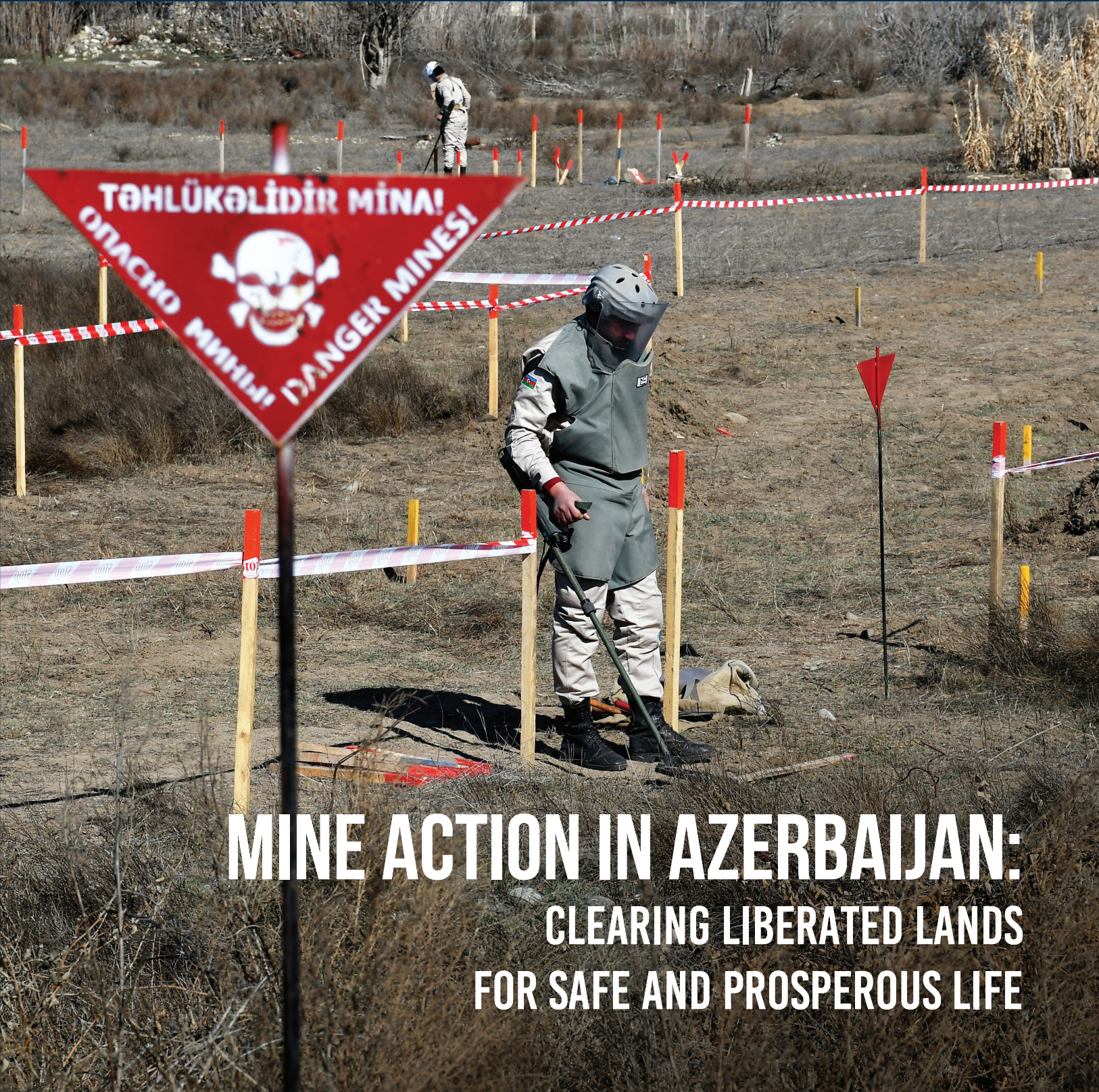




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JOURNAL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

# DİPLOMATİYA ALƏMİ WORLD OF DIPLOMACY

Special Edition  
№60/2024



**MINE ACTION IN AZERBAIJAN:  
CLEARING LIBERATED LANDS  
FOR SAFE AND PROSPEROUS LIFE**



SPECIAL EDITION

**MINE ACTION IN AZERBAIJAN:**  
**CLEARING LIBERATED LANDS**  
**FOR SAFE AND PROSPEROUS LIFE**

60/2024



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# Introduction

**Dear reader,**

The present special edition of the *World of Diplomacy* journal, titled "*Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Clearing Liberated Lands for Safe and Prosperous Life*" sheds light on the landmine problem in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan. This publication highlights the dangerous threat landmines pose to innocent lives as well as serious impediments to reconstruction and rehabilitation of the territories of Azerbaijan devastated during almost three decades long occupation.

The journal features articles by state officials of the Republic of Azerbaijan, representatives of international organizations and other partners engaged in humanitarian demining as well as interviews with survivors of landmine explosions.

It describes the gravity of the landmine problem, provides the firsthand information from Azerbaijani agencies on demining operations and support to mine victims as well as international assistance in mine action.

Additionally, readers have the opportunity to explore the documents on the issue of landmines adopted within international settings by the initiative of Azerbaijan.

This publication is the result of the close collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The editorial team extends its sincere gratitude to all the contributors for their valuable input to this edition.

**Sincerely,  
Editorial Team**

**Address by H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev,  
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
to the participants of the International  
Conference themed  
“Mitigating Environmental Impact of  
Landmines: Resource Mobilization for  
Safe and Green Future”**

*Baku, Azerbaijan*

*29 May 2024*



**Dear Conference participants,**

I welcome you on the occasion of the opening of the International Conference themed “Mitigating Environmental Impact of Landmines: Resource Mobilization for Safe and Green Future”.

Today, mines and unexploded ordnance continue to remain an acute problem posing threat to people’s security across many countries. Along with jeopardizing human life, the mines seriously challenge socioeconomic



development, damage the environment and cultural heritage, hinder post-war recovery and development initiatives, and ultimately impede the Sustainable Development Goals, even decades after wars have ended.

While mine explosions pose a threat to people's lives and put their very right to live into question, they also significantly damage the environment. Plastic waste resulting from an explosion entails environmental consequences by negatively impacting soil structure. Mines that remain unearthed for a long time can lead to hazardous chemical reactions. The soil not in use due to threat of mines is subjected to erosion and abrasion. Therefore, it is particularly significant that today's conference is organized in the run-up to the 29th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – COP29, which Azerbaijan will host.

Azerbaijan is bearing the brunt of a 30-year long conflict and occupation of its lands by Armenia, suffering from mine pollution problem and stands among the most mine-polluted countries of the world. According to initial estimates, roughly 12 percent of the country's territory is polluted by 1.5 million mines and an unknown number of unexploded ordnances.

Since the end of the war in 2020, 361 of our citizens, mostly civilians, have fallen victim to mine explosion, resulting in 68 deaths and 293 severe injuries. Overall, since the beginning of Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan, over 3400 of our citizens have suffered from mines, including 358 children and 38 women. The steady increase in the number of mine victims is associated with Armenia's refusal to provide the accurate maps of the mines it planted across Azerbaijan's territory, and with placing booby traps along the roads, cemeteries, and other civilian facilities located behind the former line of contact. From 2020 to 2023, new mine zones were created stretching up to 500 kilometers, new mines had been planted in Azerbaijan. Responsibility for that rests with Armenia.

Challenges we face on demining also hamper our development and recovery efforts, creating serious obstacles for the return of 800 thousand formerly displaced persons.

Humanitarian demining is among the top priorities of Azerbaijan's state policies, and the foundation of that was laid by the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people – Heydar Aliyev. Today, the primary body in charge of humanitarian demining in Azerbaijan is the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan – ANAMA.

So far, some 140 thousand hectares have been cleared of 119,946 mines and unexploded ordnances. Yet, mined areas stretch far beyond that. Mines are easy to plant but mine clearance is much more difficult and complex process. In a short span of time, Azerbaijan has mobilized all its strength, and is using the most advanced and cutting-edge technologies available worldwide. We are implementing measures to enhance efficiency in mine clearance, and our capabilities have significantly improved compared to

previous years. All-women demining teams have also been deployed since last year.

Our country is implementing humanitarian demining at its own expense. Adequate political and practical support from the international community for mitigating humanitarian consequences of mines and demining the affected areas are of utmost significance.

While addressing its mine problem, Azerbaijan has simultaneously launched multiple initiatives to rivet the international community's attention to this matter. As you may know, last year our country has officially declared humanitarian demining as the 18th National Sustainable Development Goal, and we are working to ensure the recognition of this issue as the UN's Global 18th SDG. In the meantime, Azerbaijan has launched an initiative to establish a Special Contact Group on Humanitarian Demining within the Non-Aligned Movement. The Contact Group has begun operating since last September.

At the 15th meeting of the states-parties to the "1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict," held in 2023, a resolution titled "The Impact of Mines on Cultural Heritage" was adopted upon Azerbaijan's initiative. As a follow-up to this momentous resolution, Azerbaijan hosted a special conference in Aghdam this May, themed "The Impact of Mines and Unexploded Ordnance on Cultural Property."

In the past three years, our country has hosted a number of international conferences, in collaboration with the UN, dedicated to the subject of mines. Along with being leading platforms for the discussion of mine action matters, these events draw greater attention to this significant problem that troubles humanity in the modern era. Presently, Azerbaijan is working with the UN to establish the "Center of Excellence" to provide education on the mine action. A letter of intent is due to be signed between the ANAMA and the UN Development Programme on the sidelines of this Conference. This notable development will allow Azerbaijan to share its expertise with the countries that face similar problems.

Today's event demonstrates Azerbaijan's determination to tackle the mine issue, one of the challenges of modern times. I believe that this conference will contribute to addressing the problem of mines and their consequences, including the environmental impact, as well as to the exchange of advanced experience in the area of the mine action.

I extend my best wishes to you and wish the conference every success.



# Healing the Scars of Armenia's Aggression against Azerbaijan: Encountering Landmine Threat

Azerbaijan stands among the most heavily mine-contaminated countries in the world, where around 1.5 million landmines and countless explosive devices were laid by Armenia during the almost three-decade-long military occupation of Azerbaijan's territories.

As a matter of fact, the devastating consequences of the war against Azerbaijan run deep. Azerbaijani people endured unimaginable atrocities, destruction of their towns and cities, looting and erasure of rich cultural heritage, plundering of natural resources, and overall damage to the environment. Yet, the lingering presence of landmines prolongs this suffering, still leading to injuries and fatalities among Azerbaijanis, hindering reconstruction and rehabilitation of the liberated territories and return of the former displaced population to the places of their origin in safety and dignity after almost 30 years of military occupation and ethnic cleansing. This attests that, among others, the clear objective behind Armenia's extensive landmine placement was also to obstruct the return of former internally displaced persons to their homes and impede the development of these territories.

The placement of landmines was carried out not only during the armed conflict but also continued after its end in 2020. Armenia's continuous deployment of landmines had persisted until its remaining troops were compelled to leave the territories of Azerbaijan as a result of the local anti-terror measures conducted in September 2023. The discovery of landmines manufactured by Armenia in 2021 on Azerbaijani soil is another irrefutable proof that these deliberate and calculated actions were intended to hinder the return of the population to their homeland and cause as much civilian damage as possible.

Since the conflict ended on November 10, 2020, 382 Azerbaijanis (as of December 2024), including women and children, have fallen victim to landmine explosions, while the total number of casualties since the beginning of the military occupation of the Azerbaijani territories exceeded 3,400 – a figure that speaks to the enduring cruelty of this hidden menace.

Armenia's continuous refusal to provide landmine maps complicates mine action in Azerbaijan. Notwithstanding the fact that Armenia, under international pressure, eventually submitted small portions of maps with



**JEYHUN BAYRAMOV**  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan*



**APART FROM THE DANGER THAT LANDMINE EXPLOSIONS CAUSE TO HUMAN LIFE DIRECTLY, THEY ALSO LEAD TO LAND DEGRADATION, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION, OBSTRUCTION OF POTENTIAL FOOD PRODUCTION, CAUSE DELAYS IN ESSENTIAL RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION OF THE LIBERATED TERRITORIES”.**

only 25 percent accuracy, many landmine explosions after the war in 2020 have occurred in the areas unmarked on these incomplete maps, illustrating Armenia’s purposeful disregard for human life and international humanitarian law.

Apart from the danger that landmine explosions cause to human life directly, they also lead to land degradation, environmental pollution, obstruction of potential food production, cause delays in essential reconstruction and rehabilitation of the liberated territories. The ripple effect of the landmine problem touches many aspects of life, making the task of demining a humanitarian imperative.

Given the dramatic scale and the impact of the landmines, Azerbaijan has made humanitarian demining one of its priorities.

The Government of Azerbaijan does its utmost to clear the country’s contaminated territories. Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, established in 1998 (Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action at that time), together with the relevant state bodies (Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Emergency Situations, and State Border Service) and international partners work tirelessly to detect and eliminate landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), and since the end of the war in 2020 have successfully cleared 166.000 hectares of land that includes 54500 landmines and around 105.000 ERW. The total area cleared constitutes approximately 14.2 percent of estimated contaminated area, and the number of found landmines constitutes approximately 3.6 percent of the estimated 1.5 million landmines.



**AS A MATTER OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO INCREASE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR FURTHER STRENGTHENING AND ENHANCING NATIONAL MINE ACTION EFFORTS IN AZERBAIJAN FOR THE SAKE OF SAVING HUMAN LIVES”.**

We are grateful to our partners for their shared concern regarding the landmine problem and their contributions to humanitarian demining in Azerbaijan but the assistance provided is definitely not enough.

We have to underline that over 90% of demining activities in Azerbaijan are funded through national resources, which are insufficient given the scale of the problem. For Azerbaijan, the suffering caused by this man-made disaster is not confined to the past. It continues to be a pressing issue. It continues to claim the lives and hinder the recovery and rehabilitation efforts today. Therefore, as a matter of human solidarity, it is important to increase international support for further strengthening and enhancing national mine action efforts in Azerbaijan for the sake of saving human lives.

