

PALESTINE



PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2015

For 2014

Problem understood	5	5
Target date for completion of mine clearance	5	5
Targeted clearance	6	6
Efficient clearance	6	6
National funding of programme	3	3
Timely clearance	5	5
Land release system in place	7	5
National mine action standards	5	5
Reporting on progress	5	5
Improving performance	5	5
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	5.2	5.0

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Palestine continued to make progress in demining in 2015, with HALO Trust granted permission to re-survey its assigned tasks, prior to starting full clearance, in order to more accurately delineate the boundaries of mined areas.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION

- Palestine should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.

CONTAMINATION

In Palestine, hazards encompass minefields, military training zones, and areas of confrontation where many explosive devices are left behind. A 2013 survey by the Palestine Mine Action Centre (PMAC) found that Palestine has mined areas covering a total of 19.9km², marginally less than its previous estimate of 20.4km².¹ A HALO Trust survey of the West Bank in 2012 identified 90 minefields, 13 of which were laid by the Jordanian military in 1948–67, while the remaining 77 were laid by the Israeli military along the Jordan River after the 1967 war.² All minefields, including those laid by the Jordanian military, are under Israeli military control.³

According to HALO, as at the end of January 2016, more than 0.4km² of confirmed mined area exists across nine minefields in Palestinian-controlled territory and two minefields are in no-man's-land between the West Bank and Israel. All 11 minefields (see Table 1) were laid by the Jordanian army.⁴

Table 1: Confirmed mine contamination as at end January 2016⁵

Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m ²)
Anti-personnel mines	3	53,084
Anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines	8	383,526
Totals	11	436,610

CHA = Confirmed hazardous area

Five of the twelve governorates in the West Bank still contain mined areas, as at the end of January 2016, as set out in Table 2.⁶ The governorate of Bethlehem is now mine-free, after clearance of the sole remaining minefield was completed on 22 January 2016.⁷

1 Email from Brig. Joma Mousa, Director, PMAC, 31 March 2014.

2 HALO Trust, "West Bank, The problem", at: www.halotrust.org/where-we-work/west-bank.

3 Emails from Tom Meredith, Desk Officer, HALO Trust, 24 June and 23 October 2015; and Sonia Pezier, Junior Programme Officer, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), 14 April 2015.

4 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 24 June 2015.

5 Ibid., 19 July 2016. The table no longer contains data for the a-Nabi Elyas and Husan minefields, since clearance was completed on 17 November 2015 and 22 January 2016, respectively.

6 Ibid. There were inconsistencies between PMAC and HALO's data on the number and location of mined areas. As at end 2015, PMAC reported 16 mined areas, totalling 0.61km². Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016. Their list, though, appears to contain inaccuracies.

7 Email from Ronen Shimoni, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 27 September 2016.

Table 2: Contamination by governorate as at 31 January 2016⁸

Governorate	CHAs	Area (m ²)
Jenin	4	89,056
Tulkarm	1	37,810
Qalqilya	2	89,726
Ramallah	2	189,934
Hebron	2	30,084
Totals	11	436,610

Most mined areas are located in Area C (see below) along the border with Jordan, which covers approximately 60% of the West Bank and is under full Israeli control for security, planning, and construction.⁹

According to the United Nations (UN), of the estimated total of 90 minefields in the West Bank, those in more “central areas” – the governorates of Hebron, Jenin, Qalqiliya, and Tulkarm – are priorities for clearance.¹⁰

In addition to posing a risk to civilians, mines affect the socio-economic development of Palestinian communities. All mined areas are located in, or close to, populated areas,¹¹ mostly on privately owned agricultural and grazing land or along roads used daily by communities; and are either poorly marked or not marked at all. Yet they are accessible to the population, and in some cases are even under cultivation. These minefields were laid by the Jordanian military and are all located in areas under Israeli security control. Clearance operations must therefore be coordinated with the Israeli government.¹²

8 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 19 July 2016. Table 2 refers to Jordanian-laid minefields. The two minefields in no-man’s-land are located west of the separation barrier in an Israeli-controlled area. There were inconsistencies between PMAC and HALO’s data on the number, area, and location of confirmed mined areas. PMAC reported four confirmed mined areas in Jenin totalling 126,140m²; one in Tulkarem, of 13,070m²; four in Qalqilya totalling 154,426m²; two in Ramallah totalling 141,332m²; two in Jerusalem totalling 74,914m²; one in Bethlehem of 22,267m²; and one in Hebron of 32,152m². Email from the Planning Department PMAC, 5 May 2016. Email from Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust, 27 September 2016.

