



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
5 March 2024

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-fifth session

26 February–5 April 2024

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[4 February 2024]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **The Deadly Legacy of Landmines**

For nearly 30 years of occupation of Azerbaijani lands, Armenia destroyed entire towns and villages with all infrastructure and planted land and anti-tank mines across the vast area of land to kill and maim both Azerbaijani civilians and military.

Since the end of the 44-day “Second Karabakh War” of 2020, the Azerbaijani government has been carrying out demining operations in the liberated territories to expedite the return of internally displaced people to their homes.

Despite the Azerbaijani government’s best efforts, mobilization and training of deminers, the problem is believed to haunt both civilians and military in the area and use public money to cope with the problem.

Since the 44-day war in 2020, several hundred of people have become victims of landmines in the liberated territories by Azerbaijan, including dozens killed, while others received injuries of varying degrees of severity. Among the injured are children, young people and women.

ANAMA reported that the maps provided by Armenia were just 2 per cent effective in mine action. According to the Azerbaijani government data, international experts estimate that Azerbaijan needs nearly 30 years and \$25 billion to solve issues related to demining.

The remnants of Armenia's occupation persist in the form of deadly land-mines on Azerbaijani soil, claiming numerous lives, particularly those of civilians. Since the conclusion of the 2020 44 days war, the toll from landmine incidents has risen to 342 victims.

## **Liberated Lands are Extensively Mined**

According to ANAMA (the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action), Armenia has actively engaged in the creation of a new “contact line” spanning 480 kilometers in length and reaching depths of 2 kilometers, covering a vast area totaling 960 square kilometers. Over the course of the past three years, Armenia has extensively mined this area, strategically seeding it with a staggering 500,000 mines. Despite claims of ignorance by Armenia, considering their assertion that maps detailing these mines do not exist.

Armenia's provision of maps to Azerbaijan following the “Second Karabakh War” was primarily due to international pressure. However, only a quarter of the information contained in these maps is accurate. Alarming, nearly 55% of recent explosions resulting from mine detonations have occurred in areas lying outside the boundaries delineated by the maps provided by Armenia.

The placement of mines by Armenia on Azerbaijani lands over the past three decades has emerged as a monumental challenge and threat, significantly complicating efforts for comprehensive reconstruction in regions liberated from occupation subsequent to the “Second Karabakh War”, which concluded on November 10, 2020. This situation severely impedes the activities of both military personnel and civilians in the affected region, and it obstructs the peaceful return of displaced individuals to their ancestral homes.

Tragically, over the past 30 years, more than 3,400 Azerbaijanis have suffered injuries or lost their lives due to mine explosions initiated by Armenia. Specifically since the conclusion of the “Second Karabakh War”, a total of 342 Azerbaijani citizens have fallen victim to landmines, with 65 casualties, including 50 civilians, having been fatally wounded.

The longstanding tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia trace back to 1991 when the Armenian military seized control of then Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, along with seven adjacent regions. This occupation has remained a central point of contention, fueling ongoing animosity and conflict between the two nations.

Extensive demining efforts have been undertaken in various regions, including Terter, Khojavand, Shusha, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Lachin, Gubadli, and Zangilan. The results of these operations reveal the staggering scale of the challenge, with the discovery and detonation of 3,495 anti-personnel mines, 5,034 anti-tank mines, and 23,049 units of unexploded ordnance. The clearance efforts have successfully rendered 53,081.8 hectares of land free from mines and explosive munitions ( according to recent report of ANAMA) .

Azerbaijan, committed to securing its liberated lands, initiated comprehensive operations in November 2020 to eliminate the lingering threats posed by mines, booby traps, and various weaponry left behind by Armenian troops.