Azerbaijan, the country suffering from the scourge of landmines, understands firsthand the critical importance of international cooperation in humanitarian demining. While Azerbaijan tackles its demining problem, it makes a valuable contribution to global humanitarian demining efforts as well. Thus, Azerbaijan contributed to demining projects in Türkiye, Georgia, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

Since the end of the conflict in 2020, Azerbaijan hosted three international landmine conferences bringing together a diverse audience, including

demining advocates, activists, and demining practitioners. Such conferences are of exceptional importance because they primarily serve to foster dialogue, share expertise and raise awareness on challenges posed by landmines.

In 2023, at the initiative of the President of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the Non-Aligned Movement established a Contact Group on Humanitarian Demining. This initiative aims to foster coordinated efforts in humanitarian demining, raise global awareness, and facilitate the exchange of best practices.

Also, upon Azerbaijan's initiative during the 15th Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict a resolution titled "Impact of Landmines on Cultural Property" was adopted which became the first one in UNESCO's history to specifically address the threat of landmines to cultural heritage. This resolution emphasizes the significant threat that landmines and ERW pose to cultural heritage, underlying the importance of exchanging exact information on the location of deployed landmines to ensure humanitarian demining and establish safe access to cultural property. As a follow-up to this resolution, Azerbaijan hosted a one-day Special Conference on 3 May 2024 within the 6th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue.

Another significant milestone in this area was the adoption of humanitarian demining as 18th National Sustainability Development Goal (SDG) by Azerbaijan which later on was proposed to be established as the UN's 18th SDG.

As seen, Azerbaijan's active international involvement in the landmine issues extends beyond seeking assistance for its landmine problem. Our motivation for active engagement primarily stems from the human approach recognizing the adverse impact of the landmine problem on humanity, as a whole.

We believe that by joining forces, we can save lives and pave the way for a future where no one – man, woman, or child – lives in fear of these silent killers.

This journey is arduous requiring commitment and collective action. Supporting Azerbaijan in its demining efforts would not only help to heal the wounds of aggression and occupation. Rehabilitation of territories and return of the Azerbaijani population to their homes may turn the painful experience of our region into a beacon of hope for the rest of the world, demonstrating how determination and cooperation can rebuild life and ensure that future generations inherit a safer and brighter world.



**AZERBAIJAN'S ACTIVE INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE LANDMINE ISSUES EXTENDS BEYOND SEEKING ASSISTANCE FOR ITS LANDMINE PROBLEM. OUR MOTIVATION FOR ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT PRIMARILY STEMS FROM THE HUMAN APPROACH RECOGNIZING THE ADVERSE IMPACT OF THE LANDMINE PROBLEM ON HUMANITY, AS A WHOLE".**



# Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Challenges and Response Action

**VUGAR SULEYMANOV,**

*Chairman of the Board  
of the Mine Action Agency  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

Azerbaijan stands as one of the most heavily landmine-affected countries globally, with its liberated territories still grappling with the enduring presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Most of the settlements were destroyed in Garabagh and East Zangezur Economic regions of Azerbaijan and approximately 1.5 million landmines were planted here, during the nearly 30 years of occupation by the armed forces of Armenia.

After the 44-day Patriotic War, demining of the liberated territories became the top priority for Azerbaijan. Creating safe conditions for the restoration and reconstruction of these areas, enabling the return of former internally displaced persons to their native lands, and facilitating the implementation of international and large-scale projects in Garabagh and East Zangezur Economic regions of Azerbaijan has become one of the most important priorities for our country.

ANAMA deminers in action,  
Jabrayil district, Azerbaijan.







Following the victory of our glorious army in 44-day Patriotic War the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action, established in 1998, was restructured into the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) in 2021 by the decree of the President of Azerbaijan. As a public legal entity ANAMA is not only responsible for planning, coordinating and managing mine action but also oversees all humanitarian mine clearance operations across the country. It serves as the primary executing body in this field.

Several layers of anti-tank mines laid on top of each other, Aghdam district, Azerbaijan

As part of the “Great Return” program to liberated territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, identified as one of the main strategic goals in the National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development: Azerbaijan 2030, ANAMA is conducting large-scale mine clearance activities in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). The clearance operations, primarily in areas designated for residential infrastructure, agriculture, transportation, energy, industrial parks, and other priority sectors, are carried out with the support of manual deminers, specialized mechanical equipment, mine detection dogs, and rats. International non-governmental organizations (NGO’s), such as MAG and APOPO, also contribute to the mine clearance efforts. Additionally, relevant state institutions, local companies, and NGO’s are actively involved in the process.



Rats are helping to uncover deadly landmines in the liberated territories, Azerbaijan



Initial estimates and ongoing survey indicate that 11,667 square kilometers of territory in Garabagh and East Zangezur Economic regions are contaminated with landmines and other explosive remnants of war. The current landmine threat in the liberated territories poses significant threat to the regions' development, the safety and health of our citizens, and has a considerable negative impact on the area's natural environment and biodiversity.

Continuous non-technical and technical survey operations conducted by the ANAMA in the liberated territories have determined that destroyed settlements, agricultural fields, cemeteries, gardens, forests, rivers, waterwells are heavily contaminated with landmines. The former contact line and its surroundings are considered the most contaminated areas. The majority of the mine incidents occurring outside these areas indicate that the civilian designated areas have been extensively mined as well.

Numerous improvised and booby-trap explosives have also been discovered in these territories, primarily at the entrances of abandoned houses and their surrounding areas, in farm buildings, residential structures, central district hospitals, schools, as well as under the bridges near individual residential areas and in the basements of buildings.

The mining of cemeteries, sacred sites, roads leading to cultural-historical monuments, the surroundings of these locations, few remaining undestroyed houses and their courtyards, and the extensive contamination with booby traps, constitute grave violations of international law.

According to statistics, over the past 30 years, the number of mine victims in Azerbaijan has reached over 3400 of whom 359 were children, and 38 were women. From November 10, 2020, to the present, there have been 382 (as of December 2024) landmine explosion victims. 70 people have lost their lives, and injured 312. Notably, 262 of these mine victims were killed or injured due to explosions outside the former contact line areas.

Furthermore, the inaccurate minefield records provided by Armenia were not effective and did not reflect the actual locations of the landmines. Armenia's refusal to share the accurate records poses significant threats to peace and security in the region.





Removal of an improvised explosive device installed in Khankendi, Azerbaijan

The grim consequences of landmines are not limited to the immediate human suffering they cause. They have alarming impacts on the local flora and fauna, and soil contamination.

These areas, renowned for their diverse ecosystems, have been severely impacted by the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXO), resulting in environmental destruction. About 1.5 million landmines planted in Azerbaijan's liberated territories have devastated the once flourishing flora and fauna. This translates to a minimum estimate of 480 tons of plastic wastes. Rivers, lakes, springs, canals, and more than 330 water wells and ganats have dried out, or have been contaminated by the explosive remnants of war turning them into sources of danger.



Demining process in the liberated areas of Ashaghi Askipara village, Gazakh district, Azerbaijan





The explosions of thousands of mines have caused significant damage to the land in Garabagh and East Zangezur Economic regions. The detonations have resulted in the contamination of rich soil, leading to ecological harm and negative impacts on agricultural productivity, which require long-term efforts for remediation.

In line with our sustainable development commitments, we have clear visions of the interrelationship between demining our lands and sustainable development goals. Recognizing the critical importance of humanitarian demining for our people, H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has proposed the establishment of the 18th National Sustainable Development Goal which was declared in 2023. Additionally, Azerbaijan has put forward the proposal for the adoption of the UN Global 18th Sustainable Development Goal, which encompasses global mine action activities.

Within last three years Azerbaijan hosted three international conferences to draw the international community's attention to the landmine problem. In May of this year, an international conference titled "Mitigating Environmental Impact of Landmines: Resource Mobilization for a Safe and Green Future" was held in Zangilan and Baku. Considering that 2024 has been declared the "Green World Solidarity Year" in Azerbaijan and that our country will host the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change the conference's theme was aligned accordingly. The international conference, co-organized by ANAMA and UNDP, gathered over 300 representatives from 75 countries. A declaration on the global fight against mine threats was adopted at the conclusion of the conference.

During the above mentioned international conference on May 30, 2024, the Statement of Intent was signed between ANAMA and UNDP for cooperation in establishing the ANAMA-UNDP International Centre of Excellence and Training for Mine Action in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This center will provide training and capacity-building at national, regional, and international levels in mine action, including certification and knowledge transfer. It will also promote research and innovation in mine action to advance the latest technologies and methodologies in humanitarian mine action. This initiative underscores Azerbaijan's efforts to promote peace, security, sustainable development, and both regional and global cooperation.

ANAMA is conducting extensive Explosive Ordnance Risk Education trainings, one of the primary components of mine action, and has established cooperation with various local and international organizations to support these efforts. Conducting risk education trainings is a critical measure to ensure the safe return of former internally displaced persons to their native lands, as well as for informing representatives of companies involved in reconstruction activities in the liberated territories and individuals visiting those areas. Furthermore, ANAMA is prepared to share its expertise in risk education on an international scale.



**WITHIN LAST THREE YEARS AZERBAIJAN HOSTED THREE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES TO DRAW THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S ATTENTION TO THE LANDMINE PROBLEM".**





ANAMA Explosive Ordnance Risk Education trainings for former IDPs in Lachin district, Azerbaijan

Through a partnership between ANAMA and Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), support has been extended to an amputee football team, the majority of whose members are mine incidents survivors. The team has made history by qualifying for the final stage of the UEFA European Championship, earning a place among the 10 strongest teams on the continent.

Our foremost responsibility is to further expand our mine action activities, provide assistance to those that was affected, and ensure that future generations live in a world free from the horrors of mines, in a safe and healthy environment.





Currently, while conducting mine clearance activities in the liberated territories, ANAMA also participates in various international projects and initiatives, mobilizing its efforts globally to combat mine threats and safeguard human safety.

Our country conducts its mine action efforts using mainly its resources, with approximately 95% of this work being funded by the Government of Azerbaijan. While international organizations and our partner countries contribute to mine action efforts in Azerbaijan, given the scale of the problem, this support is insufficient. Therefore, increasing international attention and support in this area is essential. We believe that only by collective efforts at the global level we can make effective contributions towards resolving this issue.



**WHILE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OUR PARTNER COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTE TO MINE ACTION EFFORTS IN AZERBAIJAN, GIVEN THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM, THIS SUPPORT IS INSUFFICIENT”.**

# Clearing a New Development Pathway: The Critical Role of Mine Action in Azerbaijan's Future

**ACHIM STEINER,**

*Administrator, United Nations  
Development Programme  
(UNDP)*

Every day, millions of people around the world live in a state of fear, knowing that everyday life - like going to work, farming their land, or even letting their children play outside could end in tragedy due to hidden landmines or unexploded ordnance (UXO). That includes countries such as the Republic of Azerbaijan, where remnants of conflict not only threaten lives but render vast areas of land unusable and deprive communities of vital resources. These threats hinder development, undermine human security, and effectively deny people the opportunities and future they deserve.

Since the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) initial involvement in mine action, the organization has supported over 50 countries in addressing the devastating impacts of landmines and explosive remnants of war, whose consequences can affect communities for generations. Working as part of the United Nations (UN) family, we have seen firsthand how humanitarian mine action, which aims to clear land so that civilians can return to their homes and their everyday routines without the threat of explosive hazards, is central to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, social cohesion and peacebuilding, and unlocking the potential for economic growth and resilient livelihoods<sup>1</sup>. Our engagement emphasizes the importance of community involvement, ensuring that mine action strategies are inclusive and responsive to the needs of those most affected by landmine and UXO contamination.

In Azerbaijan, UNDP and our many valued partners have been supporting the Government on mine action since 1999, allowing thousands of people to return home, and build a safer, more secure future for themselves and their communities. Yet vast areas of land remain hazardous despite significant progress on clearance. Moreover, landmines and UXO can leak toxic chemicals and heavy metals into the ground, poisoning soil, waterways, and agricultural crops. This can disrupt local ecosystems and biodiversity, including preventing plants and forests from recovering.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unmas.org/en/5-pillars-of-mine-action>



As a result of this contamination, hundreds of thousands of people remain displaced within Azerbaijan, and many cannot go home until their land is surveyed and cleared. In the meantime, many face difficulties in securing adequate housing, accessing decent work and essential public services such as healthcare and education, and integrating into the local communities that host them. In a broader sense, mine contamination and displacement add to the significant challenges facing Azerbaijan in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To drive new momentum on this intergenerational task, in 2023, the Government adopted a national, “18th SDG” on mine action, which includes specific measures to clear contaminated areas, use cleared land for agriculture, create safe conditions for reintegration, and assist victims. As part of these efforts, UNDP has scaled up its technical support to the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) to help reach this dedicated goal on mine action. For instance, with financial support from the European Union, UNDP and ANAMA established the first-ever all-women demining team in the country. This initiative is diversifying mine action efforts, creating new job opportunities for women, and fostering greater community engagement.

UNDP is also at the forefront of innovation, increasingly utilizing tools like drones, remote sensing, artificial intelligence, and animal-assisted detection. These approaches and technologies, some of which are now being adopted in crisis areas like Ukraine, have been proven to significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of mine clearance operations. UNDP is eager to continue supporting ANAMA in these efforts, drawing upon our global expertise.

