

## Bomb threat looms over Lebanese villagers (Lebanon)

---

**TYRE, Lebanon (CNN) -- Diab Diab lost an eye and part of a leg trying to clear unexploded bombs from the fields of southern Lebanon. But now he is going to lose his job, too.**

(16.03.2009)

Despite the dangers of clearing mines, Diab Diab wants to continue his work.

For though there are possibly thousands of unexploded bombs and shells littering the landscape, the money for cleanup operations has disappeared in the global recession.

Diab knows the dangers all too well, but said he wants to continue working for British specialist clearance company BACTEC. "It's hard to lose one's job -- despite the risks and the dangers you run, you get used to it," he said.

Countries such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates all pledged to help Lebanon clear the landmines, cluster bombs and other unexploded ordnance left by Israeli forces as they withdrew from their conflict with Hezbollah in the summer of 2006.

More than \$43 million in international donations has been spent so far on clearing the region. Britain and the Netherlands have been the largest single donors, each giving more than \$5 million. The United States gave \$2 million soon after the conflict and Saudi Arabia's contributions are now at \$1.5 million, a report by the United Nations Mine Action Service shows.

But with the economic crisis sweeping around the globe, some of the donor cash has dried up, and BACTEC, which had been responsible for a quarter of the clearing work, has to shut down its operations in Lebanon.

There are some areas that BACTEC operations manager Johan Hann can mark as "cleared" on a map in his office. Elsewhere, the map shows areas that have not been touched and a vast swath of land where no one knows what lies in the ground. Watch mom cry for her daughter, maimed by a bomb »

Cluster bombs leave huge craters but also spread bomblets over a wide area. Not all the bomblets will necessarily detonate on impact, and those that do not explode are left, like ticking time bombs in the ground.

The United Nations Mine Action Service says Israel has provided no information as to where bombs were dropped. Nor has Israel contributed to the funding for the U.N.-led mine clearance effort.

Land has to be cleared field by field, section by section and yard by yard. A piece of red and white tape fluttering across a piece of land shows how far Hann's team got before they had to stop.

Mohammed Cheaito looks to the other side of the tape, to the land that he should be farming but that could be full of hidden danger.

"If they are going to stop now, it means we will stop planting and working, too; we can't get to our land anymore," he said.

"Of course, I am upset. They're supposed to finish their work so we can walk freely and cultivate our land in order to make a living."

But the risks of straying onto uncleared land are all too obvious. At least 328 people have been killed or wounded by bombs left in the soil of the region that borders Israel.

One of them is Naimah Ghazi, who stepped on a cluster bomb in her garden in 2007 and lost half a leg.

She used to provide for her family by farming tobacco, but now she spends most of her day sitting in the very garden that hid the weapon that injured her.

Her mother, Khadija, finds it almost unbearable to look at her.

"I cry so much I can barely see with my eyes. I cry when I look at the state my daughter is in," the 86-year-old wails.

Phone calls asking for jobs are still coming in to BACTEC's offices, Hann said, even as the mine clearers pack up their tents and climb into their trucks for the last time.

They leave behind thousands of acres of land around the villages that they haven't been able to check and an untold number of bombs, perhaps still waiting for a victim.

Von: 17.03.2009, CNN, [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)

[<<< zurück zu: News](#)

---