



# MOROCCO

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Morocco should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Morocco should continue to submit voluntary APMBC Article 7 reports.
- Morocco should seek assistance to develop a functioning civilian mine action programme.
- Morocco should ensure freedom of access and unhindered movement of all civilian UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) staff and take all necessary measures to facilitate the conduct of demining.
- Morocco is strongly encouraged to provide any minefield records or cluster strike data to other relevant stakeholders to facilitate survey and clearance of affected areas.

## CONTAMINATION

The exact extent of contamination of the area of Western Sahara controlled by Morocco, on the west side of the Berm,<sup>1</sup> is not known. In the past, Morocco declared, highly improbably, that a total of 120,000km<sup>2</sup> of area was contaminated,<sup>2</sup> although the threat is undoubtedly significant.

Morocco's contamination is a result of the conflict between the Royal Moroccan Army and Polisario Front forces over Western Sahara. Morocco has reported having registered and mapped the minefields it has laid, and has pledged to clear them as soon as the conflict over Western Sahara is over.<sup>3</sup>

In April 2013, Morocco had identified ten areas as having been mined by the Polisario Front since 1975: Bir Anzarane, Douiek, Gerret Auchfaght, Gor Lbard, Gor Zalagat, Hagounia, Idiriya, Imlili, Itgui, and Tarf Mhkinza.<sup>4</sup> It repeated this list in a voluntary Article 7 report it submitted for calendar year 2017.<sup>5</sup> From 2015, the area of Glibat Jadiane, which had been listed as contaminated in earlier years, was no longer included on the list of mined areas.<sup>6</sup>

In its voluntary Article 7 report for 2017, Morocco reported that three people were killed and sixteen others injured in anti-personnel mine incidents during the year. This compares to two people killed and seventeen injured in 2016.<sup>7</sup> In June 2018, Morocco stated that a total of 2,640 victims of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) had been recorded, including 810 deaths since 1975.<sup>8</sup>

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Morocco does not have a national mine action authority or a mine action centre.

### Legislation and Standards

Morocco has not adopted national mine action legislation or standards, but reported, most recently in 2013, that “normal safety and environmental protection standard have been followed.”<sup>9</sup>

### Operators

Morocco initiated major demining efforts in 2007, following an increase in the number of incidents. All mine clearance in Morocco is conducted manually by the Royal Moroccan Army (RMA). In 2017, it reported that 16 demining modules and 89 demining detachments were operational and responded to 175 interventions during the year.<sup>10</sup>

In March 2016, it was reported that United States (US) Marines were providing training to build the demining capacity of the RMA. US instructors covered ordnance identification, safety, basic demolition, and basic combat casualty care.<sup>11</sup> In a voluntary Article 7 report for 2017,

Morocco reported receiving humanitarian demining training from the National Guard of the US State of Utah and that six senior government officials, including from the Ministries of Health and Solidarity, the Royal Armed Forces, and the Moroccan Red Crescent visited the Lebanon Mine Action Center (LMAC).<sup>12</sup> The Utah National Guard previously reported providing landmine clearance training to Moroccan military officials through the State Partnership Programme in April 2015.<sup>13</sup>

MINURSO has been coordinating mine action activities with both parties to the conflict. In March 2016, however, Morocco required that MINURSO international civilian personnel “leave the Kingdom of Morocco within three days”.<sup>14</sup> This included all international staff overseeing the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS)-managed demining project within MINURSO, resulting in the suspension of all demining activities east of the berm from 20 March 2016–15 September 2016, when the MINURSO Mine Action Coordination Centre resumed its operations from Tindouf, where it had been relocated.<sup>15</sup> Morocco demanded the staff leave because UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had used the term “occupation” to describe the situation east of the Berm during a visit to the region.<sup>16</sup>

## LAND RELEASE

Morocco has not reported with any detail on its release of mined areas in recent years. In a voluntary Article 7 report for 2017, Morocco reported release of 232km<sup>2</sup>, with the destruction of 69 anti-personnel mines, 82 anti-vehicle mines, and 595 items of ERW.<sup>17</sup> This is an apparent decrease from 2016, when Morocco reported release of 283km<sup>2</sup> with the destruction of 288 anti-personnel mines, 170 anti-vehicle mines, and 1,899 ERW.<sup>18</sup>

