

COPING WITH LANDMINES PROBLEMS IN THE LIBERATED TERRITORIES



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Introduction

Landmine contamination remains a persistent global humanitarian challenge, plaguing post-conflict nations long after hostilities have ceased. Countries like Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to grapple with the deadly legacy of millions of active landmines, which hinder reconstruction, paralyze agriculture, and cause thousands of civilian casualties annually—disproportionately affecting rural communities and children. While international treaties such as the Ottawa Treaty have galvanized demining efforts, affected states often face profound financial and technical constraints that impede clearance operations.

Azerbaijan exemplifies this crisis, its territories contaminated by landmines deployed during the two so-called Karabakh wars with Armenia. The widespread mining of occupied Azerbaijani lands during the First Karabakh War (1988-1994) created a lethal environment that persisted through the Second Karabakh War in 2020. Following the restoration of its sovereignty, Azerbaijan has prioritized humanitarian demining. However, the sheer scale of contamination continues to obstruct reconstruction and the safe return of internally displaced persons.

This study analyzes Azerbaijan's current demining policies by comparing them with the experiences of two other severely affected nations: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mozambique. Through this comparative analysis, the study aims to identify transferable strategies for overcoming the financial, logistical, and political obstacles to mine clearance. The objective is to provide a framework for Azerbaijan to accelerate its operations, refine its policy structures, and forge more effective partnerships with international organizations.

Methodology

The research methodology relies on an overview of literature, incorporates interviews with relevant officials in the field and carries out qualitative along with quantitative data analysis. This includes an extensive analysis of policy documents alongside existing reports and international legal frameworks concerning mine action. Among these are ANAMA's quarterly reports combined with data provided by Mine Action Review (ANAMA, 2022).

The study begins by offering a historical overview of Azerbaijan's situation, highlighting the systematic use of landmines by Armenia throughout the period of occupation. It then assesses the various challenges that landmines pose per se, incorporating international humanitarian law to underline the illegality of Armenia's actions. The research provides several key policy recommendations to Azerbaijan, including those based on the cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mozambique given their respective challenges and successes with extensive demining operations. The experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina provides a broad range of insights for countries dealing with the mining issue, including about the role of international cooperation, the development of modern demining procedures and the process underpinning policy development. The Mozambique case illustrates successful long-term approaches to de-mining, with the country officially declaring itself free of mines. It reveals approaches which Azerbaijan can successfully adopt for its own situation. The research gathers primary data by conducting interviews with ANAMA representatives, as well as with officials from international mine accomplishment organizations, government representatives and representatives from local communities. This combination of interviews generates qualitative data, helping understand various operational difficulties, including from funding limitations and several economic effects stemming from landmine contamination. The analysis relies upon existing statistics on mine contamination levels, demining progress and casualty figures.

There are several methodological limitations which must be considered. The systematic nature of available military records and partial minefield maps creates obstacles for researchers who attempt to collect data. Restrictions in both funding sources and logistical aspects affect researchers in their conduct of field studies and interview sessions. Moreover, in line with international practices, both political and economic factors in Azerbaijan must be considered due to the significance of varying contexts.

Historical Background: The First and Second Karabakh Wars

1. First Karabakh War: The Consequences of the War

The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is one of the most tragic and long-lasting conflicts of the twentieth century. It was caused by ethnic and political reasons and became even more acute after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The conflict is rooted in the resettlement of the Armenian population to the South Caucasus during the reign of Tsarist Russia and the implementation of artificial ethnic changes in the region. The conflict intensified in the late 20th century after Armenia advanced territorial claims to Azerbaijani lands and pursued expansionist policies. In the late 1980s, prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenian authorities, taking advantage of the weakening of the central Soviet government, decided to annex the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan to the Armenian SSR.

The First Karabakh War (1988-1994) forced many Azerbaijanis to flee their homes. An agreement on a ceasefire was reached on May 12, 1994. By this time, as a result of Armenia's military aggression, 20 percent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan - the cities of Khankendi, Khojaly, Shusha, Lachin, Khojavend, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli, Zangilan districts, as well as 13 villages in the Tartar region, 7 villages in the Gazakh region, and 1 village in the Sadarak region of Nakhchivan - had been occupied by the

Armenian army. As a result, more than 1 million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced persons, and more than 20 thousand Azerbaijanis were killed during the military operations. In May 1994, the Bishkek Protocol on a ceasefire was signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, this ceasefire did not result in Armenia withdrawing from the occupied territories, and the conflict remained in a state of tension for many years.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which mines were deployed in the occupied Azerbaijani territories by Armenian armed forces, both during and in the aftermath of the conflict, with the strategic goal of maintaining control over these areas. The extensive mine planting of Azerbaijani territories significantly impeded their safe restoration and obstructed the return of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homeland.

In response to this humanitarian and security crisis, the Republic of Azerbaijan established the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA). Founded on July 18, 1998, by Order No. 854 of President Heydar Aliyev, ANAMA's primary mandate is the clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from liberated lands. Through this work, the agency plays a fundamental role in protecting civilians and enabling reconstruction and repatriation efforts.

In an interview with Adil Aslanov, Head of the Methodology and Training Department at ANAMA, key complexities of post-conflict demining were elucidated. Mr. Aslanov emphasized that clearance operations following the First Karabakh War are significantly impeded by dynamic environmental factors. He explained that the original geographic placement of mines laid by Armenian forces has been substantially altered over the past three decades. Natural processes, including river flooding, heavy precipitation, snowfall, and landslides, have displaced ordnance, complicating the accurate identification of mine locations. This environmental dispersion necessitates a greater investment of time and resources to ensure the thoroughness and safety of clearance operations.

