

4 April: International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

New form of contamination will require complex clearance operations

Ottawa, 4 April 2021 - On the International Day for Mine Awareness, Humanity & Inclusion (HI) is alarmed by an exceptionally high and complex level of contamination, particularly explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised mines following current and recent conflicts. Published last November, *Landmine Monitor* recorded 5,554 mine casualties in 2019, a very high number for the fifth consecutive year. 80% of them are civilians - children representing 43% of the civilian casualties. This high figure is mainly due to intense armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and other conflict areas. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the sometimes unprecedented level of contamination left will require complex and long clearance operations in order to restore life to the local populations.

Clearance in the 21st century

- After years of conflict, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, etc. are contaminated by a vast range of explosive weapons including air delivered bombs, explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and booby traps. Urban areas are the worst affected. In many cities in these countries, the ground is littered with rubble mixed with explosive remnants of war, improvised devices and booby traps left behind by the belligerent parties. In recent years, clearance operations have become much more complex and require humanitarian clearance organisations to adapt, re-equip and in some cases, re-train.

HI prepares itself for upcoming challenges

- With its partner Mobility Robotics, HI in Chad has tested the use of drones to accelerate the clearance of land contaminated by mines and other explosive remnants of war and its release to the local population: HI is able to locate suspicious objects using drones equipped with cameras and create maps to better define places of intervention for deminers. HI is pioneering the use of infra-red camera to locate explosive ordnance buried in the ground. These new methods aim to accelerate land release activities in addition to making them safer, cost effective and efficient.

Quote

- **Quote:** "In the coming years, clearance operations face new and difficult challenges: In Syria, Yemen, Libya, Afghanistan, etc., bombing and shelling in urban areas have left behind a large number of explosive remnants of war including bombs, missiles, projectiles, and improvised devices. In many cases these deadly items are mixed within the rubble of destroyed or partially destroyed buildings. In many places, this contamination is deliberately placed to target civilians and spread fear and death to those wishing to return home. This type of contamination is extremely dangerous and requires complex clearance operations. It also makes risk education sessions essential to teach the population safe behaviours and to respond to these dangers when faced with these deadly explosive devices."

5,554 casualties in 2019

- Published last November, *Landmine Monitor's* annual report found **for the fifth consecutive year, exceptionally high casualties caused by landmines, explosive remnants (ERW) and improvised mines. The Monitor recorded 5,554 mine casualties in 2019. 80% of them are**



civilians - children representing 43% of the civilian casualties. This high figure is mainly due to intense armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria and other conflict areas.

- These alarming statistics are directly linked to the massive use of explosive weapons in populated areas in recent conflicts (Iraq, Syria, Yemen, etc.), including prohibited weapons such as anti-personnel mines and cluster bombs.

Massive and repeated use of explosive weapons

- **The use of explosive weapons in populated areas in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq has been massive and continuous. This practice, which mostly kills and injures civilians, leaves many large areas contaminated by explosive remnants of war after the fighting has ceased.** According to the United Nations, between January and October 2019 there were, on average, 184 explosive incidents per day in Syria. In 2018 the average was 187: 26.1% of the incidents were related to airstrikes, 69.9% to the use of heavy weapons and 4% to IEDs and other explosives.
- In Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, etc., bombings and shelling have left explosive remnants of war that permanently contaminate large areas long after fighting has stopped. In neighborhoods or villages that have been bombed, the presence of these explosive remnants of war threatens the lives of civilians and makes it impossible to return to normal social and economic life.

About Humanity & Inclusion (HI)

HI is an independent international aid organization. It has been working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict, and disaster for 38 years. Working alongside people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions, and promoting respect for their dignity and basic rights. Since it was founded in 1982, HI has set up development programs in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergencies. The network of eight national associations (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States) works constantly to mobilize resources, jointly manage projects, and to increase the impact of the organization's principles and actions. HI is one of six founding organizations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 and the winner of the Conrad N. Hilton Award in 2011. HI takes action and campaigns in places where "living in dignity" is no easy task.

Learn more: www.hi-canada.org

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