9 Email from Celine Francois, Programme Officer, UNMAS, Jerusalem, 5 July 2012; and “UNMAS 2013 Annual Report”.

10 Ibid.; and UNMAS, “State of Palestine”, accessed 29 July 2015 at: <http://www.mineaction.org/print/programmes/state-palestine>.

11 Emails from Sonia Pezier, UNMAS, 14 April 2015; Brig. Joma Abdeljabbar, PMAC, 12 March 2015; and Tom Meredith, HALO, 11 May 2015; and UNMAS, “State of Palestine”, accessed 29 July 2015.

12 Email from Sonia Pezier, UNMAS, 14 April 2015; UNMAS, “State of Palestine”, accessed 29 July 2015; and email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 23 October 2015.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

An authorisation from the Palestinian Authority's prime minister on 25 March 2012 set up PMAC, appointed its director, and created a Higher Committee for Mine Action as an interministerial body, with 27 members representing the ministries of education, foreign affairs, health, intelligence, interior, justice, and military liaison, as well as the police and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. The Higher Committee for Mine Action, which serves as the national mine action authority, is tasked to develop mine action legislation and allocate resources for the sector.¹³

PMAC, which is located in the Ministry of Interior in Ramallah, is mandated to coordinate all aspects of mine action in the West Bank. It receives technical advice from the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS).¹⁴ The committee has established a number of sub-committees to deal with technical issues, risk education, legal affairs, foreign affairs, and health and safety.¹⁵

PMAC currently has eleven employees¹⁶ and is staffed with personnel from the Palestinian National Security Forces, Civil Police, and Civil Defence. PMAC also has a team of 30 that have been trained by UNMAS for demining, but who are not yet equipped to do so, and there remains no agreement with Israel on this matter.¹⁷ The Civil Police have an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) unit with 42 personnel in Bethlehem, Hebron, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilya, Ramallah, and Tulkarm, who conduct rapid response to locate and remove items of unexploded ordnance (UXO).¹⁸

Mine action is subject to the 1995 Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, under which the West Bank is divided into three areas: Area A is under full Palestinian civilian and security control; Area B is under full Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control; and Area C refers to areas where Israel has full control of security, planning, and construction.¹⁹

Strategic Planning

There is no strategic mine action plan for Palestine. In recent years, UNMAS has worked to build consensus among Israeli, Palestinian, and international stakeholders regarding a modus operandi for clearance operations in the central West Bank, and for Israel to authorise demining.²⁰

Operators

To date, Israel has not authorised demining operations by Palestinian deminers and no clearance operation has been conducted by PMAC.²¹ In September 2013, however, the Israeli National Mine Action Authority (INMAA) gave formal authorisation for HALO Trust to clear two of the eleven minefields deemed high priority by PMAC.²² Following INMAA authorisation, HALO Trust began mine clearance in the West Bank in April 2014.²³ HALO works under the auspices of both the Israeli and Palestinian mine action authorities.²⁴

In 2015, HALO employed 23 manual deminers, and mechanical assets deployed included three front-loading shovels, an armoured excavator, and a rock crusher.²⁵

Standards

HALO Trust's standing operating procedures (SOPs) are approved by INMAA and are based on national standards. Once a year, HALO Trust submits its SOPs, including any necessary amendments, to INMAA for approval.²⁶

Quality Management

HALO Trust's work in the West Bank complies with the Israeli Standard Institute for Standards, in particular ISOs 9001, 14001, and 18001. HALO carried out its own internal quality control (QC), which is conducted by senior programme staff, and which complies with the ISO standards and HALO Trust's SOPs.²⁷ In addition, as required by INMAA, 4CI Security, an external INMAA-certified quality assurance (QA)/QC company, is contracted to monitor HALO's clearance in accordance with Israeli National Mine Action Standards.²⁸

13 Emails from Celine Francois, UNMAS Jerusalem, 19 July 2012; and Imad Mohareb, Planning Department, PMAC, 31 March 2013.