2. *Second Karabakh War: Landmine Contamination and Security*

On September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan began a counter-offensive operation in response to Armenia's large-scale shelling of Azerbaijani Army positions and civilian settlements. Following a forty-four day war, the Azerbaijani Army liberated the cities of Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadli and Shusha, the settlements of Minjivan, Aghband, Bartaz in the Zangilan district, the settlement of Hadrut and many villages in the Khojavand district, the village of Sugovushan in the Tartar district, several villages in the Khojaly and Lachin districts. In total, more than 300 settlements, as well as important strategic heights in the directions of Aghdara, Murovdag and Zangilan, were liberated from occupation. The liberation of Shusha from occupation on November 8 was particularly significant from a political perspective as it forced Armenia to agree to engage in "peace talks" (Shafiyev, 2023). The war resulted in Azerbaijan's victory, with a trilateral ceasefire statement signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and the President of the Russian Federation on November 10, 2020. As a result, Armenia had to return the Kalbajar, Agdam, and Lachin regions back to Azerbaijan. According to the Trilateral Statement, a Russian peacekeeping contingent was to be deployed along the contact line in Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor. Armenia also committed to ensuring unhindered access from its territory to the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan.

Azerbaijan and Armenia are currently engaged in a peace process, with the initialing of the peace treaty text in Washington in August 2025 considered to be a milestone moment. However, as the countries progress towards peace and pursue confidence-building measures, Azerbaijan continues to feel and deal with the grave consequences of Armenian occupation, including the large quantities of land mines which were planted on its territories by Armenian forces. Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense actively supported demining operations across the Fuzuli, Jabrayil, and Agdam regions in the initial period after Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War (ANAMA, 2022). This includes large-scale mine clearance operations in high-risk areas alongside ANAMA and other national clearance organizations, with the

Ministry's Engineering Corps providing essential logistics support in such operations. Moreover, in March 2025, the Ministry of Defense and ANAMA personnel held special training dedicated to "Humanitarian Mine Clearance" and "Battlefield Clearance". Such activities are a crucial step towards the implementation of de-mining operations in the liberated territories in accordance with the internationally established mine action standards.

Beyond the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Azerbaijan is a key actor in national demining efforts. The Ministry deploys its Rescue and Engineering Units as the primary field force for mine clearance operations. Fulfilling a dual mandate, it not only implements public safety standards and provides emergency support in mine-affected areas but also conducts community education programs on the risks of explosive hazards. These integrated efforts are crucial for facilitating the safe and sustainable return of internally displaced populations, ensuring they are not exposed to the threat of landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

Landmines Problem in Liberated Territories and Mine Action of Azerbaijan

1. Managing Time and Budget in Azerbaijan's Mine Action Strategy

After the liberation of its territories during the 44-day Patriotic War, demining operations became Azerbaijan's primary concern. The restoration and reconstruction of these areas demand secure conditions that would allow former displaced citizens to return to their native land while supporting international investment projects across the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

On November 16, 2022, President Ilham Aliyev signed a decree to approve the Action Plan of the first "State Program on the Great Return to the territories freed from occupation of the Republic of Azerbaijan". The State Program has established key strategic paths to carry out the reconstruction, restoration and sustainable development

of the liberated territories. The State Program aims to achieve a rapid reconstruction and revitalization of the Karabakh region, the return of the local population and sustainable economic development. In accordance with the State Program, by 2026, authorities aim to clear all 280,000 hectares of liberated land from mine hazards. The first phase of the “Great Return” will be completed by 2026, with 140,000 displaced persons expected to relocate to Karabakh during this period. More than 32 billion AZN will be needed to execute the “First State Program for the Great Turning” in the period 2022-26. The “Great Return” program’s second phase, which includes three parts, will serve as the guide for the 2026-2040 period and is expected to finalize in 2040 (Huseynov, 2023).

Latest data indicates that the territory contaminated with mines in the liberated territories accounts for approximately 11,667 square kilometers out of the total 86,600 square kilometers which make up the country’s territory (Shafiyev, 2025). Operations intended for clearance have slow completion rates because of the extent of environmental destruction, highly challenging terrain conditions and scarce resources. For construction projects and residential developments to succeed, clearance operations must first be completed. The program targets the completion of 34,500 residential units by 2026, which will allow the resettlement of 140,000 people. However, vital infrastructure is a pre-requisite for normal life to resume, including fully mobilized roads and electricity systems, access to water and fully operational schools and hospitals. Entire cities and villages in the liberated territories need multiple years for full reconstruction to be completed. However, due to delays in construction caused by poor weather conditions and logistical restrictions, fast project completion is made impossible. Despite the allocation of 32 billion AZN for phase one (2022–2026), wide-reaching projects usually experience procurement problems, construction contractor challenges and bureaucratic delays that hinder progress. The shortage of trained experts who perform demining and construction work hinders project development, with additional funding delays or absence of personnel resulting in prolonged operational times within mountainous terrain areas. Heavy snowfall and rain make mountains in liberated areas inaccessible for

construction projects for several months during the year, decreasing the yearly operational period.

The high costs associated with the de-mining operations is another key obstacle. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) states that the production of one landmine costs between \$3 to \$75 but removing one such device requires between \$300 and \$1,000 (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1996). The mine clearance operations during 2022 required 99.9 million AZN from the 4.3 billion AZN budget which was designated for reconstructing and restoring the liberated territories. In 2023 alone, the Azerbaijani government spent 110.2 million AZN of its budget to fight mine hazards (Zohrabov, 2024). In 2025, The ANAMA will receive 85 million AZN from the 2025 state budget, highlighting an increase in funding by 1.2% from the previous fiscal year. It is expected that the total budget for reconstructing and restoring the liberated territories in the 2021-2026 period will reach 22.4 billion AZN (Caspian News, 2023).

	Total Cleared Area (ha)	Total AP Mines Found	Total AT Mines Found	Total UXOs Found
Clearance Statistics 2021	20770 ha	18777	9583	24026
Clearance Statistics 2022	43915 ha	8780	4133	14950
Clearance Statistics 2023	53081 ha	3495	5034	23049
Clearance Statistics 2024	62023.9 ha	4286	2372	59163
Clearance Statistics 2025 (March)	12441.6 ha	1248	498	13200

Table 1: Data based on the annual statistics provided by ANAMA

Despite significant challenges related to budget and time, Azerbaijan has maintained a substantial demining effort between 2021 and 2025, as illustrated in Table 1. The data reveals several key trends:

the total cleared area increased steadily until a sharp decline in 2025, attributable to resource limitations and adverse weather. Concurrently, the detection of anti-personnel (AP) and anti-tank (AT) mines decreased steadily, potentially indicating the effectiveness of initial clearance efforts or a strategic shift in focus. In contrast, discoveries of unexploded ordnance (UXO) fluctuated, with a notable peak in 2024. This surge may reflect targeted operations in high-risk or complex areas that were previously inaccessible. It is important to note that the data in Table 1 is comprehensive, aggregating statistics from ANAMA, the Ministry of Defense, and several other government and non-governmental partners.

