Yemeni report says 827,000 live in mine-affected areas, notes 5,500 victims

UNITED KINGDOM, 19 April 2010 (BBC Monitoring Middle East) - Text of report in English by privately-owned Yemeni newspaper Yemen Observer website on 18 April [Report by Abdul-Aziz Oudah: "Mines a Major Danger”]

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There are over 5,500 mine victims in Yemen and 827,000 people across the country currently live in mine-infected lands, said an official report.

Mansour al-Ezzi, General Manager of the National Programme to Deal with Mines (NPDM), said that the programme has cleared and cleaned about 750 million square meters out of 923 million square meters of land that is mine-affected or suspected of being affected in the past ten years. NPDM has dismantled 250,000 mines and shells, and cleaned 444 localities and villages out of 570 localities,” al-Ezzi said, adding that NPDM also managed to educate more than a million people about the mine danger.

Al-Ezzi said that there has been 5,500 injuries resulted from landmines in Yemen since 1962; most of the victims are children and women. “Nine mine-clearance workers have been injured and another three workers have died on the job since 2000,” he said. He pointed out that all the governorates of Yemen, except al-Mahweet suffer the problem of mines. “The rate of mine victims since 2000, normally around 27 cases a year, has dropped to eight to ten people a year in last few years,” he said.

“827,000 people across the country live in the vicinity of mine-contaminated land,” he added. Al-Ezzi pointed out that the danger now is in Sa’adah city and its surroundings, where hundreds of mines have been planted by the Al-Houthis without maps. For his part, the Governor of Sa’adah, Taha Hajer, said that victims of mines planted by al-Houthis have increased to ten people, including two women and a 15-year-old girl in less than ten days. Four people, three of which are women, including three women, all from the same family, were injured by an explosion in the village of Ashaish last Tuesday. In the same day, a 26-year-old man was injured in Mount Habish in a similar explosion. According to the Security Media Centre, a 20-year-old man was injured in a similar accident as a result of an explosive device that was detonated in al-Malahid district.

Last Friday, a landmine explosion injured soldier, while three other citizens were wounded, when a landmine planted by al-Houthis exploded in Harf Sufyan. Yemen joined the Mine Ban Treaty in 1999 with 156 countries that suffer the proliferation of mines as a result of armed conflict. Yemen has been suffering armed conflict during the periods 1962-1969, 1970-1983, 1994, and the continuation of the al-Houthis war in 2009.

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