14 Emails from Celine Francois, UNMAS Jerusalem, 5 and 19 July 2012; and UN, "2012 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects", New York, 2013.

15 Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016.

16 Email from Brig. Joma Abdeljabbar, PMAC, 12 March 2015.

17 Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016.

18 Emails from Celine Francois, UNMAS Jerusalem, 5 and 19 July 2012.

19 Email from Celine Francois, UNMAS Jerusalem, 5 July 2012.

20 UNMAS "State of Palestine", accessed 29 July 2015.

21 Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016.

22 UNMAS "State of Palestine", accessed 29 July 2015.

23 Ibid.; and email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 11 May 2015.

24 HALO, "West Bank", accessed 29 July 2015.

25 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 19 July 2016.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Emails from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 11 May 2015; and Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust, 27 September 2016.

LAND RELEASE

The total mined area released by clearance in 2015 was 63,411m²,²⁹ compared with 21,832m² in 2014.³⁰ No land was cancelled by non-technical survey in 2015.

Survey in 2015

HALO Trust reported that in 2015 it surveyed seven mined areas across three governorates totalling 156,950m², set out in Table 3.³¹ These sites were confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) already recorded in PMAC's database and on maps; the survey was intended to more accurately delineate the boundaries of the areas. HALO survey data is based on its joint site visits with PMAC and INMAA, combined with information provided by PMAC, INMAA, and local landowners.³²

Table 3: HALO Trust survey of mined areas in 2015³³

Province/area	Areas confirmed as mined	Area confirmed (m ²)
Jenin	4	89,056
Tulkarm	1	37,810
Hebron	2	30,084
Totals	7	156,950

Clearance in 2015

In 2015, HALO Trust cleared 63,411m² of mined area in the Qalqiliya and Bethlehem governorates in the West Bank, with the destruction of 434 anti-personnel mines, 23 anti-vehicle mines, and 1 item of UXO.³⁴

Table 4: HALO Trust mine clearance in 2015³⁵

Province	Governorate	Areas released	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
a-Nabi Elyas	Qalqiliya	1	41,255	238	23	0
Husan	Bethlehem	1	22,156	196	0	1
Totals		2	63,411	434	23	1

29 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 19 July 2016.

30 Ibid., 11 May 2016. HALO Trust previously reported 12,226m² of clearance in 2014, but it was subsequently found that this only included manual clearance and excluded 9,606m² of mechanical clearance that also took place. The correct revised total for 2014 is 21,832m². Email from Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust, 18 October 2016.

31 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 19 July 2016. No survey data was reported by PMAC for 2015, likely due to the fact HALO was re-surveying confirmed areas already in PMAC's database.

32 Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016.

33 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 19 July 2016. No survey data was reported by PMAC for 2015, likely due to the fact HALO was re-surveying CHAs already in PMAC's database.

34 Email from Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust, 22 September 2016. Clearance data reported by HALO contained inconsistencies with data reported by PMAC and INMAA. PMAC reported HALO as having cleared 85,117m² in total, destroying 690 anti-personnel mines, 64 anti-vehicle mines, and 62 items of UXO. Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016. INMAA reported HALO as having cleared 93,000m² in total, destroying 379 anti-personnel mines, 19 anti-vehicle mines, and 1 item of UXO. Email from Michael Heiman, INMAA, 19 September 2016.

35 Email from Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust, 22 September 2016. There were discrepancies between HALO's data, and that provided by PMAC and INMAA, likely due to differences in reporting period between stakeholders. PMAC reported HALO clearance of two areas as totalling 85,117m², with the destruction of 690 anti-personnel mines, 64 anti-vehicle mines, and 62 items of UXO. Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016. INMAA reported HALO clearance of two areas as totalling 93,000m², with the destruction of 379 anti-personnel mines, 19 anti-vehicle mines, and 1 UXO. Email from Michael Heiman, Director of Technology and Knowledge Management, INMAA, 19 September 2016.