2. Challenges of Mine Action

2.1 The role of surveying in demining operations and Manual Demining

A range of surveys conducted by ANAMA throughout the liberated regions revealed heavy landmine contamination of (destroyed) settlements, agricultural areas, cemeteries, gardens, forests, rivers and water wells. Surveyors compiled local testimonies, mine maps, casualty statistics and space-based imagery used to identify former military facilities in regions where mines were densely placed.

The government of Armenia presented Azerbaijan with eight maps, which showed the location of the minefields across the territories liberated from occupation, particularly the Murovdag range inside the Kalbajar district (APA, 2024). Relevant experts assessed the maps but found that 75% of their content was unreliable, which makes operations more dangerous from a technical point of view. The analysis of these maps revealed key differences between the state of the actual minefields and what was illustrated on paper. Reference point coordinates proved ineffective for usage, with the maps offering limited coverage of the regions which had been under occupation. Furthermore, ANAMA lacks information about minefields in the Khojavand, Tartar, and Goranboy districts. Moreover, there is no information about the mine areas which

were established by Armenian military units in the aftermath of Second Karabakh War which ended in November 2020.

Decades of conflict-induced displacement of local populations created numerous vacant regions. There is a serious lack of key information about past mine activities in these areas. Survey teams are now facing difficulties in using regular patterns or military strategies to identify contaminated areas, with the mines in question planted without appropriate documentation of their location. In response to challenges posed by unreliable minefield data and the scarcity of accurate local information, technological advancements such as the Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) have been introduced through international cooperation, notably under the 2005 Administrative Agreement between ANAMA and the US European Special Command. The aim of this was to enhance precision in mapping hazardous zones and improve the overall effectiveness of survey operations. DGPS provides precise measurements with 10cm accuracy, enabling accurate coordinates of hazardous or cleared areas and increasing the quality of information available (ReliefWeb, 2024).

In an interview, Elnur Gasimov, Head of the Quality Control Department at ANAMA, emphasized the importance of technical equipment given the inaccuracy of the maps at hand. However, for purposes of enhanced accuracy, manual demining is preferred. That said, life-threatening situations during manual clearance operations pose the greatest challenge because as little as one incorrect movement from the deminers can lead to their death. The labor required for manual demining is both strenuous and extends the duration of the operations. He also mentioned that the already highly demanding nature of the work becomes significantly worse when metal contaminants reach high levels in industrial zones due to detectors producing unnecessary alarms.

2.2 Animal-Supported Mine Detections Systems

Mine detection dogs and mine detection rats are effective tools for when regular metal detectors become inoperable due to excessive metal contamination in the field. This approach, however, also comes with

different obstacles. Animals used for detecting scents of explosives need long-term specialized training, which is provided by experienced individuals at a high cost. Detective dogs need ongoing training together with correct care to preserve their alerting abilities.

Environmental factors also create major difficulties for detection systems. Excessively hot or cold weather along with heavy precipitation and powerful wind might cause animals to lose their scent awareness and operational efficiency. The physical environment creates dangers because thick vegetation together with unsafe debris cause harm to detection animals while restricting their movement. They are also vulnerable to fatigue alongside stress, illness and distractions which threaten their operational effectiveness during extended working times. Additional factors to consider are the difficulties associated with moving the animals to inaccessible locations, providing them with regular medical services and supplying food together with their rest and shelter requirements. Mine detection rats clear an average of 400 square meters per day but their small body sizes expose them to predators and other environmental threats (APOPO, 2024).

2.3 Use of Mechanical Means and Destruction in Demining operations

While mechanical demining devices enhance operational efficiency and improve safety by reducing human exposure to hazards, their deployment introduces distinct operational challenges. A primary obstacle is the extensive site preparation often required. Demining frequently occurs in abandoned areas characterized by ruined infrastructure, dry canals, flood-prone zones, and other difficult terrain that impedes the movement and operation of heavy machinery. Establishing a secure work environment under these conditions demands significant additional planning, resources, and time.

The effectiveness of mechanical equipment is contingent upon three key factors: soil characteristics, vegetation density, and the type and depth of buried ordnance. Machines such as flails, rollers, and tillers have limited capabilities in detecting or neutralizing deeply buried or small-sized

mines, potentially leaving explosives undiscovered. Furthermore, the use of mechanical force against unstable unexploded ordnance (UXO) presents a significant secondary risk; the equipment can accidentally activate these devices, thereby creating new and immediate threats.

Using machines for land clearing requires significant investments to be made for their purchase and continued operation together with frequent maintenance costs. The equipment needs trained professionals and logistical support together with fuel and spare parts, making it difficult for them to operate in remote locations with restricted resources. Despite the operational challenges associated with mechanical demining tools, innovations like MEMATT—Türkiye’s first domestically-produced unmanned mine-clearing vehicle—demonstrate how advanced technology can significantly enhance safety and efficiency in complex demining operations, such as those in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan. A contract was signed for the delivery of 20 such vehicles to Azerbaijan. MEMATT, which has a remote-controlled and unmanned system with certification capability realized entirely with national means, was designed to prevent loss of life in mine clearing operations. MEMATT can clear mined areas faster and more effectively. It is more effective and superior to its counterparts in the world, especially given its resistance to high amounts of explosives (ReliefWeb, 2024).

Additionally, high-level expertise is required for mines and unexplained ordnance which were entombed for extended periods to be handled and detonated appropriately. The primary hurdle consists of performing precise assessments of ordnance status to establish whether it can be classified as “non-transportable”, “constrained transportability” or “transportable”. The destruction requirements for different categories of explosives demand specific measures which can be performed either directly at the site or in destruction zones or through synchronized special equipment in designated areas. The destruction of non-transportable explosives takes place directly at their discovery location as they are often located within dangerous restricted areas. Transporting fully transportable ordnance or ordnance with constrained transportability requires special handling, with the risks particularly high when materials present deterioration or chemical instability.

