

One Million Children in Iraq Impacted by Landmines and Cluster Bomblets

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Nearly one million Iraqi children are affected by the presence of landmines with hundreds having been maimed or killed by exploded cluster bomblets since 1991, a UN statement acknowledged.

A statement issued by the United Nations mission to Iraq on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action calls for more progress to eliminate the threat of landmines to the people of Iraq.

"It is tragic and unacceptable that children continue to have their lives forever damaged by the presence of landmines," stated Dr. Marzio Babilé, UNICEF's Representative to Iraq.

"With determined effort, all landmines and unexploded ordinance in Iraq can be eradicated; we call on all actors – the Government of Iraq, international community and private sector – to coordinate to permanently eliminate this threat from the lives of Iraqi children and their families." 

The most recent Iraqi child victimized is a twelve year old boy who lost one eye and both his hands from a munition that exploded when he was herding sheep near Basra in March, 2013.

Iraq continues to be one of the most contaminated countries in the world with more than 1,730 square kilometers of its lands is polluted with landmines and unexploded ordinance, affecting 1.6 million people in around 4,000 communities across the country.

Mr. Martin Kobler, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq said that "landmines and unexploded ordinance continue to terribly affect Iraqis, restricting their access to essential services and, in the worst case, maiming and killing them".

"Efforts must be scaled-up to heal the wounds of past wars and remove this menace, once and for all, from the lives of Iraqis," added Kobler.

Due to a shortage of funding, the UN's Mine Action Program will come to an end by mid-2013. As a result, the UN appeals the Government of Iraq to urgently fund humanitarian mine action activities, such as demining and mine risk education, to improve the living conditions of Iraqis affected by landmines.

On October 2012, Kurdistan's State Demining Organization announced that 10 people killed

and 40 others wounded during the year.

The southern Iraqi province of Basra considered one of the most contaminated areas in the world because of the fact that its territory used as military firewalls during the country's wars.

It is worth to mention that an average of two Iraqis were killed or injured weekly by mines during 2009, according to international statistics.

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