



UNMAS IN A NUTSHELL

[\[LINK TO VIEW THE VIDEO\]](#)



The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) was established within the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in 1997 in order to serve as the **UN focal point for mine action and management of the UN Voluntary trust fund for Assistance in Mine Action (VTF)**. UNMAS sets up and manages Mine Action coordination centers in peacekeeping and emergency contexts utilizing UNOPS as its implementing agency. It currently oversees and manages programmes in **Afghanistan, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Colombia, Cyprus, DRC, Gaza, Lebanon, Libya, Nepal, Somalia, Sudan and Western Sahara**.

UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION TEAM - GAZA OFFICE



UNMAS – April 2010

Following the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) 'Operation Cast Lead', which began in late 2008 and left inhabitants living and working in communities contaminated by explosive remnants of war (ERW),



UNMAS – Nov. 2009

UNMAS deployed a mine action capacity in Gaza in **early 2009** at the request of the UN Resident Coordinator in the oPt and in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1860. After the emergency phase was completed – i.e., removal of the immediate threat posed by unexploded ordnance (UXO), facilitate the opening of humanitarian corridors to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid and the identification of shelter for displaced persons, and the removal of rubble – **it was assessed that ERW buried in the rubble of damaged or destroyed buildings, infrastructure and agricultural areas constituted the primary threat**. UNMAS activities thereafter

transitioned to a more sustained response through the coordination and implementation of mine action inputs and support into a variety of planning processes, most notably those aimed at the removal of rubble and the rehabilitation of contaminated agricultural areas.

Amid a restrictive and complex operational environment, UNMAS and its partners, under the banner of **the United Nations Mine Action Team-Gaza Office (UNMAT-GO)**, were very successful in providing life-saving interventions that enabled a safer environment for the civilian population and the wider humanitarian community in Gaza. **In 2010, civilian casualties fell by 41%**, with the majority of residual ERW hazards now confined to the Access-restricted areas (ARA) along the border with Israel and other agricultural areas that are particularly difficult to reach in the current circumstances. Despite the blockade, UNMAT also successfully **completed the destruction of 92 UXOs containing white phosphorus through innovative techniques**, clearly demonstrating that substantive and meaningful results can be achieved in Gaza. Having completed this groundbreaking milestone, and in consultation with its partners, **UNMAT reduced its operational capacity at the end of 2010** to align it to local conditions and requirements.

As of 1 January 2011, an UNMAS Mine Action Technical Advisor and small support staff continue to ensure the prevention/reduction of the risk of death and injury from UXO/ERW, by providing (i) mine action coordination and technical advice and assistance to all UN, INGO, NGO agencies and civilians at-risk upon request; (ii) UXO/ERW risk assessments in support of humanitarian and development projects; (iii) marking and recording of UXO/ERW locations; (iv) limited UXO neutralization and removal on an on-call basis; (v) UXO/ERW safety awareness briefings to new staff and at-risk civilian populations; and (vi) advice, awareness training and possible post blast investigation of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to UN agencies and INGOs.

[Project #OPT-11/MA/35904/5116 - CAP oPt 2011 - Protection Cluster output 3.2].

QUICK FIGURES 2009 - 2011

- ❖ **Team composition:**
 - * **2009-10:** 1 UN coordination component [UNMAS]; 5 EOD teams & 2 Community Liaison officers [MAG]; 3 medics [MSB & Global Medic] * **2011:** 1 UNMAS Technical Advisor & 3 national staff.
- ❖ **UXO Risk Assessments:** 2,187 sites [1,280,725 m²] for 80,132 beneficiaries
- ❖ **260 EOD Rapid Response interventions**
- ❖ **364 items of ERW UXO** [incl. & 71 anti-tank mines] & 2,100 small arms ammunition located, half of which during rubble removal activities
- ❖ **Demolition all known white phosphorus UXO** [92 items] and 3 high explosives between 10 March and 12 May 2010
- ❖ **255 UXO Safety Awareness briefing sessions** for 5,426 at-risk civilians and NGO staff members from over 60 organizations
- ❖ **41% reduction in UXO related casualties:** from 39 victims [incl. 9 killed] in 2009 to 16 in 2010 [incl. 2 killed]. 13 victims [incl. 1 killed] so far in 2011. No casualty during Rubble Removal projects.
- ❖ **Donors:** DfID, AusAid, European Union, the Netherlands, OCHA/HRF, Japan.



