

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: UNKNOWN

AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2023

UNKNOWN

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2023

UNKNOWN

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Available data on contamination and release of anti-personnel (AP) mined areas in Iran continue to be extremely limited. There is no publicly available evidence to suggest that survey or clearance of anti-personnel mined areas took place in 2023. In June 2023, the Ministry of Transport of Iraq announced an agreement to clear the border areas between Iran and Iraq of landmines in order to establish a railway line, although no time frame for the clearance was given. An article published online in June 2024 suggested that the risk to people living in mine-affected areas in Iran's western provinces remains high, with people often encountering landmines in pastures, forests, and villages. The article also suggested that Iran's security strategies for the borders and western provinces have involved the re-laying of landmines, though no dates for this were given.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Iran should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Iran should clear AP mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.
- Iran should report publicly on the extent and location of mined areas and prepare a plan for their clearance and destruction.

DEMINING CAPACITY*

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Iran Mine Action Center (IRMAC)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- IRMAC
- Iranian Army
- Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps

- Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC)
- 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 AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Iran is contaminated by AP and anti-vehicle (AV) mines, mainly as a result of the 1980–88 war with Iraq. The extent of the remaining mined areas is unknown, but mine contamination is concentrated in five western provinces bordering Iraq.

According to the Iran Mine Action Center (IRMAC), the initial estimation of undefined "contamination" in Iran was 42,000km² (Ilam province, 17,000km²; Kermanshah province, 7,000km²; Khuzestan province, 15,000km²; Kurdistan province, 1,500km²; and West Azerbaijan, 1,500km²); which by February 2020 had reportedly been reduced by "90%".¹ There are also said to be mined areas around military bases.² One online report describes remaining contamination as being in hard-to-reach areas, stating that "one per cent of the remaining lands with war mines include impassable mountainous areas", with some mined areas situated on slopes, in marshes, or as deep as three metres below the surface, making detection very challenging.³

A further complication for contamination estimates pertains to reports of continuing casualties in areas that were supposed to have been cleared, calling into question whether mine clearance has been conducted to international standards. For example, in 2012, Kermanshah province was declared "free from landmines" but several people

were killed or injured by landmines only a few days after the announcement, which led the government to consider re-clearing the area.⁴ As recently as March 2024, it was reported that a landmine in Kermanshah had detonated while a farmer was grazing cattle, resulting in one fatality.⁵

Furthermore, a June 2024 online news article states that "evidence and testimonies from citizens in the western provinces and border regions" do not align with "frequent claims by government media that over 90 per cent of mine-contaminated areas have been cleared". It reports that Iranian citizens "often encounter landmines not just in former military zones but also in their everyday environments like pastures, forests, and villages" and that "kolbars⁶ in the western provinces are frequently injured or killed by landmine explosions". In particular, the article suggested that "of the 230-kilometer border between Iraq and Kurdistan province, 136 kilometers remain mine-infested".⁷

The same article claims that Iran's security strategies for the borders and western provinces have been re-laying landmines, stating that "local witnesses have reported seeing IRGC⁸ forces planting landmines at borders such as those near Baneh and Piranshahr".⁹ No dates are given for when this new use may have occurred.

OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Iran is also believed to have cluster munition remnants (CMR) remaining on its territory (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2024* report on Iran for further information).

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

IRMAC was established as the national mine action centre in 2005, taking the place of a Mine Action Committee within the Ministry of Defence (MoD). 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, and handled international relations.¹⁰

Several IRMAC staff are believed to be serving or former military personnel, including its Director, while others are civilians employed by the MoD. 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 AP mined areas is not known. 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),¹¹ but results of survey and clearance and the standards to which clearance has been conducted have not been made publicly available.

1 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.

2 "Landmines Still a Major Menace in Iran", *Atlantic Council*, 25 August 2016, at: <https://bit.ly/3dVTKp2>.

3 "The ominous legacy of war still takes victims", *Iranian Labour News Authority*, 22 May 2020, at: <https://bit.ly/3S1UfBk>.

4 "Landmines Still a Major Menace in Iran", *Atlantic Council*, 25 August 2016, at: <https://bit.ly/3dVTKp2>.

5 "Decades-Old Landmine Kills One in Iran", *Iranwire*, 28 March 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3M2LpkQ>.

6 A "kolbar" (or "kolber" or "kulbar") is a worker who is employed, legally or illegally, to carry goods on his or her back across the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

7 "Government Claims Contradicted as Landmine Danger Persists in Western Iran", *Iranwire*, 24 June 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3yGKljx>.

8 The IRGC is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran's armed forces.

9 "Government Claims Contradicted as Landmine Danger Persists in Western Iran", *Iranwire*, 24 June 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3yGKljx>.

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

11 International Committee of the Red Cross (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" accessed 9 February 2023 at: <https://bit.ly/30TC55t>.

As part of an ongoing mine action programme in Iran, which also includes victim assistance and mine risk education, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports that it has undertaken technical training of mine action actors in co-operation with IRMAC, though no dates for this are given. 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.¹²

Iran has engaged in numerous activities to promote regional and international co-operation for mine action in recent years. In 2019, Iran opened its first international demining training centre in Tehran, with the aim of offering courses to other countries in the region struggling with mine contamination.¹³ Iran's International Specialised Training Institution remains active, with discussion underway in September 2023 regarding potential training of Armenian personnel in humanitarian demining and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) at the centre.¹⁴

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).¹⁵ It was reported in June 2023 that demining would begin in the near future at the Armenia-Iran border, on the Armenian side.¹⁶ Mine Action Review has not been able to source any further information on this.