Azerbaijan has also demonstrated a notable commitment to global mine action efforts. In May 2024, ANAMA and UNDP signed a statement of intent to establish an International Centre of Excellence and Training for Mine Action in Azerbaijan that will help foster research and development, test innovative equipment, develop new methodologies, and manage vital data and information systems. By enabling capacity-building and knowledge transfer on mine action at national, regional, and international levels, the centre aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of global mine action efforts, contributing to safer communities and advancing progress toward a mine-free world. Azerbaijan has also shown leadership by including environmental protection in its national standards on mine action, which could inspire similar efforts globally. When I met with H.E. Mr. President, Ilham Aliyev in Azerbaijan in March 2024 to discuss UNDP’s contribution to the country’s socio-economic development, including mine action, we also elaborated upon Azerbaijan’s chairing of the pivotal United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku in November 2024. This crucial role is indicative of the country’s commitment to advancing the type of multilateral solutions that our global community now needs.



**AZERBAIJAN HAS ALSO  
DEMONSTRATED A  
NOTABLE COMMITMENT  
TO GLOBAL MINE  
ACTION EFFORTS”.**





**AZERBAIJAN IS AMONG THE MOST HEAVILY CONTAMINATED COUNTRIES BY LANDMINES AND EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR, UNDERSCORING THE NEED FOR INCREASED INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO MINE ACTION INITIATIVES”.**

Aligning with Azerbaijan’s priorities, UNDP is actively exploring the connections between mine action and environmental sustainability. This strategic approach aims to align our programming with Azerbaijan’s objectives of environmental protection and sustainable development, recognizing that mine action plays a crucial role in restoring ecosystems and promoting green growth. Through this integrated focus, UNDP is committed to addressing both the immediate threats of landmines, the long-term goal of a safer, and greener future.

Azerbaijan is among the most heavily contaminated countries by landmines and explosive remnants of war, underscoring the need for increased international support to mine action initiatives. Such support is crucial to expedite clearance operations, protect vulnerable communities, ensure the safe return of civilians, and promote socio-economic recovery in the affected areas.

The UN envisions a world free from the dread of landmines and explosive remnants of war, where everyone can enjoy the simple freedom that so many take for granted, like going to school or work, without the worry that their child might be harmed by a remnant of conflict. In Azerbaijan, this vision is within reach and one that is proudly supported by UNDP and our partners. Through international collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to the well-being of its people, Azerbaijan demonstrates that each safe stride forward clears a pathway to lasting peace and development, where communities can step out of the long shadow of conflict and forge the future they deserve.

# Mine Terror: A Barrier to the Implementation of State Program on Great Return to Azerbaijan's Liberated Territories

**M**ine terror in current and former conflict zones around the world has emerged as a serious challenge of our time. The global scale of mine terror is undeniably expanding, posing not only a threat to human life but also causing economic and social consequences for affected countries.

Military occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan by Armenia for almost 30 years resulted in the widespread planting of countless mines, making Azerbaijan one of the world's most mine-contaminated countries. The mines were implanted not only along the former contact line but also deep within non-combat areas.

**Colonel-General  
ZAKIR HASANOV**

*Minister of Defense  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

Mine clearance of roads  
and surrounding areas.  
Zulfugarli village, Kalbajar  
district, Azerbaijan.





Thousands of our compatriots have become victims of these death traps in our historical territories for many years. Since November 2020, 382 individuals became victims of landmine explosions, including 184 military personnel and 198 civilians. Of these, 70 lost their lives, while 312 sustained various injuries. According to the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA), since 1991, the total number of Azerbaijani citizens who became victim of the mine terror has exceeded 3,400, including 359 children and 38 women.

For a prolonged period, Armenia disregarded international conventions by refusing to hand over the accurate mine maps, demonstrating a deliberate strategy to increase casualties. Under the pressure of the Azerbaijani side and our partners, Armenia eventually provided some landmine maps. However, subsequent investigations revealed the maps to be mostly inaccurate, rendering them nearly useless. Most explosions have occurred in areas not marked on these maps, highlighting Armenia's disregard for human safety and humanitarian values.

Even after the Trilateral Statement was signed on November 10, 2020, the military and political leadership of Armenia continued provocative activities, such as laying new mines in liberated territories and along supply routes, in violation of the document. According to Provision 4 of the Trilateral Statement, armed forces of Armenia were supposed to withdraw from the territory of Azerbaijan, but instead, Armenia maintained its illegal military presence in the Garabagh Economic region, transported here weapons from Armenia and other countries and continued further provocations.

E-001 M anti-personnel landmines produced in Armenia in 2021, found in Lachin district, Azerbaijan

With regard to these provocations, it should be particularly noted that the Armenian sabotage groups planted mines, made in 2021, along the supply roads used regularly by Azerbaijani military personnel. This led to increase in number of military personnel who lost their lives and got injured because





Searching for mines using handheld detector

of landmine explosions. In this regard, the installation of a checkpoint by Azerbaijan in the Lachin district has helped to prevent the arming and supplying of its armed formations illegally deployed in the territories of Azerbaijan.

During the period from November 2020 up until local anti-terror measures were undertaken by the armed forces of Azerbaijan, several military clashes occurred where Azerbaijani Army had struck a blow to the enemy. Azerbaijan by putting forward many proposals always advocated for resolving problems based on its adherence to human values. Regrettably, Armenia chose the path of provocations and bloodshed.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan repeatedly emphasized during his speeches that Azerbaijan's patience was not infinite. The armed forces of Azerbaijan, loyal to its people and Commander-in-Chief, responded decisively to these provocations. Azerbaijan carried out local anti-terror measures that lasted less than 24 hours and culminated in full restoration of its sovereignty and thus historical justice.

Following the liberation of the territories, engineering units of Azerbaijani Army and ANAMA have been conducting extensive mine clearance operations to ensure the complete safety of these territories. Between 2021 and July 2024, 39,721 hectares were cleared of landmines, resulting in the detection and neutralization of 13,045 unexploded ordnances, 10,463 anti-personnel mines, and 3,318 anti-tank mines. These numbers continue to change daily as demining efforts progress.

Although the landmines laid by Armenia are concentrated primarily in the districts of Fuzuli, Aghdam, Khojavand, Tartar, and Kalbajar, they also extend well beyond the former contact line. The armed forces of Armenia also placed booby traps and improvised explosive devices in various



infrastructure. Each successfully defused mine or unexploded ordnance saves lives. Even though it remains challenging to predict when all of the areas will be completely cleared.

Under the leadership of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan remains committed to the safe return of former internally displaced persons (IDPs), the restoration, reconstruction and rehabilitation of the liberated territories, social and economic life. However, only a few countries have provided concrete assistance in these efforts. In this respect, I would like to mention in particular support of brotherly Türkiye. Thus, the military personnel of our engineering units both increased their knowledge and skills by participating in the courses held in Türkiye, and specialists in this field from Türkiye were invited to our country to held courses with the participation of our officers.

The main purpose of these courses is to deepen the use of engineering toolkits that have recently entered the arsenal during the execution of engineering support tasks, and to master new methods applied to the execution of the assigned tasks by our military personnel serving in this area. In addition, it should be mentioned that the MEMATT (Mechanical Mine Clearance Equipment) branded mechanical demining equipment produced by the Republic of Türkiye has a crucial role in the performance of its responsible and dangerous task by our engineering units. Additionally, the “Revival P” demining machine produced by the military industry of our country (used by ANAMA) has successfully proved its capabilities in the action. Remote operation capabilities of these equipments reduce risks to human lives.

What is more, the process of cleaning of our territories from landmines and unexploded military ammunition is being carried out with the use of mine-detecting devices produced locally and by world-leading states. At the same time, specially trained dogs in canine centers help our engineering units in the mine detection process as well. Despite these significant efforts,

Mine clearance of grassland using MEMATT mine clearance machine, Fizuli district, Azerbaijan





the demining process requires substantial financial resources and time due to the vast scale of contamination.

The Azerbaijani Government remains committed to raising international awareness about the mine terror. 350 anti-personnel mines laid by illegal Armenian armed groups in the northern direction of Saribaba height in Lachin district were discovered during the implementation of the engineer-assigned tasks performed in our territories. The military attachés of the diplomatic corps accredited in Azerbaijan visited Saribaba height of Lachin district to witness firsthand the extensive contamination. During the visit they were also presented the evidence that some mines found were newly produced in Armenia in 2021. In addition, visits of local and foreign media representatives were also organized to the places where landmines and unexploded military ammunition were found.

Azerbaijan expects more initiative and support from the international community in addressing this ongoing threat. However, global response has been limited, often displaying double standards. From the end of the last century to the present day, thousands of Azerbaijanis have been killed or injured by landmines planted by Armenia. Despite repeated appeals to international organizations and broader public about Armenia's mine terror, most of these calls for action have remained unanswered. Armenia has not been condemned for these inhumane acts and nor concrete steps has been taken in this regard. Azerbaijan is countering this terror mostly on its own.

The mines planted in Azerbaijan's ancient territories remain to be the primary barrier for former IDPs return to their native lands. Clearing these areas is crucial for restoration of infrastructure and ensuring a prosperous future. Given the enormity of the task, engineering units of Azerbaijani Army continue to work day and night to detect and neutralize landmines. This work, in line with the state leadership's directives, is successfully continued in coordination with other relevant state agencies and helps to ensure well-being across the region.

Crates full of weapons and ammunition, anti-personnel and anti-tank mines detected in liberated territories, Khankendi, Azerbaijan



**DESPITE REPEATED APPEALS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND BROADER PUBLIC ABOUT ARMENIA'S MINE TERROR, MOST OF THESE CALLS FOR ACTION HAVE REMAINED UNANSWERED. ARMENIA HAS NOT BEEN CONDEMNED FOR THESE INHUMANE ACTS AND NOR CONCRETE STEPS HAS BEEN TAKEN IN THIS REGARD. AZERBAIJAN IS COUNTERING THIS TERROR MOSTLY ON ITS OWN”.**



# Demining Operations by the Ministry of Emergency Situations in the Liberated Territories

**Colonel-General  
KAMALADDIN HEYDAROV**

*Minister of Emergency Situations  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

The historical achievements of our country under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Victorious Commander-in-Chief Mr. Ilham Aliyev, derive strength from the wise ideas of the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev. The liberation of our native lands from the occupation during the 44-day Patriotic War, led by the mastery of our honorable President, is a brilliant victory embedded with the golden letters in the history of our statehood. Azerbaijani people take an immense pride for the full restoration of its territorial integrity, sovereignty and constitutional order.

Mine clearance operation in the liberated territories with remotely controlled demining robot "GCS-200"

Currently, extensive restoration and reconstruction works are underway in the liberated lands, which were devastated completely by Armenia during almost 30 years-long occupation. The territory of Garabagh and East Zangezur Economic regions resembles a large construction site with huge infrastructure projects, the complete restoration and reconstruction of settlements and establishment of enterprises in industry, agriculture







and service sectors is underway. The Great Return program carried out resolutely under the leadership of H.E. President Ilham Aliyev brings new life to the lands liberated from occupation. With the active initiatives of the First Vice-President of Azerbaijan, President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, the unprecedented measures are taken for the rapid restoration of our ancient cultural and religious monuments destroyed by Armenia in Garabagh and East Zangezur Economic regions. These efforts are welcomed by our people with a great sense of satisfaction and gratitude.

Defused mines in Aghdam district, Azerbaijan

Regrettably, the restoration of settlements and infrastructure facilities in the liberated lands and the return of former IDPs to their ancestral lands is seriously hindered by the presence of approximately 1.5 million landmines, anti-personnel and anti-tank mines placed in these territories by Armenia. In this regard, I would like to emphasize that Azerbaijan is one of the most mine contaminated countries, with one of the highest number of landmine victims in the world. The extensive mine contamination not only hinders the reconstruction efforts, but also poses a serious threat to the life and health of our citizens. Tragically, since the end of the Patriotic War, hundreds of

our citizens, most of them civilians, have become victims of landmines. Armenia's refusal to provide accurate maps of the mines laid in the territory of Azerbaijan, the placement of trap mines in civilian areas such as roads, around water channels and reservoirs, cemeteries, forests, and agricultural lands further increases the number of landmine victims.

Immediately after the end of the war, Azerbaijan started intensive landmine clearance operations. From the outset, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, along with other relevant state bodies, has been actively participating in this coordinated work.

Thus, shortly after the end of the Patriotic War - from January 2021, the demining teams of the Special Risky Rescue Service of the Ministry launched humanitarian demining operations. While these operations initially focused on the former line of contact, they have since expanded to cover broader areas.

Ministry of Emergency Situations has sent its personnel to international trainings in order to increase their knowledge and skills in this field and gain relevant expertise. Theoretical and practical trainings on detecting and neutralizing various types of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines were conducted and tactical and technical features of relevant equipment were taught to sappers. A large number of our employees, who successfully participated in these training programs received certificates and joined demining operations.

Demining operation by the Ministry of Emergency Situations around the Khachinchay reservoir, Aghdam district, Azerbaijan





As part of these efforts, a special anti-mine military unit of the Special Risky Rescue Service of the Ministry was created in order to improve the efficiency and speed of demining operations. These efforts played an important role in accelerating the demining operations carried out by the Ministry. Thanks to the support of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, this unit was provided with the most modern facilities and equipment in a short time, and the personnel involved in demining operations were equipped with the necessary technical and protective appliances. The purchase of modern remotely controlled mechanical demining robots has significantly aided the demining operations.

Currently, the demining teams are working in the direction of Taghibeyli, Namirli, Ilkhichilar, Suma and Gulluja villages of Aghdam district (information as of September 2024). Since these areas were the former line of contact, the territory of the villages was highly contaminated with anti-personnel and anti-tank mines.

As it is known, using specially trained dogs in demining operations has proven effective. Taking into consideration that Azerbaijan is one of the countries most contaminated by landmines in the world, they are widely used by the Ministry of Emergency Situations in the liberated territories. A large number of mines and explosives were discovered by specially trained mine-detecting dogs involved in large-scale search operations by cynologists of the Ministry's Special Risky Rescue Service.

It should also be noted that the mines laid in the territories of Azerbaijan seriously complicate firefighting efforts, which is one of the important responsibilities of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, especially in open areas, including forests and fields. In such cases the direct intervention by firefighters to the source of fire is a big risk, so firefighting measures are carried out with possible alternative options with extreme caution. In any case, this approach leads to the loss of additional time and increased resource use.

