data from historical and current clearance operations and intended to provide mine action organisations with a comprehensive view of contaminated and cleared areas identified by IRMAC. The application is also said to contain information about explosive accidents and is updated on a regular, even daily, basis. The application is available to operators and interested parties upon request.<sup>19</sup> At the time of writing, it had not been possible to ascertain whether it includes data on cluster munition-affected areas.

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## PLANNING AND TASKING

It is not known whether Iran has a national mine action strategy or an annual work plan for the survey and clearance of CMR or agreed and specified criteria for the prioritisation of tasks.

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## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

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Iran reportedly has national mine action standards in place.<sup>20</sup> At the time of writing no information was available on quality management (QM) procedures for humanitarian demining in Iran, although it was reported in 2023 that a subsidiary of IRMAC performs quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) of commercial demining.<sup>21</sup>

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13 "1st International Humanitarian Demining Training Center opens in Tehran", *Mehr News Agency*, 12 November 2019, available at: <http://bit.ly/2C7wRzG>.

14 "Iran, Armenia ink MoU on humanitarian demining cooperation", *Iran Press News Agency*, 19 September 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3WyeHJ>.

15 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 6 June 2023.

16 Ibid., 26 April 2023.

17 Email from Reza Amaninasab, Director, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 23 March 2023.

18 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, available at: <http://bit.ly/38ALojt>; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, Deputy Director of IRMAC, 23rd International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and UN Advisers, 11–14 February 2020, Geneva.

19 Emails from Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 23 March 2023; and Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April and 6 May 2023.

20 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 6 June 2023.

21 Ibid., 26 April 2023.

## OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

As of writing, no up-to-date information was available on Iran's national survey and clearance capacity. In 2023, it was reported that IRMAC continued to undertake humanitarian demining<sup>22</sup>, though it was not clear what capacity, if any, was being deployed to survey or clear cluster munition-contaminated areas.

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>23</sup> No information was available as to whether the Army or Revolutionary Guard Corps currently conduct clearance activities.

In 2022, commercial operators included Immen Zamin Spadana, Immen Gostaran Mohit (reportedly working in western and south-west Iran), and Zamin Pak Persia (reportedly working in western Iran).<sup>24</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>25</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.

## DEMINER SAFETY

It is not known whether there were any accidents as a result of CMR survey or clearance activities in Iran in 2022. In the past, exceedingly high levels of demining accidents have been reported. In 2020, IRMAC stated that since its establishment in 2005, 200 deminers had been killed or injured during clearance of mines and ERW, equating to one accident for every 15,000 mines or ERW detected.<sup>26</sup>

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Only limited information is available on land release activities in Iran in 2022 and it is not known if any cluster munition-contaminated areas were released through survey or clearance. While reports suggest that a small number of submunitions were found, at the time of writing it had not been possible to verify this information with IRMAC. It is also not known if any new areas of CMR contamination were added to the national database in 2022.

## SURVEY IN 2022

It has been reported that both non-technical and technical survey took place in the provinces of Khuzestan and Ilam in the south-west of Iran 2022.<sup>27</sup> However, it is not known whether these surveys included any specific survey of CMR-contaminated areas. It is also not known whether any nationally coordinated CMR survey has taken place in Iran since Mine Action Review initially reported on the issue in 2016.

## CLEARANCE IN 2022

It is not known whether any clearance of cluster munition-contaminated areas took place in Iran in 2022.

It has been reported that two mine action projects of approximately 32km<sup>2</sup> were underway in western Iran in 2022, of which more than half had been cleared. No data were available regarding humanitarian clearance of this area. However, it was reported that commercial clearance activity had resulted in the destruction of 13 submunitions as well as 188 landmines and 1,690 items of UXO, with the majority of these items found in 2022.<sup>28</sup>

22 Ibid.

23 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, September 2019.

24 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 6 May 2023.

25 Ibid., 6 June 2023.

26 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, available at: <http://bit.ly/38ALojt>; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, Deputy Director, IRMAC, 23rd International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and UN Advisers, Geneva, 11-14 February 2020.

27 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 6 May 2023.

28 Ibid., 26 April, 6 May, and 6 June 2023.

It was also reported in 2023 that two other major commercial mine action projects were in place in the south-west of Iran; one was due to commence in June 2023 in the Sohrab oil field development, which may be contaminated with both CMR and landmines. The other ongoing project concerns an area covering 17km<sup>2</sup>, contaminated with CMR and other ERW. Clearance of 10% of the area had been completed as at May 2023, with approximately 20 items of UXO discovered so far, most of which had been found in 2022.<sup>29</sup> It was not known whether any submunitions had been found.

Very little information is available on CMR clearance in Iran in previous years. In 2020, 18 submunitions were discovered during ERW clearance of some 7km<sup>2</sup> in a commercial clearance project in Khuzestan province in the south-west of Iran.<sup>30</sup> As part of the project, the Pasargad Energy Development Company (PEDC) subcontracted a demining operator and subcontracted QA/QC for the project.<sup>31</sup>

According to a 2020 presentation by IRMAC, at that time more than 2 million mines and over 1 million items of ERW had been destroyed since the start of its national programme.<sup>32</sup>

## PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

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As the extent of CMR contamination in Iran remains unknown and little information is available on the overall effectiveness of Iran's national mine action programme, it is not possible to comment on the extent to which Iran is making reasonable progress towards release of CMR-affected areas.

## PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

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It is not known to what extent Iran is making provision for a sustainable capacity to address previously unknown CMR-contaminated areas following completion (i.e. residual contamination).

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29 Ibid.

30 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, August 2020.

31 Ibid., September 2020.

32 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, available at: <http://bit.ly/38ALojt>; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, 23rd International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and UN Advisers, Geneva, 11–14 February 2020.