In April 2023, on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, Iran's Minister of Defence stated that "Iran has acquired the knowledge to produce demining equipment and is ready to use its resources to sweep land mines." He added that Iran "is also ready to help other countries and relevant international organisations."¹⁷

IRMAC did not respond to Mine Action Review's inquiries about its national mine action programme in 2022, 2023, or at the time of writing, in 2024.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

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

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

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 mines in order to minimise potential harm from clearance. It has been reported, however, that Iran's Ministry for the Environment does regulate environmental practices in mine action to some extent.¹⁸

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

It is not known to what extent IRMAC is able to disaggregate AP mine contamination and clearance from that relating to other explosive ordnance. It has been reported that IRMAC's database is accurate and that operators provide regular activity reports to IRMAC on both humanitarian and commercial mine action projects.¹⁹ However, Mine Action Review has not been able to obtain further information on this from IRMAC.

In 2020, IRMAC reported having a geographic information system (GIS), web-based, integrated information management

system, which integrates information on quality, safety, and the environment.²⁰ 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.²¹

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 (UN) Advisors, Geneva, 11–14 February 2020, at: <https://bit.ly/43EjVZD>.

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

14 "Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise SNCO delegation was on official visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran", CHDE, 6 September 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3Kj8UFx>.

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

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

17 "Defense Minister: Iran ready to help other countries for demining", *Iran Press News Agency*, 4 April 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3S0IwYz>.

18 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April 2023.

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

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

21 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.

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 AP mines or agreed and specified criteria for the prioritisation of tasks.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Iran reportedly has NMAS in place.²² At the time of writing, no information was available on quality management (QM) procedures for demining in Iran, although it was reported in 2023 that a subsidiary of IRMAC performs QA and QC of commercial demining.²³

IRMAC undertakes two main types of clearance activity: shallow and deep.²⁴ After Kermanshah province was declared “free from landmines” in 2012 (but several people were killed and injured by landmines only a few days later), an Iranian Member of Parliament commented that the clearance had not respected the minimum depth set in national standards.²⁵

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2023, it was reported that IRMAC continued to undertake humanitarian demining.²⁶ In March 2024, the Deputy of Iran's Armed Forces spoke of the army Engineering Units' ongoing efforts to “clear millions of mines and bullets from contaminated border areas”, with a “significant number of personnel” dedicated to this.²⁷ However, as of writing, no up-to-date information was available on Iran's survey and clearance capacity.

IRMAC combines the roles of regulator and operator and, in 2019, was reported to have demining teams and support staff deployed in five affected provinces. In Kurdistan province, IRMAC was conducting verification, mainly through mechanical clearance. IRMAC also responds to calls from the local community reporting landmines or items of unexploded ordnance (UXO). In 2019, demining capacity in Kurdistan province was believed to stand at only around 12 personnel, a reduction on earlier capacity. Available demining assets, such as mechanical assets, vary from province to province.²⁸

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 2019.²⁹ At the time of writing, no information was available as to whether the Army or Revolutionary Guard Corps currently conduct clearance.

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 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.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

It is not known if any AP mined areas were released through survey or clearance in Iran in 2023. It is not known if any AP mined areas were added to the national database in 2023. Nor is the extent to which nationally coordinated AP mine survey and clearance have taken place in Iran since Mine Action Review initially reported on the issue in 2016.

SURVEY IN 2023

It is not known if any AP mined areas were released through survey in 2023. In 2022 it was reported that both non-technical and technical survey took place in the provinces of Khuzestan and Ilam in the south-west of Iran.³⁰

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

23 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April 2023.

24 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, 2020, p. 5.

25 “Landmines Still a Major Menace in Iran”, *Atlantic Council*, 25 August 2016.

26 Email from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April 2023.

27 “Over five million landmines cleared from contaminated border areas: commander”, *Tehran Times*, 3 March 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4aHFag2>.

28 Information provided by Reza Amaninasab, Ambassadors for Development without Borders, September 2019.

29 Ibid.

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

CLEARANCE IN 2023

It is not known if any AP mined areas were released through clearance in 2023.

It has been reported that a major commercial project for release of land containing AP mines was due to commence in June 2023 in the Sohrab oil field development in the south-west of Iran.³¹ Mine Action Review has not been able to source any further information on this.

In 2022, it was reported that two mine action projects of approximately 32km² were underway in western Iran, of which more than half had been cleared. No data were available regarding clearance of this area. However, it was reported that commercial clearance had resulted in the destruction of 188 landmines as well as 13 submunitions and 1,690 items of UXO, with the majority of these items found in 2022.³²

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Iran is believed to have dedicated significant resources and effort to clearing areas on its territory contaminated by mines, CMR, and other ERW,³³ but results of survey and clearance have not been made publicly available. In 2020, IRMAC listed the challenges it faces in humanitarian clearance in Iran as: high density of contamination; minefield barriers in place; flooding in contaminated areas, which hinders access; mines and UXO displaced by flooding; displacement of mines to bottom layers of soil (up to 6 metres); the transformation [degradation] of mines, and vegetation.³⁴

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

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

31 Emails from Narges Jahanparast, Ambassadors for Development Without Borders, 26 April, 6 May, and 6 June 2023.

32 Ibid.

33 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", accessed 9 February 2023.

34 IRMAC PowerPoint presentation, 2020; and presentation by Mr Pourbagher, IRMAC, UN-National Directors Meeting, Geneva, 12 February 2020.