Today, our citizens, who have longed for their ancestral lands for decades, want to return to their native lands, the villages where they grew up and to live and create again in those lands. All possible steps are being taken by our state to quickly fulfill this desire, including the successful implementation of the Great Return program. Resources are being fully mobilized to clear lands from mines in the shortest possible time. Unfortunately, the high level of contamination of the territories with mines by Armenia remain a serious obstacle to carry out these works more speedily. Although humanitarian demining operations are intensively being carried out by the Ministry of Emergency Situations and other relevant agencies, there are still many landmines to be found and neutralized.



**IT SHOULD BE ALSO NOTED THAT THE MINES LAID IN THE TERRITORIES OF AZERBAIJAN SERIOUSLY COMPLICATE FIREFIGHTING EFFORTS, WHICH IS ONE OF THE IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MINISTRY OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN OPEN AREAS, INCLUDING FORESTS AND FIELDS”.**



# Social Support for Mine Victims and Their Families in Azerbaijan

## **SAHIL BABAYEV**

*Minister of Labour  
and Social Protection  
of the Population of the  
Republic of Azerbaijan*

**A**zerbaijan, with its robust economic development, is committed to ensuring the welfare, safety, and health of its citizens. Under the leadership of H.E. President Ilham Aliyev, a strong social policy has been established, which extends support to those who have lost their health as a result of mine explosions, and to the families of mine victims. This policy also covers other socially vulnerable groups, focusing on social protection, medical rehabilitation, and reintegration into society.

In 2020, in response to numerous provocations from Armenia, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan launched a counter-offensive that successfully resulted in the liberation of its internationally recognized territories after almost 30 years of occupation by Armenia. During the military occupation, Armenia not only destroyed the infrastructure and cultural monuments, but also heavily contaminated these areas with landmines. Today, according to preliminary estimates, Azerbaijan faces the challenge of clearing 1.5 million landmines across more than 13% of its territory, making it one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world.

Even after the end of the 44-day war, from 2020 to 2023, Armenia continued its mine terror, planting a significant number of new landmines in various locations. Since 2020, Azerbaijan has suffered 382 casualties, the majority of whom were civilians, either killed or severely injured. In total, over 3,400 Azerbaijanis have fallen victims to landmines since the beginning of the military aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani government is implementing a comprehensive restoration and reconstruction works in the liberated areas, while also accelerating mine clearance efforts through the use of advanced technologies.

Azerbaijan has officially declared humanitarian demining as the 18th National Sustainable Development Goal that includes actions to combat the mine threat for the safe return to our liberated territories, resettlement, rehabilitation, prosperity and peace. In line with this initiative, humanitarian demining was later proposed as global 18th SDG by Azerbaijan.

It should also be mentioned that our country contributes to the global humanitarian demining process. Azerbaijan has contributed to global humanitarian demining efforts by proposing to form a “Like-Minded Group of Mine-Affected Countries” during its chairmanship of the Non-Aligned

Movement. The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan has developed a methodology on mine action and activities related to mine victims on the basis of the 18th National SDG. Besides, information is provided on measures taken for social protection of those who have suffered from landmines or other explosive ordnance (including social payments, treatment, socio-medical rehabilitation services etc.). Financial assistance is provided immediately after accidents, with proactive allocation of payments through virtual systems, eliminating the need for citizens to apply.

Ongoing social reforms guarantee a steady increase in these payments. Over the past five years, four social reform packages, benefiting more than four million citizens, have been implemented. These reforms have significantly increased pensions, allowances, benefits, and wages. Vulnerable groups, including the families of mine victims and those disabled by mine explosions, are among the main beneficiaries.

Housing and transport support are also provided to vulnerable groups. As of 1 October, 2024, more than 15,000 individuals, including families of mine victims, have received housing. In addition, 7,700 vehicles have been distributed to people with war-related disabilities, including mine explosion survivors. In 2024 alone, 1,500 apartments will be provided to those in need.

Azerbaijan has developed a modern rehabilitation system, with rehabilitation centers expanding and incorporating advanced international practices along with traditional rehabilitation methods. This system plays a crucial role in helping war injured individuals and mine explosion survivors regain their independence. After the 44-day Patriotic War, the country has provided 361,000 services to 130,000 people, including rehabilitation equipment for over 2,200 war-disabled citizens. Cutting-edge prosthetics are also provided to those who have lost limbs in mine explosions, enabling them to lead active lives and even participate in sports.



**AZERBAIJAN HAS DEVELOPED A MODERN REHABILITATION SYSTEM, WITH REHABILITATION CENTERS EXPANDING AND INCORPORATING ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES ALONG WITH TRADITIONAL REHABILITATION METHODS. THIS SYSTEM PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN HELPING WAR INJURED INDIVIDUALS AND MINE EXPLOSION SURVIVORS REGAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE”.**

Elmaddin Mirzayev – stepped onto landmine on January 29, 2021 in the direction of Agdam, and besides losing a limb, he also got an eye injury.





Asaf Khudiyev – stepped onto landmine on November 14, 2020 in the direction of Fuzuli, Azerbaijan



Another key priority is the implementation of employment initiatives for mine victims and their families. By October 2024, over 23,700 people will have received employment support, with small businesses created for 11,800 individuals through the self-employment program.

In August 2024, the Garabagh Vocational Training Center of the State Employment Agency under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan organized a one-month vocational training at the base of the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) located in Balasoltanli village of Gubadli (one of Azerbaijan's liberated districts). The main purpose of such vocational trainings is to provide the participants with basic theoretical and practical knowledge about the safety of life activities and prepare them as specialists in this field. The Garabagh Vocational Training Center continues its work together with ANAMA and is planning to engage more unemployed people to vocational trainings in the future. The participants who will successfully pass the exam will be provided with appropriate jobs by ANAMA.

Educational training on mine safety and occupational safety is also provided to employers and employees working in liberated areas, with over 5,000 individuals trained to prevent workplace accidents.

Azerbaijan's social policy is designed to promptly address the challenges encountered by mine victims and their families. While Azerbaijan continues to tackle these challenges primarily on its own, international support remains crucial to overcoming the long-term impact of mine contamination.



**WHILE AZERBAIJAN CONTINUES TO TACKLE THESE CHALLENGES PRIMARILY ON ITS OWN, INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT REMAINS CRUCIAL TO OVERCOMING THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF MINE CONTAMINATION”.**

# Azerbaijani Border Guards Continue Demining Operations in the Liberated Territories

The unwavering determination and relentless efforts of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Victorious Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, in restoring the territorial integrity of our country and ensuring the return of former internally displaced persons (IDP) of our displaced compatriots to their ancestral lands, combined with the courage of our Armed Forces, and the unity of our people, led to the great victory in the 44-day Patriotic War.

Participating in the operations that resulted in the restoration of the territorial integrity of our country has become a symbol of immense honor for every border guard of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan ranks among the top countries in the world in terms of landmine and explosive ordnance contamination. During 30-year long occupation Armenia indiscriminately implanted anti-personnel and anti-tank mines in the territories of Azerbaijan.

The experience of other countries shows that it can take at least 25-30 years to fully clear landmines from the soil. Demining is a difficult, high-risk, and challenging task. Landmines pose a threat not only to human life but to the entire ecosystem as well.

Clearing the liberated territories from landmines and unexploded ordnance is, without a doubt, a top priority for our country. No infrastructure development can begin without completing this critical work. It is also important for ensuring the safety of former IDP's the displaced people who return to their places of origin. Therefore, a great responsibility rests on the shoulders of our sappers.

Currently, efforts are underway to clear the liberated territories, including roads, and agricultural fields of landmines and unexploded ordnance. Simultaneously, the engineering and fortification units of the State Border Service are working on constructing supply roads to border units located in mountainous and remote areas, as well as developing social infrastructure for military personnel.

As a result of demining operations, a total of 1,598 anti-personnel mines, 1,763 anti-tank mines, and 519 unexploded military munitions were

**Lieutenant-General  
RASHAD SADIGOV**

*First Deputy Chief –  
Chief of Staff of the State  
Border Service of the  
Republic of Azerbaijan*



**DEMING IS A  
DIFFICULT, HIGH-RISK,  
AND CHALLENGING  
TASK. LANDMINES  
POSE A THREAT NOT  
ONLY TO HUMAN LIFE  
BUT TO THE ENTIRE  
ECOSYSTEM AS WELL”.**





Mine detection in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan

detected and neutralized across 2,665.74 hectares in the Jabrayil, Zangilan, Gubadli, and Lachin districts—territories liberated from the occupation and located within the service area of the military units of Border Troops. In these regions, 150 km of new roads have been constructed, and 358 km of roads have been reconstructed.

More than 13% of Azerbaijani territories remain affected by landmines. Regretfully, after nearly 30-year-long military aggression against Azerbaijan and following the Patriotic War, Armenia, in violation of international law, refuses to provide maps of the minefields in the liberated territories. Between 1993 and 2024, due to mine explosions 9 military personnel of the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan lost their lives, while 19 others sustained various injuries. This act not only constitutes a war crime but is also a serious violation of international humanitarian law and Armenia's legal obligations.

To enhance the professional knowledge of our engineering and fortification units in demining operations, a course on humanitarian demining and clearing of battlefields was conducted on

November 16-23, 2023, with the participation of representatives from the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Additionally, 11 sessions of the "Fortifier Training Course" and the "Advanced Fortification Profession Course" were conducted by specialists from the State Border Service.

The next remarkable milestone in the complete restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereign borders happened on May 24, 2024. On that day, the State Border Service restored control over the territories of Baghanis Ayrim, Ashaghi Askipara, Kheyrimli, and Gizilhajili villages of Gazakh district, our victory flag was raised and it was reported to the Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

The peaceful return of four Azerbaijani villages, without a single shot fired, represents another important step toward fully ensuring sovereignty of Azerbaijan. It is yet another diplomatic victory of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev.

The agreement reached by the delimitation commissions may contribute to confidence building between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It highlights the effectiveness of Baku's proposal to conduct peace talks and the delimitation process without mediators or third-party involvement.



Following the liberation of four villages of Gazakh district, the search operations conducted by our engineering and fortification units over 9.06 hectares of land led to the neutralization of 155 anti-personnel mines, 19 anti-tank mines, 3 anti-personnel traps, and 22 unexploded ordnances.

Today, as always, the Azerbaijani border guards protect our country's borders with unwavering dedication. The constant attention of the Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief to the service and combat activities of our border guards, along with his recognition of their steadfastness, provides them with moral strength and inspires to achieve even greater successes.

Over the past four years since the Patriotic War, H.E. President Mr. Ilham Aliyev has placed great value on the heroism and bravery of our border guards, which also reflect the high regard given to the overall efforts of the State Border Service.

State border guards of the Republic of Azerbaijan fully realize responsibility and importance of their work aimed at ensuring security of the country and protecting its borders. Every Azerbaijani border guard is proud to serve his homeland, people and President and will continue doing so sparing no effort.

Searching for mines using handheld detectors





# The Vital Role of Humanitarian Aid in Landmine Clearance in Azerbaijan

**HIS EXCELLENCY  
DR. ABDULLAH AL RABEEAH**

*Supervisor General,  
King Salman Humanitarian  
Aid and Relief Centre  
(KSrelief).*

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Azerbaijan have long-standing diplomatic, humanitarian, and cultural ties, and I am very pleased to have the opportunity to strengthen these bonds through this piece.

As the world grapples with remnants of past conflicts, landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) pose a grave threat to human safety, community resilience, and economic development. Azerbaijan, with its rich history and strategic importance, faces significant challenges due to landmines scattered across its landscape. These remnants are not just hazards to human life but are also formidable obstacles to reconstruction, particularly in locations to which displaced populations are eager to return and rebuild.

In line with its global humanitarian commitment, Saudi Arabia, through KSrelief, has made significant strides in addressing the landmine crisis in Azerbaijan. This initiative is part of a broader mission to promote peace, security, and sustainable development in conflict-ravaged regions. Since 1996, Saudi Arabia has provided over USD 129 billion in humanitarian aid across 169 countries, undertaking 2,925 projects with a total of more than USD 6.8 billion across all vital humanitarian sectors.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR A SAFER FUTURE

On January 16, 2024, a Memorandum of Financial Contribution (MFC) for USD 3 million was signed between KSrelief and the Mine Action Agency of Azerbaijan. This contribution is pivotal in ongoing efforts to clear contaminated lands from mines. The objectives are to save lives, facilitate the safe return of displaced persons, and support broader reconstruction goals.

The landmine clearance project is both a technical and a humanitarian mission, with far-reaching impacts. Cleared lands will enable thousands of displaced families to return, restore livelihoods, and contribute to

community revitalization. This project underscores the belief that everyone has the right to live in a safe environment, free from the fear of mines and other explosive remnants of conflict.

## **BUILDING A HUMANITARIAN LEGACY: INSIGHTS FROM MASAM**

Why focus on landmine clearance? Landmines and UXO are indiscriminate, affecting children, the elderly, and anyone else going about their daily lives. These devices impact innocent civilians, causing serious injuries and disrupting lives. As long as conflicts exist, these threats remain.

KSrelief's commitment to landmine clearance is not new. The Saudi Project for Landmine Clearance, MASAM, which was established in June 2018 as a humanitarian initiative to assist the Yemeni people in dealing with this dangerous security issue, has set a remarkable precedent in humanitarian de-mining action. Since its inception, MASAM has cleared millions of square meters, removing thousands of mines and UXO. This project has saved countless lives and restored hope to many communities devastated by conflict.

The insights learned from MASAM are invaluable for the mission in Azerbaijan. These lessons include the importance of local capacity building, community engagement, and integrating mine action into broader humanitarian and development programs such as support for artificial limbs centers to provide prosthetic devices and support to amputees.