3. *Challenges of Mine Action and Investigating Armenia's Violation of IHL in Azerbaijan's Liberated Territories*

Anti-personnel mines are one of the deadliest and most insidious weapons in the world today -their purpose is to cause lifelong disability and remain as sources of danger after a ceasefire is reached or a conflict has concluded. Landmines can be characterized as “blind” weapons as they “blind” the lives and all activities of soldiers, civilians and even children. According to official statistics, the total number of landmine victims in Azerbaijan has surpassed 3,400 (Shafiyev, 2025). Out of this number, at least 595 individuals have died (APA, 2024). These numbers include both civilians and military personnel. The high number of victims once again underlines the severity of the problem and its continued impact on people’s lives even though the period of armed conflict is over. From the end of the war in November 2020 to December 2024, more than 388 people were victims of landmine explosions. Among them, 70 lost their lives and 318 were injured (Shafiyev, 2025). These victims include not only soldiers involved in demining or reconstruction activities but also civilians who returned to their hometowns after liberation. It must also be noted that children are especially vulnerable to landmines. According to UNICEF, between November 2020 and April 2024, nine children have died and around 289 people, including many young individuals, have been injured because of explosive ordnance (UNICEF, 2024).

Since the end of the Second Karabakh War, no systematic steps have been taken by Armenia to submit accurate and reliable mine maps. On June 12, 2021, Armenia submitted maps to the Azerbaijani side showing 97,000 anti-tank and anti-personnel mines laid in the Aghdam, Fuzuli and Zangilan regions. However, Yerevan has not yet provided maps of the remaining mined areas in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan (Mustafayeva, 2022). Remarks by former President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan shed light on Armenia’s use of mines and their systematically executed plantation: “The importance of mine maps is enormous. Those areas have been mined for exactly 30 years” (Sputnik Armenia, 2021). This has had profound consequences, one of which is the slowing down of the implementation of the ‘First State Program

for the Great Return to the liberated territories’, and the subsequent worsening of economic and social restrictions.

Armenia must be held accountable in line with key standards of international humanitarian law (IHL) for its actions and for ignoring key internationally recognized provisions and protocol. A look at these key principles will help better understand the essence of the issue and the role of international humanitarian law:

“International humanitarian law is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare. International humanitarian law is also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict” (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2004).

The purpose of IHL is not to just impose specific prohibitions on weapons of war. Instead, it is designed to protect human life and minimize suffering during armed conflict. By considering the affirmed explanation and the core principle of IHL – namely, the protection of persons “who are not and no longer participating in hostilities” – it becomes clear once again that Armenia’s actions over the occupation period were in clear violation of key IHL principles. Crucially, IHL is considered valid and relevant not only for the active war period – it is equally important in the post-war stage. As a matter of fact, there is ample evidence of Armenia’s use of mines to target civilian objects on Azerbaijani territory after the war period.

Moreover, the Republic of Armenia should be held accountable in line with several international agreements on mine action. These are based on customary international norms which are codified in the 1949 Geneva Conventions (and their Additional Protocols) and aim to protect those *not* taking part in hostilities and minimize their suffering in this period (Mustafayeva, 2022). In this regard, the following articles are mentioned:

- i. According to the 1996 amendments made to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) (Protocol II, Article 6 (4)), advance warning must be provided

to the civilian population when mines are being dropped or laid remotely. More than 70 percent of mine explosion incidents that have occurred to date have taken place in areas outside the former line of contact. This increases the scope of areas where mines and unexploded ordnance are likely to be found, with the process of their installation clearly continuing even after the liberation from occupation.

- ii. According to Article 5 (a), (b) of the said Protocol II, anti-personnel mines used by states must either be self-destructive or protected by monitoring and marking. When leaving the area, these mines must either be cleared or transferred to the responsible party. Given the Republic of Armenia's failure to provide adequate maps and information, it would be reasonable to conclude that both paragraphs of Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), as amended on 3 May 1996 (Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices), have been violated.
- iii. According to Article 51(4)(a), (b), and (c) of Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions (1977), which concerns the protection of the civilian population during international armed conflicts, the use of weapons that are indiscriminate—such as landmines—is prohibited. These weapons are considered indiscriminate because they are not limited in time or space, and they cannot distinguish between military targets and civilians. Given this, Armenia's use of such weapons—despite having ratified the Protocol—constitutes a violation of these provisions.
- iv. Protocol V, defined by Human Rights Watch as “the new international law on ERW,” establishes the responsibility of states involved in armed conflict for all Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) in areas under their control. The Protocol states that once hostilities conclude, a state involved in the armed conflict “must mark and clear, remove or destroy ERW in the affected areas under its control.” In addition to mines, the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) should also be taken

into account. Armenia should also provide information on ERW that it has installed beyond its borders. Protocol V reaffirms the significance of the “humanitarian” approach, underlining the responsibility of states to “take all feasible precautions” to protect civilians from the potentially catastrophic consequences of ERW (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

Each of the mentioned protocols reflects the principles of customary international law. Therefore, any state that is a party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, as well as the CCW, may invoke Armenia’s responsibility for war crimes arising from its violations of the principles of distinction and proportionality.

Armenia’s violation of fundamental international norms and its malicious intentions throughout the conflict with Azerbaijan are made further clear by the illegal missile strikes launched by its military forces against Azerbaijani cities between September and November 2020. These actions, which deliberately targeted the civilian population of Azerbaijan, grossly violated the norms and principles of international law, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, the decisions and resolutions of the UN Security Council, as well as the requirements of the declared humanitarian ceasefire regime. The first missile attack on the city of Ganja, located 60 kilometers from the conflict zone, was launched by Armenian armed forces on October 4, 2020. ANAMA confirmed that unguided Smerch artillery rockets and Scud-B ballistic missiles were used in these attacks. Scud-B missiles, which can carry a 985 kilogram high-explosive warhead, have poor accuracy, with a potential deviation of up to 500 meters from the intended target. Hence, attacks using weapons that cannot be directed at a specific military target and cannot distinguish between military targets and civilian objects indiscriminately violate the laws of war (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

The city of Barda, located approximately 100 kilometers from the border with Armenia and 30 kilometers from the line of contact, was also attacked by Armenian armed forces. Rockets with prohibited cluster munitions were fired from the Smerch Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) into densely populated areas of Barda, including the

business center and its surroundings (Prosecutor General's Office, 2020). Armenia's failure to provide maps of these mines and munitions, which placed the civilian population in great danger, along with the attacks on Ganja and Barda, clearly demonstrate its disregard for civilian protection.