UNMAS WEST BANK

[\[LINK TO VIEW THE MAP\]](#)

The West Bank has been contaminated by landmines for over sixty years. These minefields were laid by both Jordan and Israel along the 1949 Armistice line and used extensively during and after the 1967 six-day war, where they were used as protective/defensive minefields as part of border and military installation defenses. It is estimated that there are approximately half a million anti-personnel mines in the West Bank. According to information [Israeli hiking maps and recent statements from the Israeli Defense Forces] which has been mapped by UNMAS into the OCHA database using geographic information system software, it is estimated that approximately **20.4 km² of the West Bank** is contaminated with landmines (anti-personnel and anti-tank), **most of which is located in area C**. UNMAS expects this figure to rise as more accurate information is obtained through an in-depth threat assessment. Other ERW can be found throughout the West Bank due to extensive military operations and continuing training by the IDF.

Most minefields and hazardous areas are located in fertile agricultural and grazing land and, in some cases, inside or in the near vicinity of villages. In addition, the marking and fencing of minefields is often in poor state of repair, with some operational minefields not marked at all. This poses a constant risk to the lives of the population, particularly children, farmers and herders. **In addition, development and livelihood opportunities are hindered throughout the region** since minefields are preventing access and development of sites with cultural, and/or commercial value. *As an example, approximately 3,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines surround the highly touristic Baptismal site, covering some 30 dunums of land.*

Although an EOD capacity was developed within the Palestinian Civilian Police during the nineties to 'dispose of explosive ordnance and improvised explosive devices in the oPt', **there is no known demining capacity within the Palestinian Authority (PA)**. Moreover, Palestinian national security forces are said to lack maps or records of minefields. Similarly, no system is currently in place for the systematic collection and verification of landmine/ERW-related victim data in the oPt; nor any strategic framework for victim assistance. Meetings of the 'Palestinian National Mine Action Committee' (PNMAC) - an interministerial coordination body established in 2002 under the Ministry of Planning and chaired by the Ministry of Interior since 2006 - have been indefinitely suspended since August 2008.

Recognizing the **momentum** that has been built by UNMAS' operational success in Gaza in assisting communities against the threat from UXO and in establishing an unprecedented level of trust and coordination with Israeli and Palestinian officials and interlocutors, UNMAS actively engaged in 2010 with all relevant stakeholders to explore how its technical knowledge might best assist the PA in addressing the ERW threat to communities in the West Bank. Amongst other factors, this dialogue has been greatly facilitated by a **written request from the Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs in December 2010 asking UNMAS to assist in setting up a Palestinian Humanitarian Demining Capacity**, and by the passing by the Israeli Knesset in May 2011 of a **Bill establishing a National Mine Action Authority and a Mine Action Centre in Israel**. The later legally obligates Israel to take action to clear those minefields within territory it controls, subject to IDF concurrence that they have no further military or security value.

An initial Project proposal, amounting to USD 1.4 million (12 months), will allow in mid-2011 **the deployment of an UNMAS Technical Advisor and small support staff within the Ministry of Interior in Ramallah**. This Team will coordinate the set up of a Palestinian Mine Action management and clearance capacity for the implementation of humanitarian mine clearance in the West Bank in accordance with international standards. Within the first year of implementation, UNMAS expects to (i) assess and analyze the level of contamination; (ii) provide Mine Action policy advice, technical support and assistance to senior members of the PA's leadership and the identified members of the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA), and develop appropriate legal structures and frameworks; (iii) articulate training needs and mine action operational requirements in a comprehensive operational Mine Action plan for the West Bank (24 months) endorsed by the NMAA, and start implementation; (iv) develop Palestinian Technical Standards and Guidelines endorsed by the NMAA; and (v) address the corresponding Mine action funding needs.

QUICK FACTS

❖ 20,433,446 m² of contaminated land:

- * 79 confirmed minefields incl. 3 in area B;
- * 6 linear minefields along roads in area C;
- * 92 suspected hazardous areas incl. 3 in area B.

- ❖ **More than 800 victims recorded for the West Bank and Gaza since 1999** according to the Landmine and Cluster Munitions Report of 2010

