

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Yemen should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as a matter of priority.
- Yemen 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.
- Yemen Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) should seek to expand international technical support for the sector and facilitate survey and clearance by international operators.
- YEMAC should take immediate action to update operational standards and address weak application that is jeopardising deminer safety.
- YEMAC should become more transparent on its work, including by publishing regular, comprehensive reports on developments in its management, planning, and implementation of mine action.

### CLUSTER MUNITION REMNANT CONTAMINATION

YEMAC has reported the presence of CMR in six governorates but the extent is not known. Contamination is believed to be heavy in Saada and al-Jawf governorates as well as in Amran, Hodeida, Mawit, and Sana'a governorates, including in Sana'a City.<sup>1</sup>

Yemen had CMR contamination before 2015 but the escalation of armed conflict since 26 March 2015 has significantly increased both its extent and the threat to the civilian population, mainly as a result of airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition.<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch said it had recorded Saudi air strikes using cluster munitions dating back to 2009.<sup>3</sup> In March 2017, the organisation reported that 18 coalition attacks using cluster munitions since 2015 had killed at least 18 civilians and injured 74 more.<sup>4</sup>

Human rights groups have documented the use of United States (US) BLU-63 (Sana'a City), BLU-97 combined effect submunitions (Saada governorate), CBU-58 and CBU-105 sensor-fused munitions (Amran and Sana'a governorates), Brazilian Astros II munitions (Saada governorate and city) and British BL755 submunitions (Hajjah governorate). They have also reported use of ZP-39 artillery-delivered submunitions of indeterminate origin.<sup>5</sup>

No air strikes using cluster munitions by the Saudi-led coalition have been recorded since May 2017.<sup>6</sup> The coalition, however, has continued air strikes into 2019, contributing to Yemen's already significant contamination by explosive remnants of war (ERW), including anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, including mines of an improvised nature, and a wide range of rockets, mortars, and artillery shells.<sup>7</sup>

### PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Yemen established a National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) by prime ministerial decree in June 1998 to formulate policy, allocate resources, and develop a national mine action strategy.<sup>8</sup> NMAC, chaired by the Minister of State (a member of the cabinet), brought together representatives of seven concerned ministries and a number of non-governmental organisations. In Yemen's 2019 request for an extension to its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline YEMAC reported the Committee had disbanded.<sup>9</sup>

YEMAC was established in Sana'a in January 1999 as NMAC's implementing body with responsibility for coordinating mine action, including through responsibility for planning, quality control, and information management.<sup>10</sup> YEMAC worked through two Regional Executive Mine Action Branches (REMABs), in Sana'a and Aden; a national training centre in Aden, also set up in 1999; and another REMAB in al-Mukalla (Hadamout governorate), which was created in March 2004. REMABs were responsible for field implementation of the national mine action plan.<sup>11</sup>

Since the upsurge in conflict in 2015, YEMAC effectively split into two operations, undermining coordinated management and planning. In 2018, an office in Sana'a directed activities in the north in areas under the control of the Houthis. YEMAC's director was based in the south, overseeing activities in southern and central areas under the control of the internationally-recognised government, where it has its main offices in Aden and Marib, and branches in Abyan, Hadramaut, and Lahej.<sup>12</sup>

YEMAC said in 2019 it planned to open new branches in Taiz and Marib. It also announced plans to open a new coordinating office in Aden in 2019.<sup>13</sup> The office was to be under YEMAC's director with responsibilities that included accrediting and tasking operators.<sup>14</sup>

The United Nations supported mine action in Yemen from 1999 to 2003 through a programme implemented by the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS). From 2003, the programme came under full national management. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) deployed an international adviser to YEMAC at the end of 2014 to support planning and programme management. In 2018, its international staff included a chief technical adviser and planning and reporting specialist in Sana'a and a technical advisor based in Aden. National staff included two posts in Sana'a and one in Aden. In 2019, UNDP planned to recruit up to eight additional international staff and three or more national staff to strengthen the programme capacity.<sup>15</sup>

## PLANNING

Yemen has no strategic plan for tackling CMR, mines, or ERW.<sup>16</sup> Mine action in 2018 focused on emergency clearance of the most affected areas. YEMAC and UNDP expected to maintain emergency clearance in 2019 but also to build programme capacity and increase non-technical survey in order to develop an understanding of the extent of contamination. A coordination officer due to be appointed in 2019 was to be tasked with supporting planning.<sup>17</sup>

## STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Compliance with international standards of survey and clearance appear to be a major challenge and concern. Yemen acknowledges that clearance operations are not conducted to a "uniform standard or application of SOPs", which has largely been the situation since 2007. YEMAC observed "clearance teams are under tremendous pressure to release land quickly thus leading to the uneven application of the standards."<sup>18</sup>

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

YEMAC maintains an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database. UNDP observed that the system, although outdated, was becoming more reliable. It planned to hire an international information management expert in 2019 to work with YEMAC and develop capacity.<sup>19</sup> Yemen said its IMSMA system is "outdated" and "not usable".<sup>20</sup>

## OPERATORS

Until 2018, YEMAC was the only organisation authorised to conduct survey and clearance. YEMAC had almost 1,000 staff deployed in field operations at the end of 2018 divided between the northern and southern areas of operations.<sup>21</sup> Yemen reported in early 2019 that "teams and management are in need of a complete development of methodologies, skill development and training. YEMAC is using outdated clearance methodologies, based on their training in the 1990s, which is further hampered by a degree of 'skill fade' by the teams."<sup>22</sup> It also noted that staff are paid only intermittently and have no insurance or pension.<sup>23</sup>