Recommendations for Azerbaijan's Mine Action

1. Mine Risk Education Policy Recommendation based on ANAMA and International Experiences

This section examines the cornerstone of ANAMA's humanitarian efforts: its community engagement and Mine Risk Education (MRE) programs. ANAMA demonstrates exceptional capability in this domain, orchestrating nationwide MRE campaigns that target vulnerable populations, including schoolchildren, residents of high-risk areas, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). These tailored initiatives are crucial for protecting civilians, particularly children and rural inhabitants, by equipping them with the knowledge to identify and avoid explosive threats.

The success of these programs is underpinned by a centralized, multi-stakeholder collaboration model. ANAMA partners with national NGOs, such as the International Eurasia Press Fund and Relief, and works alongside key government bodies. For instance, it delivers MRE programs in concert with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, while the Ministry of Defense provides critical data to continuously update risk maps. This synergy between ANAMA's field presence, the Ministry of Emergency Situations' (MES) outreach on emergency preparedness, and MoD's intelligence creates a cohesive safety network. This integrated approach not only optimizes operational results but also fosters public trust, providing residents with the reassurance necessary for their safe and sustainable return.

Mine Risk Education (MRE) campaigns are a fundamental component of humanitarian mine action, as they represent one of the most vital

and sustainable elements in this field. Education enables individuals to uphold key health and safety standards whilst simultaneously reducing casualties and helping clearance operations detect contaminated terrain. ANAMA has taken the lead in MRE implementation across Azerbaijan whilst also working alongside UNICEF and other national authorities including the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023; UNICEF Azerbaijan, 2023).

Since the early 2000s, Azerbaijan achieved substantial progress in establishing formal mine education structures. A pioneering initiative emerged when UNICEF and ANAMA combined forces to launch the UNICEF–ANAMA Mine Risk Education Project in 2000. This delivered standardized MRE training to schoolteachers, health workers and community volunteers throughout twelve high-risk districts spanning Fizuli, Aghdam, Goranboy, and Gazakh. The project’s main aim was to develop local capability and mine awareness integration into regular educational and health activities (International Eurasia Press Fund & UNICEF, 2002).

Some significant outcomes emerged during the program implementation period:

- 59 four-day workshops for over 1,000 schoolteachers
- 30 workshops for over 500 health staff
- 26 community workshops reaching 400 local volunteers
- Production and distribution of more than 150,000 mine-awareness exercise books, 120,000 child-focused brochures, and posters, T-shirts, and visual aids (*International Eurasia Press Fund & UNICEF, 2002*)
- A touring mine safety play performed in 17 IDP camps and frontline schools, written specifically for children

A Technical Working Group was established under the MRE program, comprising personnel from ANAMA and the Ministry of Defense (MoD), along with representatives from the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES), the Ministry of Education, and civil society organizations. The group provided advisory services to policy developers while overseeing workshop results to ensure messages matched local requirements (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023).

ANAMA utilizes digital communications and media outreach as essential components in their contemporary educational efforts. ANAMA's Enlightenment Works division currently directs the production of mine awareness videos and conducts school outreach activities combined with community talks and poster campaigns throughout the country. Alongside this, UNICEF works with the European Union and Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education to teach MRE principles in schools, with a particular focus on newly liberated areas (ANAMA, n.d., "Enlightenment works"; UNICEF Azerbaijan, 2023).

Even though Azerbaijan's progress in Mine Risk Education (MRE) has been notable, various barriers impede its total implementation and effectiveness nationwide. A major challenge stems from the inconsistent implementation of programs across schools and the broader education system. MRE practices are not formally included in the national school curriculum, which makes it an optional and teacher-initiated program (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023; UNDP, 2022). Community outreach efforts remain limited, with schools and health centers receiving some engagement, while essential at-risk groups—such as farmers, shepherds, and parents—continue to be largely unreached by unexploded ordnance (UXO) prevention measures (International Eurasia Press Fund & UNICEF, 2022). Moreover, youth participation continues to be underutilized within MRE programs, with children often acting as passive listeners rather than leading local awareness initiatives. MRE activities also lack formal assessment systems for measuring their sustained impact on target communities. This is significant as organizations can only effectively measure behavior change and develop evidence-based improvements through systematic feedback mechanisms and data collection methods alongside performance assessments.

The long-term sustainability of these efforts relies on a strengthened focus on the implementation of Mine Risk Education (MRE) (UNICEF Azerbaijan, 2022). To ensure that mine awareness becomes a lasting cultural norm beyond the completion of demining operations, Azerbaijan should integrate MRE into school curricula, leverage media platforms, and conduct community workshops.

By combining institutional Mine Risk Education (MRE) with public engagement and supportive policy frameworks, reinforced through sustained monitoring, Azerbaijan achieves both risk reduction and fosters societal resilience-building. The vital defense offered by education plays a protective role for communities throughout the ongoing demining process, while also laying the groundwork for sustainable reconstruction during the Great Return period.

2. *International Cooperation of Humanitarian Demining based on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mozambique*

This section of the paper incorporates international policy advice from IGOs and incorporates case analogies from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mozambique to propose scalable models in response to the current context.

2.1 *International Cooperation: IGO Partnerships and Recommendations*

In support of mine action, Azerbaijan has created a rapidly developing network of foreign alliances. Promoting gender mainstreaming in line with UNDP's sustainable development objectives, the ANAMA-UNDP-EU project, with an initial budget of €4.25 million, contributed to the establishment of the country's first female demining teams. These initiatives demonstrate policy alignment with international best practices established by key actors in global mine action (AIR Center, 2024). According to UNDP, mine action should be institutionalized and form a crucial part of national development plans. In Azerbaijan, the organization has assisted in digitizing minefield data using the IMSMA system, enabling risk-based prioritization of clearance areas (UNDP, 2023).

