

Canada and Demining Activities in the Middle East

Extending the acceptance of the international treaty banning landmines and integrating action against mines with measures to build peace are priorities for Canada in the Middle East. Although the region is one of the most challenging to engage on the ban issue, four states: Jordan, Qatar, Tunisia and Yemen have ratified the treaty. Algeria has signed but not yet ratified it. Jordan has demonstrated a particularly strong commitment to the mine issue, and it is hoped that its leadership, spearheaded by Queen Noor, will encourage other countries in the region to sign the treaty.

The Canadian government believes that action against landmines must be integrated into the Mideast peace process since mines have historically proven an obstacle to reconciliation, social and economic development, transportation, communication and the preservation of the environment.

Canada has contributed \$300,000 to mine clearance in the Jordan Valley and is working with Israel and Norway on this regional peace-building initiative. Canada is currently reviewing additional funding for a second phase of the Jordan Valley operation.

Through the Canadian Landmine Fund, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has approved a total of \$2 million to support landmine initiatives in Yemen. In 1998-99, the Canadian government provided \$1.5 million for a mine survey in Yemen through the United Nations Mine Action Service. The survey enabled officials to plan and co-ordinate demining operations.

CIDA has provided \$150,000 to the Canadian chapter of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency for the community-based rehabilitation of landmine victims in Yemen. The funding included economic and vocational aid for the disabled or their families. An additional \$250,000 to extend these projects to 2001 was recently approved.

Canada has provided \$100,000 to a Montreal-based non-governmental organization called Alternatives, to treat and rehabilitate landmine victims in Yemen. Canada also provided \$106,000 worth of protective gear to the Yemeni mine action centre.