Dynasafe Middle East Project Management became operational in May 2018. It is implementing the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) Saudi Project for Landmine Clearance (Project MASAM), headquartered in Marib. Operational management is provided by SafeLane Global Ltd., which worked in 2018 with a total staff of 304, mostly seconded from YEMAC but including up to 19 international staff.<sup>24</sup> Danish Demining Group (DDG), which already had a presence in Yemen conducting risk education, deployed a non-technical survey team to Taiz in November 2018.<sup>25</sup>

## DEMINER SAFETY

Casualties during CMR clearance were not reported in 2018. That said, poor compliance with safety standards appears to be a major challenge and concern and significant numbers of deminers, particularly those working on Project MASAM, may have been killed and injured during the year. YEMAC reported 14 staff killed in the course of clearance operations in 2018.<sup>26</sup> A YEMAC deminer was also reportedly shot dead by a sniper in Taiz.<sup>27</sup>

Five international staff working for Safelane were killed in January 2019. KSrelief said they died in an accidental explosion as they were transporting mines from the project headquarters to a remote location for demolition.<sup>28</sup> SafeLane said that ordnance in their vehicle contributed to the scale of the explosion but initial detonation was caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) placed under the passenger seat of their vehicle.<sup>29</sup> YEMAC said two government investigations into the incident found no evidence that SafeLane had been targeted by any armed group.<sup>30</sup> Six SafeLane personnel were killed in April in an explosion in a depot stockpiling mines and other ERW for destruction in the port city of Mokha. A seventh operator died of his injuries a day later. The nationality of those killed was not reported.<sup>31</sup>

## LAND RELEASE

Mine action in 2018 focused on emergency clearance of small, high-threat areas and did not include systematic survey and clearance of areas affected by cluster munitions. Of 125,193 items of ERW recorded as destroyed in 2018, 79 were reported to have been submunitions.<sup>32</sup>

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- 1 Interviews with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, 17 February 2016; and Stephen Bryant, Chief Technical Adviser, UNDP, in Geneva, 6 February 2017.
  - 2 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Grant Progress Report for 1 October–31 December 2015, 25 January 2016.
  - 3 Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Cluster munitions harm civilians", 31 May 2015.
  - 4 Human Rights Watch, "Brazilian cluster munitions wound children", 17 March 2017.
  - 5 Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Cluster munitions harm civilians", 31 May 2015 and "Brazilian cluster munitions wound children", 17 March 2017; Amnesty International, "Yemen: children among civilians killed and maimed in cluster bomb 'minefields'", 23 May 2016; the Legal Centre for Rights and Development, Sana'a, "The bombing of civilians and residential neighbourhoods with international forbidden weapons (cluster munitions)", undated but 2018.
  - 6 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, "The situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014", UN doc. A/HRC/36/33, 5 September 2017, p. 9.
  - 7 See, e.g., briefing to the United Nations Security Council by Mark Lowcock, United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, 15 April 2019.
  - 8 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 7 Report, Form I, 31 March 2009.
  - 9 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 28 March 2019, p. 12.
  - 10 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 31 March 2008, p. 2.
  - 11 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Report 2017", January 2018, p. 8.
  - 12 Interview with Ameen Saleh Alaqili, Director, NMAP/YEMAC, in Geneva, 5 February 2019.
  - 13 APMBC Article 5 Extension Request, 28 March 2019, p. 5.
  - 14 Interview with Ameen Al-Aqili, Director, YEMAC, in Geneva, 23 May 2019.
  - 15 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Report 2018", 20 January 2019, p. 9.
  - 16 APMBC Article 5 Extension Request, 28 March 2019, p. 12.
  - 17 Interviews with Ameen Saleh Alaqili, NMAP/YEMAC; Stephen Bryant, Stephen Robinson and Aleksandar Mihailov, UNDP, in Geneva, 5 February 2019; email from Stephen Robinson, UNDP, 15 May 2019; UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Report 2018", 20 January 2019, p. 9.
  - 18 APMBC Article 5 Extension Request, 28 March 2019, p. 10.
  - 19 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Report 2018", 20 January 2019, pp. 10–11.
  - 20 Yemen Article 5 Extension Request, 28 March 2019, p. 10.
  - 21 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Report 2018", 20 January 2019, p. 10; and interviews with Stephen Bryant, Stephen Robinson and Aleksandar Mihailov, UNDP, in Geneva, 5 February 2019.
  - 22 APMBC Article 5 Extension Request, 28 March 2019, p. 9.
  - 23 Ibid., p. 10.
  - 24 Email from Chris Clark, Director Special Projects, Safelane Global Ltd., 17 April 2019.
  - 25 Email from Marie-Josée Hamel, Head of Programme, DDG Yemen, 3 April 2019.
  - 26 Interview with Ameen Al-Aqili, YEMAC, in Geneva, 23 May 2019.
  - 27 Interview with Stephen Robinson and Aleksandar Mihailov, UNDP, in Geneva, 5 February 2019.
  - 28 KSrelief, "KSrelief mourns loss of life following explosion related to Masam demining project in Yemen", Statement, 21 January 2019.
  - 29 Emails from Chris Clark, Director Special Projects, Safelane Global Ltd., 17 and 23 April 2019.
  - 30 Interview with Ameen Al-Aqili, YEMAC, in Geneva, 23 May 2019.
  - 31 "Six deminers killed in Yemen blast", Agence France Presse, 26 April 2019.
  - 32 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Report 2018", 20 January 2019, p. 6 and Annex A, p. 26.