The Mines Advisory Group (MAG) provides critical technical support to Azerbaijan's demining efforts, emphasizing operational discipline and quality assurance. MAG's contributions include assisting ANAMA with area reduction planning, developing Standard Operating Procedures

(SOPs), and promoting the integration of innovative methods such as mine-detection rats in collaboration with APOPO. A key strategic recommendation from MAG (2023) is to focus technical clearance on verified hazardous areas rather than pursuing blanket coverage, an approach that could help Azerbaijan optimize resource allocation in challenging, low-access mountainous terrain. This partnership is further strengthened through direct capacity-building. MAG Country Director Jeanette Dijkstra, who has noted the effective progress of Azerbaijan's mine action, has personally led humanitarian demining training for ANAMA staff in regions including Aghdam, Tartar, and Fuzuli. These sessions facilitate the transfer of valuable international expertise, with knowledge gained from MAG's operational partnerships in countries like Namibia and others in Africa.

In addition to international organizations, mine action in Azerbaijan has also benefitted from bilateral relationships. For instance, partners such as Saudi Arabia (\$3M of assistance), the UAE (\$5M of assistance), Croatia (8 mine-detection dogs provided), and further donations from the US, UK, Hungary, and other European countries have provided Azerbaijan with direct financial and logistical assistance (AIR Center, 2024). These efforts must now be integrated within a national donor coordination system to promote transparency and align international funding with the state's demining objectives.

2.2 Global Analogies: Bosnia and Mozambique

Countries that have faced similarly complex situations provide a valuable point of comparison for Azerbaijan's approach to this issue. Accordingly, this paper focuses on the experiences of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mozambique.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Severely affected by landmines, Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the world's most contaminated countries. Local communities face

serious socioeconomic challenges with contamination restricting their ability to maintain proper livelihoods. More than 60 percent of Bosnian citizens live in rural areas and depend entirely on land accessibility for agricultural production along with livestock grazing, hunting activities and the collection of wood and herbaceous plants (UNDP, 2013). 1398 vulnerable communities existing within Bosnia and Herzegovina's 127 municipalities were found to be impacted by the presence of mines, UXO's or cluster munitions (European Commission, 2019). 845,163 people are considered to be part of the vulnerable community, with 132,803 people existing directly within the danger zone (BHMAL, 2023). The number of casualties during the post-war period reached 1,781, of which 624 were fatalities. There were also 134 incidents associated with direct demining procedures, with 53 of them resulting in death of personnel performing the operations (NCT CBNW, 2024). A total of 3,343 km have become safe following Bosnia and Herzegovina's technical survey operations that launched in 1996 and concluded in 2023 (NCT CBNW, 2024). Mine operators have destroyed 75,232 anti-personnel mines, 8,813 anti-tank mines and 71,122 pieces of ERW (BHMAL, 2023). An area of 826 square kilometers is still being classified as mine-hazardous, as per data released in October 2024. Experts estimate that 170,657 mines are still present on the country's territory (BHMAL, 2024).

Lack of sufficient funding has slowed progress on eliminating landmines from Bosnia and Herzegovina's territory. Over the past six years, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMAL) had an annual budget of about 20 million euros, which is short of the 40 million euros planned by the Bosnian government. Bosnian authorities have made a considerable number of appeals for more donor funds to complete the process. Mines Advisory Group (MAG) maintains close cooperation with BHMAL since early 2017, with the two working together to locate and erase landmines and other unexploded items across socio-economically vital regions.

The government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has joined various international conventions and dedicated itself to executing all responsibilities while aiming for maximum operational efficiency. This

includes the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production and Stockpiling of Cluster Munitions; the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations Treaty Collection, 1998).

The country has also officially signed up to fulfill the obligations outlined in the Maputo Action Plan of the Ottawa Convention and the Dubrovnik Action Plan of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) in 1998, with the treaty entering into force for the country in March 1999. This established March 1, 2009, as the initial deadline for the complete clearance of all anti-personnel mines within its territory. In accordance with Article 7 of the Convention, Bosnia and Herzegovina reported that it had destroyed all anti-personnel mines in its stockpiles by November 1999. Furthermore, since August 2011, the country has consistently submitted annual transparency reports under Article 7, demonstrating ongoing compliance with its treaty obligations. As part of its commitment under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), Bosnia and Herzegovina has also carried out extensive clearance operations. A total of 7,932 cluster munitions were identified and destroyed. As the country had previously eliminated all stockpiled cluster munitions, the destruction of these remnants marked the completion of its obligations related to cluster munition clearance.

Both Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina have had similarly difficult experiences with landmines as a consequence of their respective conflicts. Through various meetings over recent years, the two countries have worked to increase cooperation. It would, given Bosnia and Herzegovina's extensive experience, be reasonable for Azerbaijan to adopt the country's advanced mine clearance methodologies and enhance its own demining operations. Similarly, Bosnia and Herzegovina could also benefit from Azerbaijan's expertise, helping

establish a mutually beneficial relationship that improves operational efficiency and maximizes the safety of post-conflict demining efforts. Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience is particularly useful as it provides valuable insights on cross-border cooperation and the role of community-based survey techniques. On March 18, 2025, direct negotiations with the aim of strengthening cooperation between the two countries were held. There is mutual recognition that cooperation between ANAMA and Bosnia's similar body makes the two country's mining activities stronger and more dynamic.

Mozambique's Landmine Legacy and Clearance vs. Azerbaijan's Demining Efforts

Mozambique's landmine contamination stems from decades of conflict. This consists of three key phases: (1) the Portuguese colonial war (1964–1975), when the Portuguese laid large barrier minefields along borders and around infrastructure to block FRELIMO insurgents; (2) Rhodesian incursions (1976–1979) amid Zimbabwe's independence war, which saw landmines used along Mozambique's borders and by RENAMO rebels; (3) the Civil war (1977–1992) between the FRELIMO government and RENAMO, during which both sides heavily mined roads, bridges, and rural areas to disrupt enemy movement. By the end of the war in 1992, Mozambique was one of the world's most mined countries, with early estimates suggesting up to 2 million landmines present on the country's territory. A 1994 report noted that mines had "claimed more than 10,000 victims" (International Campaign to Ban Landmines [ICBL], 1996; Ascherio et al., 1995). These figures highlight the scale of the crisis, even if some later surveys showed a degree of overestimation. The landmines used were primarily antipersonnel (AP) devices placed to terrorize civilians and block access to farms and roads. Anti-vehicle (AV) mines were also used to target transport infrastructure (ICBL, 1996; UNDP, 2005). Mozambique undertook extensive efforts to eliminate landmines, pursuing a process consisting of several stages.