## **CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES: A UNIFIED EFFORT AGAINST LANDMINES**

At the International Conference on Mine Action held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on May 30-31, 2024, Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to humanitarian mine clearance initiatives. Prioritizing the protection of civilians, especially women and children, is crucial, and removing the threat of explosive devices certainly enhances public safety. During the conference, a USD 2.5 billion Middle East Green initiative was introduced, aimed at tackling pressing environmental challenges.

The achievements of the Saudi Mine Clearance Project in Yemen (MASAM) were highlighted, with over 443,000 explosives cleared and 56 million cubic meters of land made safe since its inception in 2018. Additionally, KSrelief signed a memorandum of cooperation with Azerbaijan's National Mine Action Agency and extended a grant to support mine clearance efforts.

Furthermore, the prosthetic limbs program in Yemen, which has benefitted nearly 3.5 million individuals, underscores the critical need for global cooperation in addressing the lasting impacts of landmines. Together, efforts must continue to create safer communities for all.



**LANDMINES AND UXO ARE INDISCRIMINATE, AFFECTING CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY, AND ANYONE ELSE GOING ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES. THESE DEVICES IMPACT INNOCENT CIVILIANS, CAUSING SERIOUS INJURIES AND DISRUPTING LIVES”.**



## HUMANITARIAN IMPACT: BEYOND MINE CLEARANCE

While the immediate goal is to clear landmines and UXO, the broader humanitarian impact is profound. The project will improve the overall quality of life for vulnerable, crisis-affected populations, particularly women and children.

By ensuring safety, KSrelief helps maintain public health, reduce psychological trauma, and promote social cohesion in displaced and conflict-affected communities. Creating a safe environment is crucial for enabling these communities to rebuild, pursue education, and participate in economic activities.

## CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

A key component of KSrelief's approach is building local capacity. In Azerbaijan, this involves training and equipping local teams to carry out effective mine clearance. By empowering local actors, KSrelief ensures the project's benefits are sustainable, allowing communities to continue their activities long after the initial phase.

The project also focuses on raising awareness about landmine dangers, particularly to children. Educational campaigns and community outreach programs are integral to success, fostering a culture of safety and vigilance to protect future generations.



**THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF THESE DEVICES TRANSCEND BORDERS, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION IS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE A WORLD FREE FROM THE THREAT OF LANDMINES”.**

## A CALL FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The landmine clearance project in Azerbaijan exemplifies Saudi Arabia's commitment to international humanitarian principles and the shared responsibility of nations to support those in need. It calls for global unity in addressing challenges posed by landmines and UXO. The devastating effects of these devices transcend borders, and collective action is necessary to achieve a world free from the threat of landmines.

In conclusion, KSrelief's financial support to Azerbaijan's Mine Action Agency is more than an investment in landmine clearance; it is an investment in Azerbaijan's future, in the safety and well-being of its people, and in the reconstruction of a nation that has endured the ravages of long-term conflict. As we look to the future, KSrelief remains committed to working with its humanitarian partners to create a safer, more peaceful world for all.

# NSPA Contributes to the Partnership for Peace Programme to Address Azerbaijan's Landmine Problem

In 1991, NATO adopted a New Strategic Concept and began focusing on developing multinational force projection to adapt to the post-Cold War era and to enhance its capabilities for crisis management operations. In order to achieve future strategic objectives, NATO needed to broaden and deepen cooperation with countries beyond its traditional borders. Therefore, the Alliance sought for partners who could meet NATO's requirements. This approach required members and partner forces to work together for out-of-area operations. The first initiative, designed to encourage these nations to work together, was the Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP), which was launched in 1994.

The ultimate goal of this programme was, and still is, to support partners in their efforts to reorganize their national defense structures and help them to develop their national capabilities. Partner countries that signed up to this programme framework would essentially have to follow the procedures set by NATO Allies in Brussels. This initiative has proved to be a very successful tool.

After restoration of its independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan was among the countries that joined the PfP programme. On May 4, 1994, Azerbaijan's National Leader Heydar Aliyev signed the PfP Framework Document, establishing a bilateral partnership between Azerbaijan and NATO. Joining the PfP was one of crucial steps taken by President Aliyev to stabilize and strengthen the country's foreign relations as part of a strategy of balanced East-West dimension.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Azerbaijan's membership in the NATO Partnership for Peace Programme.

As a result of three decades of productive partnership on a broad range of topics and critical issues in line with the principles and purposes of the PfP, as well as a significant contribution to NATO-led peace operations and energy security of the NATO's member and partner nations, Azerbaijan is recognized as valuable NATO Partner.

**ORHAN MURATLI,**

*Director,  
Support to Operations  
NATO Support and  
Procurement*



**AS A RESULT OF THREE DECADES OF PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP ON A BROAD RANGE OF TOPICS AND CRITICAL ISSUES IN LINE WITH THE PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES OF THE PFP, AS WELL AS A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO NATO-LED PEACE OPERATIONS AND ENERGY SECURITY OF THE NATO'S MEMBER AND PARTNER NATIONS, AZERBAIJAN IS RECOGNIZED AS VALUABLE NATO PARTNER”.**



Looking back, three distinctive Trust Fund projects executed by the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) can be identified within this partnership.

The Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) has partnered with NATO on a series of NATO Trust Fund projects which assist with the clearance of unexploded ordnance. For one such project, NSPA received a tasking from Türkiye in September 2002 to produce a PfP Trust Fund proposal to assist in the clearance of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) contaminated area surrounding the Saloghlu military base in Northwest Azerbaijan and to dispose of stockpiled UXO at the nearby towns of Aghstafa and Poylu. Saloghlu was an ammunition storage facility, which was blown up when the Soviet Army withdrew in 1991. This explosion resulted in heavy contamination by UXO on over 568 hectares and secondary contamination over 4,000 of hectares surrounding the base. During the ensuing years, the UXO problem posed a serious and ever increasing threat to the safety and security of the local population.

The clearance operation was carried out by ANAMA, which is the government agency responsible for co-ordinating all UXO and mine clearance in Azerbaijan.

For over five years, against the backdrop of considerable risk, ANAMA and NATO/NSPA PfP have cleared more than 5,680,000 million square meters on the surface, and an equal amount in the sub-surface. More than 640,000 individual dangerous items were found and safely destroyed. During this period, mine risk education programmes were also carried out to raise awareness. As a result, the number of UXO-related accidents decreased.

The second example highlighting this valuable cooperation is the Jeyranchol Clearance Project, whose scope was the clearance of mines and UXO at Jeyranchol former Soviet Army military test and training area close to the Azerbaijan/Georgia border. The Jeyranchol live firing range was in active use over the period 1955-1991. The hazard from UXO and mines in the Jeyranchol area presented a serious humanitarian, socio-economic and environmental threat to the local population.

The aim of this project was to clear UXO and mines from the site over 28 months. The project started in 2012 and consisted of three phases. The first phase of the Jeyranchol Clearance Project covered a few km<sup>2</sup> of a totally contaminated area and was completed in July 2014. The second phase of the project was launched immediately after the first phase in July 2014 and finalized on October 2016. The third and final phase of the project was finalized during the summer of 2018. As during the Saloghlu project, the Government of Azerbaijan contributed 50% of the total project costs.

NSPA also disposed of Mélange, which is a highly toxic substance that was used by the former USSR's armed forces as one of the two components to propel small and medium range missiles. There were 1,400 tonnes of dangerous rocket fuel inherited from the stocks of the former Soviet Union stored in aluminum tanks, which had been gradually corroding, posing a serious threat to public health and environment.

Azerbaijan requested NATO's assistance in destroying the Mélange and the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme supported to launch a project for this purpose. The budget of this project (2.2 million Euros) was fully covered by NATO. In two years starting from 2006 a mobile mélange treatment plant constructed in Azerbaijan neutralized in Alat (Garadagh district) and Mingachevir respectively 950 and 350 tonnes of mélange.

Bilateral relations between NATO and Azerbaijan have strengthened over time, reflecting their close cooperation on critical mine clearance projects. As a result of ongoing bilateral meetings and joint platforms, a portfolio of collaborative work is expected to be established in the near future. To this end, the ANAMA delegation and Azerbaijan's Mission to NATO visited the NSPA in Capellen on 23 September 2024 for bilateral discussions. During the meetings, there was an exchange of views on Azerbaijan's landmine issues and how NSPA could assist. NSPA experts presented a portfolio outlining potential areas of joint work, including the application of new technologies and advanced practices. Particularly in the field of humanitarian mine clearance, it is evident that joint activities will expand, leading to significant progress in cooperation between Azerbaijan and NSPA.



# Lifesaving Canines in Azerbaijan

**INDRE SABALIUNAITE,**  
*Program Director, The  
Marshall Legacy Institute*

In early 2021, a small non-profit organization based in Virginia, U.S., the Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI), received a request from the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) to help them rid of landmines in the Karabakh region. ANAMA has been a longtime partner of MLI, which provides lifesaving mine detection dogs (MDDs) and training to local demining organizations to help them expedite clearance operations. MLI agreed to assist ANAMA with the massive effort that loomed ahead and has since provided 41 hero canines who are working to “sniff out” dangerous landmines and explosives.

MLI was founded in 1997 by General Gordon R. Sullivan to extend the mission and vision of the Marshall Plan to help countries help themselves. MLI established the Mine Detection Dog Partnership Program (MDDPP) in 1999. Through the MDDPP, MLI has provided 300 MDDs and training to 21 demining organizations in 11 countries. MLI uses government and private donations to purchase, train, and deliver the dogs to countries in-need. The success of the MDDPP is measured by MLI’s ability to satisfy urgent operational requirements from mine-affected countries and assess the long-term care, sustainability, and effectiveness of the indigenous human-dog team capacities that are developed in each country.

MLI’s MDDs are trained by our partners, the Global Training Academy in Texas, U.S., and the Mine Detection Dog Center in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. These highly trained dogs are incredibly powerful assets, enabling a team to search land up to thirty times faster than a human deminer with a metal detector. The MDDs are trained to search on long leashes and use their powerful noses to sniff the ground as they walk to the end of a 10-meter lane. If they identify an explosive, a dog will use the ‘sit and stare’ position to alert their handler, who will in turn alert the EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) team to mark the indicated area. The donated MDDs are typically German or Belgian Shepherds, who have a drive for work and rewards in the form of their Kong toys. MDD teams never work alone and are considered as a tool in a deminer’s toolbox. MLI’s partner demining organizations determine the best use of the MDDs, whether it is conducting quality assurance checks after demining machines or conducting survey work to determine how contaminated an area is. None of MLI’s donated MDDs have been injured or killed while working, which is a testament to both their trainers and our partners who employ them efficiently and safely.

Nearly all canines provided by MLI have been sponsored by private caring individuals, schools, and organizations. A remarkable 52 MDDs, such as MDD Mace in Azerbaijan, have been sponsored by schoolchildren through MLI's Children Against Mines Program (CHAMPS). MDD Mace was sponsored by a student in Maryland in 2022 who campaigned throughout the four years of his high school career to raise the needed funds to sponsor a dog. Since being provided to ANAMA and receiving certification to International Mine Actions Standards, MDD Mace and his handler have searched more than 761,000 square meters of land! CHAMPS was established in 2004 as a way to connect students in the U.S. and mine-impacted countries to learn about one another and to become part of the solution to the global issue of landmines. Children in the U.S. conduct campaigns to raise funds for dogs and landmine survivors, and their peers in the mine-affected country befriend survivors, learn about the importance

ANAMA handler Loghman  
Namazov and mine  
detection dog (MDD) Kella





of mine risk education, and help spread awareness about the risk of mines to their local schools and communities.

ANAMA is one of MLI's oldest partners, dating back to 2005. Since then, MLI has provided 81 hero dogs to the organization, who have searched a total of 62.8 million square meters of land, which is the equivalent of one-third of Washington, DC. ANAMA is MLI's largest MDD recipient, reflecting both the immense need for demining programs in Azerbaijan and ANAMA's efficient and effective use of MDDs. MLI's work in Azerbaijan has increased exponentially in 2021 when MLI and ANAMA signed an agreement for MLI to provide 30 MDDs to the organization through 2023. The Government of Azerbaijan agreed to fund 12 dogs, while MLI conducted a large fundraising campaign to sponsor the remaining 18. As of August 2023, MLI completed the agreement and was able to provide 41 dogs, thanks to an anonymous donor who witnessed the incredible need for more MDDs and wanted to help. The remaining canines were sponsored by schoolchildren, the U.S.-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce, private U.S. citizens, and American companies such as Northrop Grumman Corporation, Tetra Tech, and Leonardo DRS.

ANAMA handler Karimov Goshgar and explosive detection dog (EDD) Tori



MLI-provided MDDs work in western part of Azerbaijan, to include the regions of Aghdam, Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Shusha, and Khojavand. ANAMA's work to demine and develop these regions is truly awe-inspiring. Newly built and paved roads connect future towns and cities, and construction is taking place as soon as areas are cleared of mines and rubble left over from years of conflict and neglect. Newly built towns, such as Zangilan, are built sustainably and are already home to large communities of previously displaced Azerbaijanis. According to a study co-implemented by the United Nations Development Program and the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining, every dollar invested in mine action and landmine clearance generates \$4 in economic investments. The work of the MDDs helps to release land for use in the development of farmland and fields for pasture, as well as to conduct emergency missions to safely evacuate individuals trapped in minefields.

Recently, one MDD team responded to an accident that occurred when an individual stepped on a landmine in a cemetery in a rural and still mined area of the Karabakh region, Azerbaijan. MDD Calla and her handler Babayev acted as first responders to reach and safely extract the injured person from the cemetery. As Calla was leading her handler toward the injured man, she indicated the presence of yet another mine nearby, helping to avert immediate danger and ensure a successful evacuation. MLI program staff make frequent visits to Azerbaijan to see firsthand the impact of the MDDs and ANAMA's demining efforts. MLI extends its gratitude to ANAMA for not only being an outstanding host to our staff, but also for welcoming our donors who have the unique opportunity to visit Azerbaijan, meet their sponsored MDDs, and witness their invaluable work.