In 2015, HALO Trust continued clearing the minefield at a-Nabi Elyas, which it had begun in April 2014. The minefield was laid in 1965 by the Jordanian military with Belgian PRB M35 anti-personnel mines and British MkV anti-vehicle mines; of an estimated 1,400 mines in total, many were known to remain dangerous. Where mines had become deeply buried by soil movement, the plastic PRB M35s could not be found with metal detectors. In such conditions, HALO Trust used armoured mechanical equipment to fully excavate contaminated soil and ensure all deeply buried mines were found and destroyed.³⁶ HALO reported that during clearance, in certain areas it was necessary to excavate to a greater depth than planned and also to include areas outside the minefield, due to land being littered with contaminated soil from the minefield.³⁷ Clearance was completed in November 2015.³⁸

In June 2015, HALO Trust began clearing the Husan minefield, in the governorate of Bethlehem. This minefield had been partially cleared by Quadro in 2013 and HALO cleared the remainder.³⁹ Clearance of the minefield was completed on 22 January 2016.⁴⁰

The 63,411m² cleared by HALO Trust in 2015 marks a significant increase on the 12,226m² of mine clearance in 2014. Land cleared by HALO was declared free of mines by INMAA, which allowed the military to cancel the “closed military area” order, which in turn allowed landowners to return to the cleared areas.⁴¹

Israel has not authorised demining operations by Palestinian deminers and no clearance operations were conducted by PMAC in 2014⁴² or 2015.⁴³

Clearance in 2016

HALO Trust reported it was well placed to complete clearance of up to three further Jordanian-laid minefields in 2016.⁴⁴

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Palestine is not a state party or signatory to the APMBIC but nonetheless has obligations under international human rights law to protect life, which requires the clearance of mines as soon as possible.⁴⁵

In March 2015, PMAC’s director claimed that clearance of anti-personnel mines would be completed in five years, if there were no constraints by the occupation.⁴⁶ To date, though, very little progress has been made in releasing mined areas in the West Bank, with less than 0.1km² cleared over the last five years (see Table 5). Clearance in the West Bank is largely constrained by political factors, including the lack of authorisation granted by Israel for Palestine to conduct or oversee mine clearance operations. However, it is a positive development that HALO Trust began mine clearance operations in April 2014, and is continuing to complete clearance of priority sites in the West Bank.

Table 5: Mine clearance in 2011–15⁴⁷

Year	Area cleared (m ²)
2015	63,411
2014	21,832
2013	7,000
2012	0
2011	0
Total	92,243

PMAC does not have its own budget, and the Palestinian authority only provides funding for the salary of PMAC employees and the PMAC office.⁴⁸ PMAC has reported that donors have indicated that funding would increase in 2016.⁴⁹

Neither PMAC nor INMAA provides direct funding for HALO Trust’s clearance operations. HALO’s clearance programme in the West Bank is funded by government and private donors, and the organisation expected its funding to remain constant in 2016.⁵⁰

36 HALO Trust, “HALO West Bank – First Landmines Found and Safely Destroyed at a-Nabi Elyas”, 17 April 2014, at: <http://www.halotrust.org/media-centre/news-press-releases/halo-west-bank-%E2%80%93-first-landmines-found-and-safely-destroyed-nabi>.

37 Emails from Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust; and Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 22 October 2015.

38 Emails from Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust, 27 September 2016.

39 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 23 October 2015.

40 Email from Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust, 27 September 2016.

41 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 19 July 2016.

42 Interview with David Bax, Programme Manager, UNMAS, in Geneva, 17 February 2015.

43 Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016.

44 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 19 July 2016.

45 Palestine is a state party to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 6 of which requires that states parties respect and protect the right to life.

46 Email from Brig. Joma Abdeljabbar, 12 March 2015.

47 See ICBL Landmine Monitor reports on Palestine in 2011–14. HALO Trust previously reported 12,226m² of clearance in 2014, but it was subsequently found that this only included manual clearance and excluded 9,606m² of mechanical clearance that also took place. The correct revised total for 2014 is 21,832m². Email from Ronen Shimoni, HALO Trust, 18 October 2016.

48 Email from the Planning Department, PMAC, 9 May 2016.

49 Ibid.

50 Email from Tom Meredith, HALO Trust, 19 July 2016.