## **Environmental Impacts of Land Release Operations**

In addition to the environmental impact of explosive ordnance itself, clearing ordnance inevitably also has an environmental impact, but employing efficient and effective land release methods minimizes this impact by ensuring that assets are only used on contaminated land. According to the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) on Environmental Management in Mine Action (07.13), the greatest environmental concerns come from mechanical clearance and bulk demolition. The most common types of machinery used in demining are equipped with flails, tillers, or rollers. These disrupt soil structure, which can accelerate surface run-off and soil erosion; cause loss of organic matter and fertility; and damage cycles of water, organic carbon, and plant nutrients. While open burning or open detonation (OBOD) remains a generally used explosive ordnance disposal method, it releases explosive residues into the environment, some of which are regarded as hazardous waste. The contamination risk is highest in bulk demolition sites, where repeated ‘second order’ demolitions occur, and in areas of substantial precipitation with sandy porous or loam soils, a shallow groundwater table, and that are adjacent to marshes, swamps, or estuaries .

The environmental impact of clearance programmes goes beyond the clearance itself to encompass the establishment of worksites and temporary accommodation to house deminers and other operational staff, as well as from the repair, maintenance, and servicing of mine action equipment; the generation of waste during operations; soil erosion and habitat degradation from vegetation removal and ground preparation; and the use of resources and carbon footprint of clearance operators, national mine action authorities, and other partner organizations within the mine action sector.

## **Potential Impact of Climate Change on Land Release Operations**

Flooding and landslides, have the potential to displace landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), meaning that previously cleared areas become re-contaminated; that mapping and minefield marking are made redundant.

High temperatures may also have an adverse impact on munitions, as intense heat can weaken munitions’ structural integrity, cause the thermal expansion of explosive chemicals, and damage protective shields.

Post-clearance land use should be actively considered when planning clearance activities, particularly in areas where contamination can be protective of certain aspects of the natural environment.

## **Environmental Mitigation Interventions**

Environmental protection measures should be mainstreamed and considered at each stage of mine survey and clearance operations: in planning, implementation, and post-clearance. Measures to mitigate negative impacts can and should vary in scale and scope and will depend upon the local context and resources available. These can range, for example, from the introduction of new technologies which offer less invasive approaches to mine clearance, and to more local initiatives in improving waste management practices.

## **Prioritizing the Environment**

International community must be more involved in implementing environmental policies to support Azerbaijan activities in demining and provide more humanitarian aid and field work to enable the displaced people to turn back to their lands. Factors enabling progress include the availability of resources, expertise and funding.

Azerbaijan has to develop stronger environmental practices and working partnerships with local environmental NGOs and communities. It is important that resourcing is available to support environmental planning and implementation within the sector, with mandatory environmental training, awareness raising and the implementation of data-collection systems for environmental management. Monitoring measures must be developed to control, manage environmental impacts and estimate the environmental losses which is affected by landmines.

## **Conclusion:**

All countries in conflict and post conflict must cooperate to remove all effects of landmines and to join the international treaty to ban landmines, adopted in September 1997, comprehensively prohibits antipersonnel mines and requires countries to destroy stockpiles, clear mine-affected areas, and assist victims.

There is a fear to facilitate the internal displaced people returns without addressing the demining and environmental - political issues that created population displacement in the first place, returns are likely to create a dramatic situation . Such returns, risk inflaming the political tensions created by the war rather than resolving them. For this reason, Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement (IRDG) calls the United Nations and the international community to be more involved in dealing with Armenia to provide more detailed information and maps about the landmines fields in the liberated areas and to be allowed to Azerbaijani experts to conduct inspections in the mines.

IRDG calls the international communities to take action to end the threat of these devices of death, support communities as they heal, and help people return and rebuild their lives in safety and security.

International assistance will help save lives, enable IDPs to return to their homes in safety and dignity and bring sustainable development to the affected territories and people.

---

1. Evans and Duncan, "Disposal of Explosive Ordnance and Environmental Risk Mitigation"; T. Jenkins, C. Vogel. "Department of Defense Best Management Practices for Munitions Constituents on Operational Ranges", SERDP 2014