Every year, MLI honors one outstanding hero-dog team at our Clearing the Path Gala and Awards Ceremony. In 2022, a team from Azerbaijan, Explosive Detection Dog (EDD) Tori and his handler Karimov Goshgar Yashar, were recognized as the Team of the Year for their brave and lifesaving work. The bond between all working dogs and their human handlers is incredibly strong and powerful. Handlers place their lives in the trust of their dogs – and the story of EDD Tori and Goshgar exemplified this bond, as Tori was able to alert Goshgar of an imminent unmarked minefield when the team took a break in the midst of traveling to a distant work site. Goshgar was invited to travel to Washington, DC to be recognized for his and Tori's achievements in mine action during MLI's Gala in October, 2022.

MLI continues to work with ANAMA to help the organization meet further operational needs. In September 2024, MLI's trainers are preparing to deliver 6 MDDs to Baku, and another 6 will be delivered by the end of the year. MLI is also working with ANAMA to explore future needs, as many of ANAMA's MDDs start to retire.

MLI's humanitarian work would not be possible without the support of our partners and donors. The MDD program in Azerbaijan is also supported by the Embassy of Azerbaijan and the robust Azerbaijani diaspora in the U.S.



**IN 2022, A TEAM FROM AZERBAIJAN, EXPLOSIVE DETECTION DOG (EDD) TORI AND HIS HANDLER KARIMOV GOSHGAR YASHAR, WERE RECOGNIZED AS THE TEAM OF THE YEAR FOR THEIR BRAVE AND LIFESAVING WORK**



# Turning Mines to Vines: Replacing Landmines with Climate Smart Agriculture

**HEIDI KUHN**

*World Food Prize Laureate  
Founder of “Roots of Peace”*

In September 1997, Roots of Peace, a humanitarian non-profit based in California, began with a vision of turning MINES TO VINES: replacing the scourge of landmines with vineyards and orchards worldwide. As a mother of four children, I could not imagine a world where there were an estimated 110 million landmines in 60 countries – preventing a child from kicking a soccer ball out of bounds, or a farmer from planting their fields without the risk of losing a life or a limb.

For the past quarter of a century, I have walked the minefields of Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Israel, West Bank, Vietnam and Zimbabwe on a quest to replace minefields with sustainable farmland.

We have facilitated the removal of millions of landmines/UXO and planted over seven million fruit trees restoring the land with our farmer-focused development model that revitalizes farmland, food security, livelihoods and resilience after devastating conflict. Together with our partners, we have shown over a million people living in war-torn regions around the world a pathway forward for restoring peace and prosperity through agriculture.

With conflicts proliferating in so many parts of the world, I was invited by Mr. Umud Mirzayev, President of the International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF) to walk the minefields of Karabagh with Mr. Vugar Suleymanov, Chairman of the Board of Mine Action Agency of The Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA)

The purpose of my visit on March 1, 2022 was to walk the minefields of Karabagh region of Azerbaijan during International Women’s Month, as I was en route to attend the FORBES 50 over 50 Summit in Abu Dhabi. I wanted my footsteps for peace to count, as women bear the burden of landmine accidents, and must cope with disabled children and spouses while keeping their family alive when the bread-winner is lost.

As we approached the liberated territories the scenery changed drastically from what we have seen in the panoramic city of Baku, ‘carpets of landmines’ stretched across large areas. The name of the region of Karabagh in Azerbaijani means “kara/gara” – black, “bagh” – garden” due to the large and dense greenery. Yet, over 1.5 million

landmines/UXO were laid as a result of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The worst -affected areas were along the fortified former contact line in the districts of Aghdam, Fuzuli and Jabrayil, with the backdrop of landmines laid amidst the valley farmlands. Minefield placards were everywhere, which prevented farmers from accessing their once productive fields. The conflict-torn territories of Azerbaijan had the highest per capita rate in the world of mine accidents due to unexploded ordnance.

The brave ANAMA team greeted me at the edge of the minefield, as gave me a briefing regarding the contaminated region. When they asked me

Heidi Kuhn at minefields of  
Aghdam district, Azerbaijan  
November 18, 2024







Heidi Kuhn at 3rd  
International Conference on  
Humanitarian Demining,  
May 30, 2024,  
Zangilan, Azerbaijan,

my blood type, it was a defining moment as I realized the risk involved in walking these lands. The spring flowers were beginning to bloom, and the grass was green. Yet, this false sense of beauty would only lure a child to pick a bouquet when repatriating to their homeland, as it takes only eight pounds to detonate a landmine. Whether the boot of a soldier or the sandal of a child, these dormant seeds of destruction only hold the land hostage for future generations to thrive. The only solution is removal.

As my helmet was placed on my head, and the Keflex jacket tightened, I placed my thumb on the trigger with Umud and Vugar. Boom! The loud thunder on the distant ground caused a dark cloud of smoke to lift into the sky, as we were exhilarated to see that one more landmine was removed. Yet, as we looked around the vista, our shoulders dropped as millions more remained lurking in the ground. The work of a deminer requires great courage, as their family never knows when they say good-bye in the morning, whether their love one will return from their daunting labor in the minefields.

Our IEPF and ANAMA team returned to Baku, to host a private dinner at the home of Alfred Nobel, who made his fortune in oil along the Caspian Sea. Alfred Nobel invented dynamite as a tool of destruction, and it was ironic that we used this same dynamite to detonate a landmine as an ‘act of peace’. During the event, we made a proclamation to bring forth the 18th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), as none of the remaining SDG’s may be accomplished in a minefield.

Addressing the issue of landmines and unexploded ordnance aligns with the original 17 SDG’s including Goal #1 (No Poverty), Goal #3 (Good Health and Well-Being), Goal #4 (Quality Education), Goal #6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and Goal #16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Each spring, I’ve returned to the minefields of Karabagh, as this once productive agricultural region offers the world a stark reality that landmines do not belong on the face of the earth. Since I walked my first minefield in Azerbaijan, over 30% of Ukraine is now contaminated by landmines – a country once known as the ‘Breadbasket of Europe’. If humanity continues to lay landmines in the one earth we share, we will face a catastrophe in 2050 when there will be an estimated 9-10 billion people to feed.

The COP29 Climate Change Conference is a unique opportunity to inspire the world to turn MINES TO VINES.

Each landmine removed, each fruit tree planted feeds future generations. And, each tree planted on a former minefield provides shade and sequesters the carbon to restore the one Earth we have been given to shepherd.

Roots of Peace looks forward to partnering with ANAMA to revitalize the fertile lands of Karabagh, Azerbaijan with climate smart agriculture and food security which will benefit future generations.

We envision a world where smallholder farming is a pathway to economic prosperity, social well-being, and serves as a foundation for global peace through agriculture. Through strong partnerships with judicious innovations and smallholder farmers – including women and youth- we seek to overcome the climate crisis, reshape supply chains and thrive in a world of resilient locally led communities.

By respecting cultural differences, driving innovation, and fostering local ownership, we aim to catalyze sustainable growth and stability across all agricultural stakeholders.

May the Country of Azerbaijan be ‘ground zero’ during COP29 for cultivating peace through agriculture, as global citizens take the first step to eradicate landmines and plant the Roots of Peace on Earth...



**EACH LANDMINE REMOVED, EACH FRUIT TREE PLANTED FEEDS FUTURE GENERATIONS. AND, EACH TREE PLANTED ON A FORMER MINEFIELD PROVIDES SHADE AND SEQUESTERS THE CARBON TO RESTORE THE ONE EARTH WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO SHEPHERD.”**



# Building a Safer Future: Cooperation between ASEAN and Azerbaijan in Mine Action

**ROTHNA BUTH**  
*Executive Director,  
ASEAN Regional  
Mine Action Center*

Landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) present an enduring danger to human safety and impede socio-economic development in war-torn regions. Both ASEAN Member States and Azerbaijan are acutely aware of these challenges, making their collaboration in mine action a vital step forward in addressing global security concerns.

Through partnerships like those between the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) and the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA), we see the power of regional and cross-regional cooperation. These efforts go beyond technical clearance operations, addressing broader post-conflict recovery, rehabilitation, and development goals.

Azerbaijan is among the most landmine-contaminated countries globally, requiring significant international support. However, Azerbaijan's engagement in landmine issues extends beyond seeking assistance; as a nation deeply affected by landmines, it recognizes the broader human and societal impacts of this problem.

The establishment of a Center of Excellence in Azerbaijan would offer a platform for knowledge exchange and capacity building, benefiting mine action professionals globally. This initiative aligns with ARMAC's mission in Southeast Asia, where promoting regional cooperation has enhanced the effectiveness of mine action across ASEAN.

In August 2024, ANAMA representatives visited Southeast Asia to learn from international best practices as they prepared to establish the ANAMA-UNDP International Centre of Excellence and Training for Mine Action in Azerbaijan. Coordinated by ARMAC, the delegation engaged with key stakeholders in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia – nations with substantial mine action experience.

During their visits, the ANAMA team observed mine clearance operations, training methodologies, and other innovations that have helped ASEAN

countries address landmine challenges. These exchanges reinforced the importance of international collaboration in building effective mine action strategies.

The partnership between ANAMA and ARMAC demonstrates how shared technical expertise and diplomatic efforts can advance mine action goals. ASEAN's success in mine action underscores the critical role of sustained regional cooperation, a model that other regions can emulate.

As Azerbaijan and ASEAN deepen their collaboration, they set a powerful example of how regional partnerships can tackle shared global challenges. Their work highlights the importance of integrating technical expertise with diplomacy to create safer, more secure communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Looking ahead, regional and cross-regional cooperation remains essential to addressing the global landmine threat. The partnership between Azerbaijan and ASEAN, with ARMAC serving as a coordinating hub in Southeast Asia, shows how collective action can drive meaningful progress.

By fostering diplomatic engagement and international support, we can envision a world free of landmines – a world where communities can thrive in safety and peace. Azerbaijan and ASEAN's leadership in mine action paves the way for a brighter future, offering hope not just to their regions but to the global community as well.



**AZERBAIJAN IS AMONG THE MOST LANDMINE-CONTAMINATED COUNTRIES GLOBALLY, REQUIRING SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. HOWEVER, AZERBAIJAN'S ENGAGEMENT IN LANDMINE ISSUES EXTENDS BEYOND SEEKING ASSISTANCE; AS A NATION DEEPLY AFFECTED BY LANDMINES, IT RECOGNIZES THE BROADER HUMAN AND SOCIETAL IMPACTS OF THIS PROBLEM.”**



# MAG's Work in Azerbaijan and Future Environmental Considerations

**JESSICA HYLAND**

*Regional Director,  
Eastern Europe,  
Mines Advisory Group*

**MINES ADVISORY GROUP**

The Mines Advisory Group (MAG) is a UK-based global humanitarian organisation that finds and destroys landmines, cluster munitions and unexploded bombs in places affected by conflict. We also work to limit the causes and address the consequences of armed violence in communities. Our work saves lives, eases suffering, protects human rights and contributes to sustainable peace and security. Since 1989, we have helped over 20 million people in 70 countries.

## **MAG IN AZERBAIJAN**

MAG worked in Azerbaijan in 2000 - 2001, supporting the recently formed, ANAMA, with training and capacity building, including training of the first humanitarian mine action capacity with a national NGO partner that then worked in Fuzuli, and Supervisor training for relevant ANAMA staff.

In 2021, MAG was invited by ANAMA and has worked in partnership in Azerbaijan ever since. MAG supported ANAMA in revising and updating national standard operating procedures (SOPs) in line with International Mine Action Standards and the ANMAR (Azerbaijan National Mine Action Requirements). Generally, IMAS are international standards that aim to enable and encourage 'the effective management of mine action programmes, including the development and maintenance of standards.'<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is tasked, with the assistance of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), with the maintenance and development of these standards.<sup>2</sup> IMAS governance includes a Review Board, composed of representatives of national authorities, non-governmental organisations, commercial companies and other stakeholders and is tasked with providing the highest-level technical input to the IMAS.<sup>3</sup>

1 'IMAS 07.13 Environmental management and climate change in mine action' (second edition, 19 June 2024) available at <<https://www.mineactionstandards.org/standards/07-13/>> accessed 20 September 2024 (hereinafter IMAS 07.13), iv.

2 'IMAS Governance' (IMAS) <<https://www.mineactionstandards.org/imas-governance/>> accessed 20 September 2024.

3 Ibid.

IMAS are global but they are also informed and support the drafting, adoption, and implementation of national mine action standards (NMAS) by relevant national mine action authorities (NMAA). Accordingly, IMAS have a critical role in bridging global norms and best practices with the different contexts and realities at national level. In fact, NMAA, with the collaboration of other stakeholders, are those tasked with the adaptation of the content of IMAS to relevant national contexts.

In 2022, MAG provided an assessment of ANAMA's mechanical demining capacity, providing recommendations to ANAMA management on next steps to strengthen capacity and a 10-month supervisors' course to ANAMA trainees, to support with management capacity in a rapidly growing sector.

In line with the Azerbaijan strategy to build a strong national mine action sector, since 2023 MAG has partnered with International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF) on two mine action projects. With international funding support MAG has enabled IEPF to recruit four demining teams, including the first female deminers in Azerbaijan. The projects also work with APOPO, a Belgian NGO, to provide animal detection systems with technical survey dogs (TSD) and mine detection rats (MDR). In mid-2024, MAG delivered a Team Leaders' course to support the development of national capacity and promotion of women into operational leadership positions.

MAG Azerbaijan's head office is in Baku, with a shared field base with IEPF in Tartar. MAG Azerbaijan has a small Senior Management Team of six international and 10 national staff including translators and support staff. In 2025 Capacity Development Advisor will join the team to support with the development of the partner organisation. There are 52 IEPF staff across four teams and support, and 18 Apopo staff employed through the projects with MAG.

Within the first operational year with the four teams, were trained by MAG and accredited by ANAMA to deploy from September 2023. The programme has released over 5 million sqm of land and safely removed 208 landmines and other explosive items.

