

**Syria: Army Planting Banned Landmines** Human Rights Watch 13 March 2012 Syrian forces have placed landmines near the borders with Lebanon and Turkey in recent weeks and months, Human Rights Watch said today, based on reports and confirmations from witnesses and Syrian de-miners. Civilian casualties have already resulted, the witnesses said.

The Syrian army should cease its use of antipersonnel landmines and recognize that planting this internationally banned weapon will hurt Syrians for years to come, Human Rights Watch said. Both antipersonnel and anti-vehicle mines of Soviet/Russian origin have been cleared by de-miners associated with the opposition. (...)

(...) Antipersonnel mines are militarily ineffective weapons that mostly kill and injure civilians, Human Rights Watch said. A total of 159 countries have joined the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, which comprehensively prohibits the use, production, trade, and stockpiling of antipersonnel mines.

Syria has not joined the Mine Ban Treaty, though it is not thought to be a producer or exporter of antipersonnel mines. It is last believed to have used antipersonnel mines during the 1982 conflict with Israel in Lebanon. The size and origin of Syria's landmine stockpile is not known, but it is believed to consist mainly of Soviet/Russian-manufactured mines, such as the PMN-2 antipersonnel mines and TMN-46 anti-vehicle mines.

**Mines Along the Turkish Border** Multiple accounts by witnesses appear to confirm that the Syrian army has planted landmines near its border with Turkey in 2012. (...)

(...) Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on February 16 that it is investigating allegations of Syrian landmine use on the border with Turkey. Turkey acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty on September 25, 2003, and has initiated plans to clear the minefields Turkey placed on its side of the border.

**Mines Along the Lebanese Border** The first reports of new mine-laying on the Lebanon border by Syrian forces emerged in November 2011. A Syrian government official told The Associated Press on November 1 that "Syria has undertaken many measures to control the borders, including planting mines." (...)

(...) Lebanon has not yet acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty, but indicated in December 2009 that it "looks forward to joining the Mine Ban Treaty," and stated in August 2011, "The Lebanese Government doesn't use or stockpile or produce or transport any anti-personnel mines."

Jordan's border with Syria was mined prior to the current conflict within Syria, but it is not known if Syrian forces have laid new mines on its border with Jordan. Jordan is a state party to the Mine Ban Treaty and in November 2011 said that "increasing tensions" on its northern border with Syria could delay the completion of the country's landmine clearance program. Syria is the fourth government reported to use antipersonnel mines since January 2011, joining Libya (under Muammar Gaddafi), Israel, and Burma. (...)

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