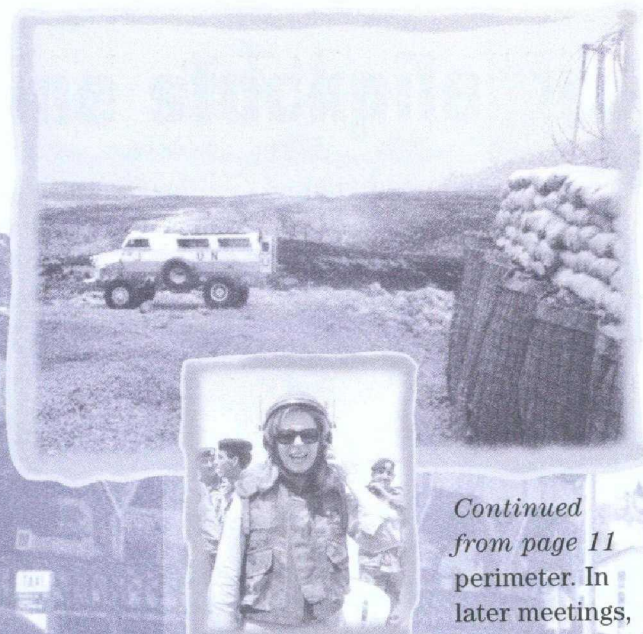




*Continued
from page 11*
perimeter. In
later meetings,
the decision was

made among NGOs to coordinate regionally. Overall, the regional campaigns seemed pleased and energized by the visit.

Beirut, February 11-12, 1999

The Regional Conference on the Menace of Landmines in the Arab Countries which took place in Beirut, was a very positive step in this region. It was organized by an unusual but productive pairing of the Lebanese Army and the Landmines Resource Centre at the University of Balamand.

There were approximately 200 participants from Lebanon and the region, including regional NGOs; representatives of the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, and Palestine; and representatives from the Norwegian, Canadian and British embassies. New faces included delegates from the Libyan and Kuwaiti Red Cross/ Red Crescent Societies.

Much of the discussion focused on the actual impact of the weapon in these countries and local mine action, with little digression into regional politics. The final statement of the conference included recommendations for a more active role on the issue by the Arab League of Nations and calls for more financial assistance.

Cairo, February 13-16

The ICBL's mid-February visit to Egypt resulted in a frank and productive dialogue with government officials and a rare opportunity to engage with the Egyptian Army.

The schedule included a meeting with the Minister of Social Affairs and the Deputy Director of Disarmament at the Department of Foreign Affairs along with other government officials, Mrs. Mubarak, NGOs and media. The Canadian embassy also hosted a reception with members of the diplomatic community. When we arrived we were informed that the Ministry of Defense had invited us to El Alamein, a rare, if not unique invitation to see demining operations there.

The meetings went well, and there was open and frank dialogue with all. There was also very good press coverage, including press briefings, media accompaniment on our tour of El Alamein, and several television interviews.

Many people cited the main impediment to Egypt's embracing the treaty as their position that the allies should demine the western desert, heavily mined in World War II. There was little sign of awareness on the part of journalists and NGOs of Egypt's role in the humanitarian landmines crisis since then, as many seemed genuinely shocked at learning of Egypt's production, export and use.

Representatives from the Ministry of Defense said that Egypt no longer exported and when asked, promised a statement to that effect in writing. No such claim was made with respect to production.

Local NGO representatives reported feeling positive about the Egyptian campaign, and felt that the talks, the public debate and subsequent media coverage the trip engendered had been a "turning point" for them.

— Liz Bernstein, ICBL

MINE BAN ENTRY-INTO-FORCE:

Global celebrations

On March 1st, 1999 the Ottawa Convention banning AP mines became international law, effectively establishing a new international norm against landmines.

This date marked the treaty's entry-into-force only 15 months after being opened for signature – a pace virtually unmatched in the history of international treaties.

Around the world, entry-into-force was celebrated by a wide range of official and grassroots initiatives. The ICBL led an enormously successful campaign which saw both the joy and grief of the occasion marked by global bell ringing. Many also observed the day with prayer, and in Washington, landmine survivors removed their prostheses in front of the White House. The message: Why not US?

Mines Action Canada rings in the treaty

Mines Action Canada (MAC) worked with about 40 organizations across Canada to organize bell-ringing to welcome the entry-into-force of the Landmine Treaty. The result was a cacophonous greeting for the treaty on March 1st across Canada: Ship's horns sounded in Atlantic harbours; elsewhere, town-criers, air raid sirens, taxi horns and church bells chimed in, with prayers also broadcast from mosques in the west.

In Ottawa, local stations were set up with gongs for people to sound their own approval of the

ban. Local organizations distributed a MAC pamphlet on the work ahead to achieve an effective ban; in addition, some groups held public information sessions. For more information on Mines Action Canada, contact us at: 1210 - 1 Nicholas St., Ottawa ON K1N 7B7, Canada, tel: 613 241-3777 fax: 613 244-3410

— Mary Foster, MAC



Joseph Ramlochand enjoyed making noise on Parliament Hill to welcome the entry-into-force of the Mine Ban Treaty.