- i. Commencement (1992–1995): Following the 1992 peace agreement, emergency demining began under UN coordination. The United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) and UN humanitarian agencies launched the first nationwide survey and clearance projects in 1993. The HALO Trust, a demining NGO, led a rapid assessment and “humanitarian” clearance of key roads and infrastructure, despite limited funding. Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) started operations in central provinces, and commercial firms were contracted for priority tasks. This ad-hoc approach opened critical transport routes but lacked a unified national strategy (UNDP, 2005).
- ii. Consolidation (1995–1999): The government created the National Mine Clearance Commission in 1995 to coordinate efforts. Initially, the commission had little capacity but demining NGOs filled the gap: HALO continued in the north, NPA in central regions and Handicap International in the south (UNDP, 2005). In 1997, Mozambique demonstrated political commitment by signing the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty, ratifying it in 1998, and even hosting the first Treaty review conference in 1999 (United Nations, 1997). This signaled Mozambique’s dedication to a mine-free future and helped attract international support. By 1999, the government replaced the commission with a stronger statutory body, the National Demining Institute (IND), under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. IND could set standards, integrate data, and directly oversee demining operations nationwide (UNDP, 2005).
- iii. Maturation (2000–2015): Backed by a comprehensive National Mine Action Plan, Mozambique expanded the capacity of its demining operations and improved efficiency. A Landmine Impact Survey (2000–2001) identified 791 affected communities and helped prioritize clearance where mines caused the most socio-economic harm (UNDP, 2005). Clearance methods combined manual deminers, mechanical flails, and mine-detection dogs. Notably, the NGO APOPO introduced mine-detection rats in 2008, an innovative tactic to speed up finding mines. APOPO’s teams in southern provinces located and cleared 13,274 mines, freeing over 11 million m² of land for safe use. By rigorously

targeting high-impact areas (roads, villages, and fertile land), Mozambique steadily reduced accidents – annual mine/UXO casualties plummeted from hundreds in the 1990s to near zero by the 2010s (Ascherio et al., 1995).

Mozambique was declared “free of all known landmines” in September 2015, a milestone achieved after clearing an estimated 300,000 mines in total with the help of over 20 demining organizations (Morley, 2015). The clearance released about 62 million m² of land for resettlement and agriculture. The keys to success were strong government ownership, structured plans, and broad international partnerships. The latter were particularly significant – the UN oversaw early operations, and major NGOs (HALO, NPA, APOPO) provided expertise and labor. Donors contributed over \$200 million to mine action in Mozambique from 1993–2015, while the government also gradually increased its budget for demining (UNDP, 2005). In sum, Mozambique’s clearance strategy combined humanitarian urgency with capacity-building: emergency clearance gave way to a coordinated national program that integrated demining with development (e.g., rebuilding roads and enabling displaced people to return safely). This comprehensive approach allowed Mozambique to overcome an immense challenge and become one of the first heavily mined states to achieve mine-free status (Morley, 2015).

Key challenges facing Mozambique in its demining campaign included the sheer scale of contamination, limited initial local capacity, and the need for coordination among many actors. In the early 1990s, Mozambique had virtually no trained deminers or mine-action infrastructure. It therefore required mass training of ex-combatants as deminers and reliance on foreign experts (UNDP, 2005). Mozambique also had to secure consistent funding over two decades, complicated by its struggling economy. Importantly, early efforts suffered from fragmentation – different NGOs and donors worked semi-independently, leading to gaps and overlaps (UNDP, 2005).

The impact of these issues was minimized by several factors. For example, regular nationwide surveys (1993, 2001) provided accurate maps of minefields, letting demining teams focus on high-impact

areas (e.g., the Limpopo rail corridor was cleared early to boost trade) (UNDP, 2005). International partnerships were leveraged smartly: when one donor's funding waned, others (UN, EU, NGO consortiums) filled in, preventing program collapse (UNDP, 2005). Furthermore, public awareness campaigns and mine risk education helped reduce accidents as clearance progressed (UNDP, 2005). By fostering local expertise, with hundreds of Mozambicans becoming professional deminers and managers, Mozambique built a sustainable capacity that continued working even as foreign NGOs scaled down their operation in later years (UNDP, 2005).

Azerbaijan's current challenges are similar, albeit with their unique aspects. The extent of contamination is vast, and, in some areas, newly laid mines expand the danger posed by legacy mines. Terrain challenges include mountainous, forested regions (e.g., Kalbajar) that complicate detection technology, much like Mozambique's dense bush. Balancing speed and safety are a constant challenge. Additionally, the political context is important as despite progress on the normalization of relations, there is still no cooperative transfer of detailed minefield maps on Armenia's behalf (some maps were provided but often inaccurate or incomplete). This is akin to Mozambique's challenge of incomplete data, dealt with through comprehensive surveys (ICBL, 1996). Azerbaijan is addressing data gaps by employing remote sensing and GIS tools, but verification on the ground is labor-intensive. Despite these obstacles, Azerbaijan has made notable progress in a short time. Hundreds of square kilometers have been cleared and casualty rates in liberated areas are starting to decline. This mirrors Mozambique's mid-1990s period when, despite difficulties, steady clearance helped generate vital momentum (Morley, 2015).