The main accomplishment has been the job access created for women into a previously all male MA sector. All stakeholders are now content with the initial results of this initiative although there is still progress to be made to ensure female participation, acceptance and leadership across the whole sector.

As a global NGO, MAG has been able to support Azerbaijan with SOPs and first steps into gender equity in mine action; MAG participates in the IMAS working groups and has been involved in the review of the Environmental standards.



## ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

The climate emergency has driven the whole international community towards mainstreaming and prioritising the protection of the environment and the adaptation to climate change in every field.<sup>4</sup> Defined by the UN Secretary General António Guterres as ‘climate crisis’, he recently reminded that every sector needs to do its part to address climate change and prevent its worsening.<sup>5</sup> Mine action (MA) is not excluded from this trend: the relevant International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) – IMAS 07.13 – was very recently updated in June 2024 and includes important references to climate change and climate adaptation.

## THE PATH TOWARDS THE UPDATED INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

Concerns regarding the link between climate change and mine action were also raised before 2024. At 2023’s National Directors and United Nations Advisers Meeting (NDM), a key event for the different actors involved in mine action globally, environment and climate change were discussed.<sup>6</sup> In the same year, the German Presidency of the 21st Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) also decided to discuss the link between environment/climate change and mine action and presented a paper titled “Green Implementation: Integrating Environmental Considerations into the Implementation of the Convention”.<sup>7</sup> In December 2023, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) also published a comprehensive report on mine action and the resilience of communities to climate change.<sup>8</sup>

In every step of that journey on environment/climate change and mine action, it became clearer and clearer that such relationship needs to be approached through different perspectives: not only how climate change impact explosive ordnance contamination and the related mine action operations, but also how mine action can affect, negatively or positively, to affected communities’ climate resilience.

For example, as pointed out by CEOBS, higher temperature and intense rainfalls make explosive ordnance more unstable and can worsen the working conditions of mine action operators. Flooding might move explosive

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- 4 A New Agenda for Peace (UN Secretary General, July 2023) available at < <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf> > accessed 20 September 2024, page 6.
  - 5 ‘Secretary-General’s special address on climate action “A Moment of Truth”’ (United Nations, 5 June 2024) < <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2024-06-05/secretary-generals-special-address-climate-action-moment-of-truth%C2%A0>> accessed 20 September 2024.
  - 6 Obrestad, Cottrell, Njeri, ‘Mine Action and Climate Change: The Legacy of Explosive Ordnance Contamination and Future Needs’ in Lampalzer and Hainzl (Eds), *Climate Changes Security* (June 2024).
  - 7 ‘Green Implementation: Integrating Environmental Considerations into the Implementation of the Convention’ - President’s Paper for the Twenty-First Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (21 Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC) available at < [https://www.apminebanconvention.org/fileadmin/\\_APMBC-DOCUMENTS/Meetings/2023/21MSP-President-Paper-Green-Implementation.pdf](https://www.apminebanconvention.org/fileadmin/_APMBC-DOCUMENTS/Meetings/2023/21MSP-President-Paper-Green-Implementation.pdf) > accessed 20 September 2024.
  - 8 ‘Mine Action and the Resilience of Communities to Climate Change (GICHD, December 2023) available at < [https://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/GICHD\\_Mine\\_Action\\_and\\_the\\_Resilience\\_of\\_Communities\\_to\\_Climate\\_Change.pdf](https://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/user_upload/GICHD_Mine_Action_and_the_Resilience_of_Communities_to_Climate_Change.pdf) > accessed 20 September 2024.

ordnance and drought and desertification might require new measures to protect soil.<sup>9</sup>

ANAMA has been a part of this journey, hosting international mine action conferences which focus on the Environment in which MAG has participated in 2024.

## **THE CONTENT OF THE SECOND EDITION OF IMAS 07.13**

Designed to outline the minimum criteria that should be taken into consideration to draft and implement national mine action standards, IMAS 07.13 second edition critically focuses on prevention and mitigation of the environmental impact of MA operations by ‘taking into account the specific activities conducted by a mine action organization and the context in which operations are conducted’.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, awareness raising and risk assessment on environment and climate considerations are central in this updated version of the standard.

## **CONCLUSION**

The landmines and unexploded ordnances of war pose challenges to restoration and rehabilitation works in the territories of Azerbaijan affected by the former conflict and, most importantly, pose a threat to human life and hinder the return of hundred thousands of displaced people.

MAG’s activities have contributed so far to Azerbaijan’s efforts in tackling these challenges. Through training and capacity building, MAG delivers its support to strengthening national mine action capabilities. Initiatives such as supporting the creation of standard operating procedures or introducing female deminers demonstrate MAG’s commitment to inclusivity and long-term impact. We believe that these actions yield the results, including the clearance of large areas of contaminated lands, making them safe for people.

Contamination of lands with mines negatively affects environment. MAG also recognizes the need of integrating environmental considerations into mine action. The second edition of IMAS 07.13 goes towards the right direction: it provides a minimum common standard that should inspire and guide national mine action authorities, organisations, donors, and other stakeholders to a more environmentally responsive mine action that provides its own contribution to climate action. Of course, such a synergic response cannot happen without the contribution of all: proper and adequate resources and expertise should be mobilised and plans and actions formulated according to comprehensive and inclusive processes should be implemented. Mine action is not exempted from listening the general calls to mobilise to protect the environment and act for the climate; the second edition of IMAS 07.13 shows that the sector is ready to respond that call.



**THE LANDMINES AND UNEXPLODED ORDNANCES OF WAR POSE CHALLENGES TO RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION WORKS IN THE TERRITORIES OF AZERBAIJAN AFFECTED BY THE FORMER CONFLICT AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, POSE A THREAT TO HUMAN LIFE AND HINDER THE RETURN OF HUNDRED THOUSANDS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE.”**

<sup>9</sup> Landmines, climate change and new environmental guidance.

<sup>10</sup> IMAS 07.13, v.



# Interview with Tamam Jafarova

MINE SURVIVOR



## 1. Please introduce yourself.

My name is Tamam Jafarova Aslan, I was born on July 3, 1976 in the village of Gosha, Tovuz district. I do not have a higher education, I do embroidery, the art inherited from my mother. I received vocational training in tailoring.

## 2. Please tell us about your life before the accident.

At that time, I lived in our village and completed my high school education. During my school years, I served as the chair of the Children's Union organization. I also helped my parents with household chores. I was 21 years old at that time.

## 3. The day of the mine accident. Please tell us how it happened and what your first reactions were?

On that day, together with my siblings we took our animals to pasture. At that time we bought a new cow and went to pasture to train it. I didn't even realize how the accident happened. Suddenly, there was an explosion, and flames spread across the area. It was only then that I realized I had stepped on a mine.

## 4. Please tell us on how you got rescued. Were you able to ask for help?

The first thing I did was check my face to see if it had been wounded. Thankfully, I realized there was no injury to my face, but my arm and leg were hurt. I tried to stay calm and regain control. Shortly after, our soldiers, having been alerted to the explosion, arrived at the scene.

## 5. Before and after the mine explosion: How did the mine explosion affect your life? Are there any particular things that you are looking forward in the future?

This event was a profound trauma for me, leaving a significant impact on my life. The person I was before the explosion no longer existed- a completely new chapter had begun. It was a difficult and painful journey to rebuild myself, adapt to this new reality, and find the strength to continue living for



**THE PERSON I WAS  
BEFORE THE EXPLOSION  
NO LONGER EXISTED-  
A COMPLETELY NEW  
CHAPTER HAD BEGUN”.**

the sake of my parents. As I mentioned earlier, I engage in crafts such as embroidery and weaving. I also explore artistic creativity and have written several books of poems. My greatest purpose now is to live as an artist.

**6. Please provide information on the treatment and rehabilitation you have received.**

For the last two- three years, I have only been using a prosthesis. Every two or three years, I used to go to the Baku Rehabilitation Center to renew it. I have visited the rehabilitation center for the disabled in Mardakan.

**7. Have you had any knowledge on mines before the accident happened?**

Until that day, I had only encountered the word "mine" in books. I had no real understanding of how an explosion occurs. No one could have imagined that a mine might be hidden in the grazing land. The first mine explosion in that area happened on that very day- the day I stepped on a mine.

**8. What was your family's reaction to the accident and how it affected people around you?**

This accident was a great tragedy for them as well. My father experienced severe shock. I heard some people telling my mother how she will you take care of me in this situation for the rest of her life? Experiencing and hearing all this is a huge suffering for a person.

**9. Do you have any contacts with other landmine victims? Is it fair to state that there are similar hardships?**

Yes, we do keep in touch and deeply understand each other's pain. As I mentioned, continuing to live after such an accident is not easy. I have tried to accept and adapt to my situation by providing myself with psychological support. Creativity and craftsmanship have been my anchors. However, I have encountered people who struggle to accept and overcome these hardships. It's incredibly challenging- some withdraw from others, avoiding people and society because they don't want to be seen as they are.

Maybe I was too young then, maybe because I have strong personality, I don't



know, but I was able to overcome these things. But I do understand those people very well.

The kindness of the people around me played a crucial role in my recovery. My father had a friend, Arif Samadov, who was also my doctor and gave me immense support.

I remember the first time they brought me crutches at the hospital. My mother had stepped outside, and I stood up by leaning on the armrest, wanting her to see me standing when she came back. But when she returned and saw me, she became upset, worried that I might fall. I felt frustrated and angry with my parents and stopped speaking to them for a while.

At that point, Dr. Arif scolded my parents for their reaction. Later, he would visit us, under the pretext of having tea, just to talk with me and offer his support. The encouragement I received from him was just as meaningful as the love and care I got from my parents.

**10. Are you somehow involved in advocacy, mine awareness? If yes, please tell us more.**

Previously, we used to go to districts and attend trainings under the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). I also participated in ANAMA trainings and received certificates.

Now I participate in the training of Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society.

The person does not lose his\her life but becomes a material and moral burden for both his family and the state throughout his life. The state has to cover the costs of rehabilitation and treatment of these people for the rest of their lives, which is such a financial burden.

It is also a morally difficult issue. I myself am the pain of a whole family

**11. What would be one piece of advice you can give to people who survived explosions?**

First of all, I would like to say that it is necessary to be careful and informed to prevent these accidents. However, if it does happen, do not lose hope. You must hold on and keep moving forward. Isolating yourself and distancing from those around you serves no purpose. Life continues, and it's important to remain connected and resilient.

Interviewer: Farida Mammadova  
Azeri-Press Agency (APA)  
Date: October 10, 2024  
This interview was originally  
conducted in Azerbaijani  
and has been translated into English





# Interview with Hasanali Aliyev

MINE SURVIVOR

## 1. Please introduce yourself.

My name is Hasanali Aliyev Shahin. I was born on January 31, 2001, in Yukhari Garadaghli village, Tartar district. In 2018, after graduating from Gapanli village secondary school, I was enrolled into the Faculty of International Relations at Baku State University, specializing in Political Science. I completed my higher education in 2022 with an average score of 90.

In July of the same year, I began active military service, which I completed in 2023, after which I returned to civilian life.

## 2. Please tell us briefly about your life before the accident.

I had just turned 22 when I stepped on a mine. After completing my bachelor's degree, I was accepted into about ten universities in Europe. However, due to family reasons, I was unable to continue my education and instead proceeded to military service. During my undergraduate studies, I gained professional experience working as a deputy executive director in several companies and commercial firms.

In 2017, I participated in competitions for schoolchildren, proudly representing our district. I reached the finals twice in the "Əlaç" intellectual show and frequently won other intellectual competitions at both regional and national levels. I also earned third place in the "Xəmsə" intellectual competition held in Baku and took part in the History Olympiad.

Throughout my school and university years, I was very active in academic and extracurricular activities. When I graduated from university, I was below just 1 percent short of graduating with honors.

## 3. The day of the mine accident. Please tell us how it happened and what your first reactions were?

After returning from military service, I began preparing for the civil service exams while staying in Baku. During short visit to my district, I stepped on a mine while walking in the yard. It was one of the mines planted by armed forces of Armenia in 1992. The incident occurred on February 4, 2024.



**MY LEFT LEG WAS IN SUCH BAD SHAPE THAT I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THE SHRAPNEL WOUNDS ON MY RIGHT LEG AT FIRST”.**

#### **4. Please tell us on how did you get rescued? Were you able to ask for help?**

In that moment, I felt that I flew off, but I quickly regained control of myself. As soon as I hit the ground, I saw the condition of my leg. My friend was following a few meters behind me. My left leg was in such bad shape that I didn't even notice the shrapnel wounds on my right leg at first. Acting quickly, my friend removed his clothes and tightly tied my leg to slow the bleeding. I immediately called my father, and about 15 to 20 minutes later, he arrived with my cousin. I was taken to the Emergency Department of the Tartar District Central Hospital, where I received first aid. From there, I was transferred to the Barda District Diagnostic Center. Following the operation, the lower third of my left leg was amputated.

#### **5. Before the mine and after. How the mine accident impacted your life after? Are there any particular things that you are looking forward in future?**

Although it is difficult, I will speak. People mature in different ways. Some feel they've grown up when they start a family, others when they join the military or get admitted to a university. For me, I realized I had grown up in the aftermath of the mine explosion.

Before that incident, my outlook on life, my thoughts, and my beliefs were entirely different. But after the explosion, I became more connected to life and gained a deeper understanding of its value. I realized how fragile life is-how death can occur in the blink of an eye.

Following the incident, I successfully passed the master's entrance exam and earned the highest certificate in the civil service exam. I am currently pursuing a degree in Accounting and Auditing under the MBA program at Khazar University's Higher Business Faculty.

One of my hopes for the future is to study abroad, something I have always dreamed of. I plan to pursue this goal after completing my master's degree. I am also preparing for the interview process with the State Labour Inspectorate Service, as I aspire to serve in an administrative role as a civil servant. Additionally, I hope to pursue a doctorate and continue my education abroad.

