



Key issues for mine action organisations:

- Registration
- Accreditation
- Access

The town of Sinjar has been destroyed and is heavily contaminated with improvised landmines and booby-traps.

BRIEF: Issues affecting mine action implementers with the Government of Iraq

KEY POINTS

- While Iraq was already one of the most contaminated countries in the world, an **unprecedented** scale of new contamination in areas affected by Daesh requires urgent and largescale humanitarian mine action (HMA) response to enable millions of internally displaced people in Iraq to return home safely.
- HMA NGOs have cleared more than 13,000 landmines laid by Daesh across more than 11 million square meters in Ninewa, Kirkuk and Diyala.
- From 16 October 2017, 110 mine action NGO teams have suspended all activities due to shifts in territorial control in Ninewa, Kirkuk and Diyala – resulting in a loss of capacity to clear more than 7,000 improvised landmines and deliver 5,600 risk education sessions.
- While there has been recent progress in registration of mine action NGOs, the additional process of accreditation with the Directorate of Mine Action, under the Ministry of Environment and Health, has presented many challenges. The complicated registration and accreditation processes are causing further delays to the re-establishment of mine action operations in Federal Iraq. The delay in accreditation is affecting the delivery of all mine action activities including mine risk education for most organisations.
- NGOs continue to face difficulties in obtaining visas for their foreign personnel, significantly impeding the timely and efficient delivery of the humanitarian response as mine action organisations must have the appropriate level of technical management oversight to operate.



“We have been living in fear for our children and the safety of our shepherds.”

OVERVIEW

Humanitarian Mine Action in Iraq

The conflict in Iraq has resulted in a scale of landmine contamination not seen in the world since the mid-1990s when the historic Mine Ban Treaty was negotiated. This new landmine emergency has seen Daesh produce antipersonnel mines sensitive enough to be triggered by a child’s footsteps and powerful enough to disable a tank on an industrial scale. Global deaths and injuries from landmines have hit a ten year high, with Iraq being a significant contributor to this figure.

Enabled by agreements between the Government of Iraq (GoI) and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to enable humanitarian action in areas retaken from Daesh in northern Iraq, HMA NGOs have conducted clearance, risk education and victim assistance activities and, to date, cleared more than 13,000 landmines laid by Daesh across more than 11,000,000 square meters of land in Ninewa, Kirkuk and Diyala governorates.

The changing political situation has had a significant impact on mine action activities in the disputed areas, increasing the urgency for GoI registration and accreditation from the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA).

Following the withdrawal of the Peshmerga from disputed areas in Ninewa, Kirkuk and Diyala on 16 October, all mine action NGO operations have been suspended in these areas – resulting in 110 teams with the collective capacity to clear approximately 350 landmines and conduct 280 risk education sessions per week standing down.

The shift in control of the disputed areas comes at a time where, following the end of military operations, civilians are starting to return home. The cessation of clearance and reduction to limited risk education activities will greatly increase the risk of accidents amongst the returning populations and deny people access to their land and livelihood opportunities.

Status of Mine Action NGOs within Federal Iraq

Four HMA NGOs – Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), Danish Demining Group (DDG), Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Fondation Suisse de Deminage (FSD) – are registered as NGO’s with the GoI and Handicap International (HI), Danish Church Aid (DCA) and HALO Trust are actively pursuing it. However, registration is not the final barrier for these HMA operations to re-establish their operations. These NGOs must also receive accreditation to operate from the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) which sits within the GoI’s

Ministry of Environment and Health. Accreditation from the national mine action authority is the correct process and is an important step welcomed by the HMA community as it ensures that international standards for the delivery of operations are maintained. Unfortunately, the accreditation process in Iraq is subject to similar bureaucratic delays to the registration process. As a result, none of the registered HMA NGOs are currently able to conduct clearance operations or deliver mine risk education in response to the IED contamination left behind by Daesh, including the vast contamination left by improvised mines.

The HMA community is extremely concerned about this situation and has been working hard to develop an appropriate advocacy strategy in response. Members of the Mine Action Sub-Cluster are currently working with the international community, including donors and the UN to advocate on issues affecting the resumption of mine action operations. This includes working to speed up and stream line the accreditation process as well as work to support the DMA in becoming a strong mine action authority able to coordinate the delivery of mine action operations throughout Iraq. We are hopeful that resolutions to these issues will be found in the coming weeks and that we will be able to resume our operations in support of the broader humanitarian response and the vulnerable populations affected by the conflict.



Images: Sean Sutton/MAG