Morocco reported that since demining efforts began and as of end March 2018, a total of 96,451 mines, including 49,087 anti-personnel mines, and a further 19,618 items of ERW had been destroyed during “release” of 5,127km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>19</sup> It also reported that, as at November 2017, a total of 4,987km<sup>2</sup> over the previous decade with the destruction of 4,833 anti-personnel mines and 16,813 anti-vehicle mines.<sup>20</sup>

In his 2018 report to the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary-General noted that the RMA had reported “clearing” nearly 145km<sup>2</sup> of land to the west of the Berm with the destruction of 1,121 items, including 1,008 items of unexploded ordnance (UXO), as well as 57 anti-vehicle and 56 anti-personnel mines during the period 10 April 2017 to 29 March 2018.<sup>21</sup> No further details were provided.

In 2010, Morocco declared it had employed 10,000 deminers, though only 400 detectors were at their disposal at that time.<sup>22</sup> This raised serious questions both about the procedures being used and the accuracy of clearance figures being reported.

In April 2016, Morocco was planning to launch a new effort to clear mines from the Berm that divides Western Sahara into the Moroccan-controlled area and the Polisario-controlled area. The units to be deployed were reportedly those trained by the US Marines.<sup>23</sup>

## ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Morocco is not a state party to the APMBC, but nonetheless has obligations under international human rights law to protect life, which requires the clearance of mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.

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- 1 The Berm refers to the defensive wall built by Morocco in 1982–87 to secure the north-western corner of Western Sahara. It is constituted of earthen walls some three metres in height. Morocco controls the area located on the west side of the Berm.
- 2 Statement of Morocco, Intersessional meetings (Standing Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention), Geneva, 25 May 2009.
- 3 Voluntary Article 7 Report (for 2014), Form C.
- 4 Voluntary Article 7 Report, April 2013, Form C.
- 5 Voluntary Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form C.
- 6 Voluntary Article 7 Report, April 2011, Form C.
- 7 Voluntary Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form C; and Voluntary Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form C.
- 8 Statement of Morocco, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 8 June 2018.
- 9 Voluntary Article 7 Report, (for 2017), Form D.
- 10 Statement of Morocco, APMBC 16th Meeting of States Parties, Vienna, 21 December 2017.
- 11 "U.S., Morocco improve demining capability", *The Globe*, 31 March 2016, at: [http://www.campejeuneglobe.com/news/u-s-morocco-improve-demining-capability/article\\_0e45e62e-f6a0-11e5-9b3b-d9775e6458de.html](http://www.campejeuneglobe.com/news/u-s-morocco-improve-demining-capability/article_0e45e62e-f6a0-11e5-9b3b-d9775e6458de.html).
- 12 Voluntary Article 7 Report (form 2017), Form H.
- 13 Staff Sgt. Annie Edwards, "Moroccan state partners observe Utah Guard landmine removal training", Official US Air Force Website, 16 April 2015, at: <http://www.151arw.ang.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/864416/moroccan-state-partners-observe-utah-guard-landmine-removal-training/>.
- 14 "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara", UN doc. S/2016/355, 19 April 2016, para. 4.
- 15 "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara", UN doc. S/2017/307, 10 April 2017, para. 40.
- 16 "Morocco's U.N. expulsion puts Western Sahara ceasefire at risk: movement", *Reuters*, 22 March 2016, at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-sahara-idUSKCN0W02BK>.
- 17 Voluntary Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form C.
- 18 Voluntary Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form C.
- 19 Statement of Morocco, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 8 June 2018.
- 20 Statement of Morocco, 16th Meeting of States Parties, Vienna, 21 December 2017.
- 21 "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara", UN doc. S/2018/277, 29 March 2018, para. 43.
- 22 Statement of Morocco, Standing Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention, Geneva, 23 June 2010.
- 23 "Morocco to Deploy Highly Qualified Team to Remove Sahara Landmines", *Sahara Question*, 25 March 2016, at: <http://sahara-question.com/en/news/morocco-deploy-highly-qualified-team-remove-sahara-landmines>.