Drawing on Mozambique's successful mine action experience, particularly in cooperating with international organizations, a key policy recommendation for Azerbaijan would be to implement a comprehensive, phased Mine Action Plan that integrates clearance with development and prioritizes capacity-building. Specifically, Azerbaijan should:

- a) Prioritize High-Impact Areas and Infrastructure: Mozambique's clearance had outsized impact when focused on roads, bridges, and farmland, which unlocked economic activity and safe resettlement. Azerbaijan should similarly concentrate clearance on primary roads, power supply routes, and village perimeters first. Modeling studies on Mozambique found that if clearance had been centrally coordinated to prioritize transport corridors, economic gains would have been even higher (UNDP, 2005). Azerbaijan's Great Return program already identifies priority settlements; refining it with a socio-economic lens (e.g., clear community land that yields livelihoods) will maximize the benefits of each demining dollar.
- b) Secure Multi-Year Funding and International Support: A long-term national plan will require robust financing. Mozambique benefited from consistent donor commitment over 20+ years, coordinated through UN and national channels (UNDP, 2005). International partnerships can also be leveraged for technology transfer: for example, expanding the use of detection rats or drone-based mapping which Mozambique's partners pioneered could be piloted in Azerbaijan's context.
- c) Enhance Victim Assistance and Community Engagement: A comprehensive policy must include caring for landmine survivors and involving communities. Mozambique integrated survivor assistance into its mine action program (through NGOs and health ministry support), which improved the socio-economic reintegration of victims (UNDP, 2005). This requires the provision of medical rehabilitation, prosthetics, and vocational training for those injured by mines – many of whom are rural farmers or returning IDPs. It also means engaging communities in mine action: community members can help identify suspected hazardous areas and serve on local mine action committees to voice priorities. This bottom-up input was crucial in Mozambique's post-Landmine Impact Survey, ensuring clearance addressed community needs (UNDP, 2005).

The implementation strategy would involve drafting a detailed Mine Action Plan (with 3–5 year milestones) in consultation with experts from Mozambique and other mine-free countries. This plan should set annual clearance targets (land area and number of mines), allocate roles to ANAMA, army engineers, and NGOs, and outline budget needs. A supervisory board, including government ministries, UNDP, and major donors, could meet regularly to monitor progress and resolve bottlenecks (as was done in Mozambique’s IND coordination meetings) (UNDP, 2005).

Mozambique proved that even the most mine-infested country can become mine-free through sustained commitment, smart prioritization, and global partnerships. This South-South collaboration and adherence to international humanitarian demining standards will significantly boost Azerbaijan’s post-conflict recovery and development trajectory (Morley, 2015).

Conclusion

The extensive landmine problem in Azerbaijan’s liberated lands stems from the former decades-long conflict with Armenia, consisting of both the First and Second Karabakh Wars. Massive landmine contamination occurred during the wars throughout critical zones including the Fuzuli, Aghdam and Kalbajar regions. This impeded Azerbaijan’s displaced population from relocating back to the liberated territories. Remaining mines continue to act as major obstacles for reconstruction efforts and restrict agricultural progress while putting civilian safety at risk. This study has revealed Azerbaijan’s substantial progress in addressing its landmine issues through coordinated efforts between government leadership and national institutions with the backing of international partners.

This study has further analyzed the fundamental role of Azerbaijan’s key ministries and institutions in confronting the landmine crisis. A tripartite framework, comprising the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES), and the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), has been established, with each

entity serving a distinct yet complementary function. The Ministry of Defense's Engineering Corps provided critical tactical clearance and intelligence during and after active conflict. Concurrently, the Ministry of Emergency Situations has safeguarded public safety by fulfilling emergency response functions and protecting local communities. As the cornerstone of the humanitarian response, ANAMA has evolved into the primary body for technical demining, Mine Risk Education (MRE), data management, and international coordination. Through systematic data exchange, logistical support, and public awareness campaigns, this multi-agency collaboration has created a comprehensive and sustainable operational foundation for the nation's mine clearance efforts.

The research also analyzed the "Great Return" initiative which plans to bring internally displaced people back to Karabakh by 2040. The massive reconstruction challenge facing Azerbaijan, which includes considerable population movements, depends significantly on rapid and efficient demining operations. Our analysis illustrated that institutional cooperation greatly facilitates this mission. However, the pace of clearance operations is limited by factors such as weather conditions, terrain attributes, technical mapping shortages and funding restrictions. Despite this, on a general level, annual activities in Azerbaijan demonstrate progress through large-scale landmine clearance that reduce casualties and maintains increasing safety standards.

Azerbaijan has shown steadfast dedication to the implementation of Mine Risk Education (MRE) programs as part of its comprehensive safety plan. Through multiple partnerships with UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and other organizations, ANAMA expanded Mine Risk Education programs across classrooms and IDP camps while delivering sessions throughout frontline communities. The country has established essential components for a national mine safety culture but does continue to face implementation challenges with regard to curriculum integration and community participation. To address this, this research recommends institutionalizing school-based MRE (Moral and Relationship Education), expanding youth participation, organizing exhibition tours, and establishing an oversight system to monitor community progress and behavioral change.

The research benefited from additional insights obtained through international comparisons. The cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mozambique helped develop recommendations for strategies tailored specifically to Azerbaijan's mine clearance initiatives. The Bosnian case demonstrated how extensive coordination over multiple decades together with survey-driven clearance methods and legal responsibilities led to progress, whereas Mozambique achieved success by integrating mine clearance programs with economic development through phased implementation and strong community connections. The case examples emphasized the importance of long-term planning together with intersectoral collaboration and donor coordination as fundamental elements for future success in Azerbaijan.

The analysis in the report merged legal insights with humanitarian observations to reveal ways in which Armenia violated fundamental international humanitarian law, especially by neglecting minefield documentation and continuing mine planting in post-conflict zones. The Geneva Conventions' protocols, together with the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, outline key obligations which Armenia failed to uphold, leading to delayed recovery while causing additional civilian deaths.

In conclusion, the Government of Azerbaijan has demonstrated a resolute commitment to addressing one of the world's most severe post-conflict mine elimination challenges. Through a strategy that combines strong institutional drive, technical expertise, and international partnerships, a coordinated national mine action framework has been established. Despite significant geographic, logistical, and political obstacles, this framework has yielded substantial results, positioning Azerbaijan as a leading nation in global demining efforts. To build on this success, the implementation of key recommendations—particularly in enhancing mine risk education, strengthening international coordination, and deepening community engagement—will be crucial. With continued progressive domestic policy and sustained international assistance, Azerbaijan has the potential to achieve a mine-free future and emerge as a model for other nations recovering from conflict.

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CENTER OF ANALYSIS
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COPING WITH LANDMINES PROBLEMS IN THE LIBERATED TERRITORIES

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