Our district was within a conflict zone, our village was close to the contact line with the armed forces of Armenia. Many people from neighboring villages have also become victims of terror by Armenia and its landmines. One of my biggest ambitions is to bring to the attention of the international community tragedies that Armenia's terror has caused us. I can share the horror that I myself endured with.

Under the leadership of our Supreme Commander, our army liberated our lands. As followers of this political path, we must do everything in our power to work further for prosperity of the Azerbaijani state.

**6. Please tell us about the treatment that you got and rehabilitation process afterwards.**

I underwent rehabilitation in May. But at the moment, I am preparing for exams and I have a busy schedule with my studies, so I cannot devote much time to my health.

I underwent recovery at the rehabilitation center for the disabled and am currently using a conventional prosthesis. My measurements have already been taken for a high-tech prosthesis.

Following the mine incident, the Vice-President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Ms. Leyla Aliyeva, personally showed interest in my situation. As my tuition fees were quite high, the Foundation generously took responsibility for covering them, for which I express my heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Aliyeva.

In the coming days, I will receive the high-tech prosthesis, also provided by the Foundation.

**7. Have you had any knowledge on mines before the accident happened?**

During my military service, I participated in numerous training sessions.

Having grown up in a district close to the former line of contact, I knew what a mine explosion is. This awareness helped me stay composed when I stepped on the mine-I understood what was happening and did not lose control.

**8. What was your family's reaction to the accident and how it affected people around you?**

Of course, the greatest tragedy and stress for any parent is seeing something happen to their child, and my family went through a lot as well. I thank God that I am safe. I try to stay strong - for myself and for them. Even when I'm in pain, I do my best not to show it, so my parents won't worry. They have always supported me, and for that, I am deeply grateful. My relatives, friends, and family did everything they could to help me hold on to life and get back on my feet. When things get tough, I remind myself not to fall into despair.

**9. Do you have any contacts with people who became victims of mine? Is it fair to state that there are similar hardships?**

This event affected me so deeply that I tend to avoid anything that reminds me of it. I have also refrained from connecting with others who have experienced similar mine explosions.





**THE GREATEST TRAGEDY AND STRESS FOR ANY PARENT IS SEEING SOMETHING HAPPEN TO THEIR CHILD, AND MY FAMILY WENT THROUGH A LOT AS WELL”.**

**10. What would be one piece of advice you can give to people who survived explosions?**

You never know what life will bring. Falling victim to a mine explosion or losing a part of your body is not the end of life. As Mevlana said, "There are still people who would have wished to be in your situation".

We have our veterans – may God protect them. Life goes on.

There is no need to collapse under hardship. Giving up will only harm yourself and, in turn, your family. It's essential to rise, move forward, and keep going.

Interviewer: Farida Mammadova  
Azeri-Press Agency (APA)  
Date: October 10, 2024  
This interview was originally  
conducted in Azerbaijani  
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**unesco**

Protection of  
Cultural Property in  
the Event of Armed Conflict

# 15 HCP Resolutions

**C54/23/15.HCP/resolutions**  
**Paris, 11 December 2023**  
**Original: English/French**

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND  
CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**1954 HAGUE CONVENTION  
FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY  
IN THE EVENT OF ARMED CONFLICT**

**FIFTEENTH MEETING OF  
THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES**

**UNESCO Headquarters, Paris  
11 December 2023**

**Resolutions adopted during the 15th Meeting of the High  
Contracting Parties to the 1954 Hague Convention**

**Item 7 of the agenda**

**Impact of landmines on cultural property (proposed by Azerbaijan)**

**RESOLUTION 15 HCP 7**

The Meeting of the High Contracting Parties,

1. Having examined the document C54/23/15.HCP/7,
2. Recalling the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 14 May 1954 and its Protocols of 14 May 1954 and 26 March 1999, the Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 16 November 1972, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UN Security Council resolution 2347 (2017), as well as UNESCO Military Manual on Protection of Cultural Property (2016),
3. Affirming that adherence to international law, in particular international humanitarian law, is of vital importance for the protection of cultural property,
4. Commending the efforts undertaken by Member States in order to protect and safeguard cultural property in the context of armed conflicts and post-conflict situations,
5. Stressing that the explosive remnants of war and the use of mines, boobytraps and other explosive devices in a manner that violates international humanitarian law may cause a significant damage to cultural property,
6. Expresses concern on the serious threat by use of mines, boobytraps, and other explosive weapons can pose to cultural property during and after the armed conflict;
7. Agrees to take a proactive role in raising awareness and in discouraging and preventing any act of hostility in a manner that violates the 1954 Convention.



# Concluding remarks of the International Conference on “Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals”

*31 March-1 April 2022  
Baku, Azerbaijan*

## **PREAMBLE**

1. The Participants expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government of Azerbaijan, the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Development Program for organising the conference and to all participants for their collaboration and support.

2. The aim of the Conference was to bring together key actors of the demining sector from the international community, mine action operators, government agencies and civil society to discuss the importance of humanitarian mine action in addressing the threat of mines to people’s lives and livelihoods.

3. The Conference focused on exploring linkages between the potential of humanitarian mine action for lasting peace and socio-economic development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, more specifically SDG 16th that seeks to ‘significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere’.

4. In a stimulating environment of cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary knowledge sharing best practices were exchanged on the most advanced technologies currently available worldwide as well as lessons learned from intense demining activities, which were of particular importance for Azerbaijan as it is currently undertaking major reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in its conflict-affected areas.

The conclusions and the recommendations of the conference will be calling upon stakeholders to strengthen cooperation and explore options for further collaboration. The establishment of a in-country donor coordination mechanism such as mine action forum was suggested and at technical level it was recommended to establish various technical working group to address key challenges (LR, IM, EORE, VA).

5. The conference papers and summary of discussions, challenges and opportunities identified, and recommendations for further action shall be published as a compendium, providing the means by which a broad audience can be updated on the development of the sector, and above all gain understanding about the importance of continuous investment into humanitarian mine action programs.

### **THE PARTICIPANTS:**

I. Recognize that the multi-lateral and interdisciplinary approach promoted by the Conference can lead to new opportunities for peace-building, sustainable development and international cooperation on humanitarian mine action.

II. Acknowledge that humanitarian mine action cannot be sustainable without partnerships at all levels.

III. Recognize the need for sustainable support structures and financing, as well as the necessity of moving away from one-off project financing to built-in mechanisms to ensure timely and continuous funding for humanitarian mine action program in Azerbaijan.

IV. Recommend to consider the introduction of a new Sustainable Development Goal for humanitarian demining, to further strengthen and harness synergies between mine clearance and measurable progress towards a blueprint for a better, safer and more sustainable future for all.

V. Acknowledge that humanitarian mine action is crucial for sustainable development and vital for saving lives, preventing injuries and rebuilding infrastructure, education and agriculture and underline the importance of strengthening assistance to Azerbaijan in humanitarian demining to support the ongoing reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in conflict affected areas. Explosive Ordnance Risk Education and victim assistance are important and an integrated part of any mine action program.

VI. Acknowledge that capacity-building and capacity exchange on humanitarian mine action are a continuing process, based on trust and enduring relationships that require a long-term commitment.

VII. Further acknowledge that capacity-building and capacity exchange constitute a continuous dialogue between all stakeholders and awareness raising – hence recommend that this Conference is considered as a cornerstone for the continued sharing of practical experience and lessons learned in the area of humanitarian mine action, and is held annually in Azerbaijan.

# The Declaration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on “Mine Action – the Path to Reaching SDGs”

24-26 May, 2023

Aghdam and Baku, Azerbaijan

## **DECLARATION**

Over 60 states remain contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) after many years, threatening the safety, health, wellbeing, lives and livelihoods of generations of people. The most vulnerable populations, including women and children, are the most affected.

For affected countries and communities, the impact of landmines and ERW is an impediment to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the national and local levels.

To accelerate progress towards a mine-free world, we, the participants to the 2nd International Conference on “Mine Action – the Path to Reaching SDGs,” agree to take bold actions to advance global mine action, inter alia by:

*Recognizing* that humanitarian mine action is one of the prerequisites for sustainable development in mine-impact countries, progress towards achievement of the SDGs, accelerating peace processes and sustaining peace;

*Sharing* the principles and values of the existing international legal instruments that regulate or ban the use of landmines, cluster munitions, and other ERW, while encouraging all to take steps towards formal adherence to these instruments, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (“Ottawa Convention”) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (“Oslo Convention”);

*Recalling* the human cost of landmines and ERW, which disproportionately affects the most vulnerable, including women and children;

*Emphasizing* the importance of humanitarian mine action to be integrated into national development plans in mine-impacted countries as one of the key priorities for socio-economic development and adequate resources to



be allocated, including for strengthening the national humanitarian mine-action capacities;

*Acknowledging* the important roles of civil society, private sector, media, educational institutions and other stakeholders in humanitarian mine action, under the leadership of national Governments;

*Promoting* the efficient use of technology and innovation for humanitarian mine action;

*Renewing* commitments to strengthen global partnership and cooperation, in support of national efforts and as a demonstration of global solidarity, to achieve a mine-free world; and,

*Appreciating* the initiatives by a number of mine-impacted states to adopt a national SDG on humanitarian mine action and calls for inclusion of a new global SDG on humanitarian mine action.

We further call for a renewed global momentum for a mine-free world, to end the threat of landmines and ERW, support communities as they heal, and help people return and rebuild their lives in dignity, safety and security, by joining and fully implementing the existing international instruments, strengthening existing partnerships and building new platforms.

We express gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the valuable opportunity to discuss humanitarian mine action and SDGs, and for their generous support and excellent hospitality. We also express our solidarity with Azerbaijan – as well as all with all mine-affected countries - in addressing their immense mine problem and call on international community to support Azerbaijan's humanitarian mine action efforts.

# The Declaration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference “Mitigating Environmental Impact of Landmines: Resource Mobilization for Safe and Green Future”

30-31 May 2024,  
Zangilan and Baku, Azerbaijan

We, the participants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Mine Action held on 30-31 May 2024 in Zangilan and Baku, Azerbaijan, have convened and deliberated on mitigating environmental impact of landmines and resource mobilization for a safe and green future. In this regard,

We,

*Expressing* deep concern with the devastating and indiscriminate impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) that continue to kill, maim, and traumatize civilians, including children, women, and other non-combatants;

*Acknowledging* that landmine contamination exerts significant negative impact on the environment, making it critical to prevent and mitigate possible adverse impacts of landmine contamination through appropriate measures;

*Recognizing* that climate change adversely affects efforts to mitigate explosive ordnance threats (ad ref: UNSG report No A/78/259, 2023);

*Recalling* the resolution No 2365 (2017) of 30 June 2017 of the UN Security Council and all its previous resolutions on mine action;

*Recalling* also the resolution No 78/70 of 7 December 2023 of the UN General Assembly and all its previous resolutions on assistance in mine action,

*Welcoming* the UNESCO resolution titled “Impact of landmines on cultural property” adopted at the fifteenth meeting (2003) of the high contracting parties of the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict;

*Taking note* of the UN Secretary-General's report titled "Assistance in Mine Action" No. A/78/259, issued on 31 July 2023, in which the exacerbating nexus between landmine contamination and climate change was recognized;

*Taking note* of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy and the United Nations Policy on Victim Assistance in Mine Action;

*Taking note of* the International Mine Action Standard IMAS 07.13 "Environmental Management in Mine Action";

*Commending* the previous International Conferences on Mine Action held in Azerbaijan in 2022 and 2023 and their outcome documents;

*Expressing* concern over the serious and lasting social and economic consequences of landmines and explosive remnants of war on the civilian population;

*Stressing* that mine action continues to be a valuable confidence-building measure in the peace-building process (**ad ref:** UNSG report No A/78/259, 2023);

1. *Call for* the integration of environmental aspects of humanitarian demining into mine action efforts;
2. *Invite all* States and other stakeholders in a position to do so to support mine action in all of its pillars, most notably in mine victim assistance, demining and risk education by allocating adequate and appropriate resources, including technical, financial, and material assistance, training, and by promoting research and development on mine action techniques and technologies (**ad ref:** UNGAR 78/70, 2023).
3. *Stress* the urgent need for comprehensive measures to prevent further casualties from landmines and ERW, and provide robust support for mine victims, including medical care, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society, and urge states and relevant organizations to allocate resources and expertise to these efforts (**ad ref:** UNGAR 78/70, 2023, The Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts 1977 (Protocol I); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006.);
4. *Call on* the United Nations climate conferences to recognize and address the environmental impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war by including mine action in discussions and policies on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, ensuring the integration of mine clearance in national and international environmental strategies, and allocating resources for that area.
5. *Emphasize* the importance of mainstreaming mine action into



Agenda 2030 process and *recommend* consideration of this issue at the Summit of the Future to be held later this year.

6. *Call* on States and relevant stakeholders to enhance cooperation through the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and technology; in this regard, we *welcome* the statement of intent signed between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to establish a Center of Excellence on Mine Action Training.
7. *Call* upon Member States of the UN to comply with their respective international obligations related to mine action, including those related to the exchange of information on the location of landmines (**ad ref:** UNSCR 2365, CCW Protocol 2).
8. *Call* for the continuation of the efforts of States and relevant organizations to support the establishment and development of national mine action capacities in countries in which mines and ERW constitute a serious threat to the civilian population, and an impediment to environment, food security, and broader social and economic development (**ad ref:** UNGAR 78/70, 2023).
9. *Call on* affected states and relevant United Nations agencies and regional organizations and institutions and NGOs involved in mine action to proactively mainstream the environmental aspect of mine action to mobilize efforts and solutions to mitigate adverse impacts of landmine contamination.
10. *Express* gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the generous support and excellent hospitality in conduct of this conference. We also express our solidarity with Azerbaijan – as well as with all mine-affected countries - in addressing their immense mine problem and call on the international community to support Azerbaijan’s humanitarian mine action efforts (**ad ref:** declaration 2023 Conference).
11. *Extend* our wishes for success to Azerbaijan in its presidency of the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29).











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