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Landmine Hazards Likely to Long Outlast Yemen War

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Axios

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Clearance efforts can have an outsize impact, especially if supported by improvements in local governance.

Even as Yemen's warring parties recommitted to the UN peace process last week, the conflict continues to devastate the civilian population. The [hundreds of thousands](#) of landmines strewn across the country pose a threat that will outlast any viable peace.

The big picture: Most landmines were deployed by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, but remnants of cluster munitions used by the opposing Saudi-led coalition pose similar risks. These unexploded ordnances have claimed hundreds of lives, while displacing Yemenis from their homes and impeding access to roads, water and farmland.

Details: Both the sheer number and irregular distribution of landmines will make clearing them slow and dangerous.

Landmines are readily available in domestic military stockpiles and relatively easy to mass produce, making them a go-to weapon now and in prior Yemeni conflicts.

The Houthis have laid landmines [on the coast](#), at the border with Saudi Arabia, around key towns and along transport routes.

Mines have been laid with no discernible pattern. Moreover, cyclones and floods can scatter mines from their initial locations, complicating verification of cleared land.

What's happening: Some clearance efforts are underway, supported by the Saudi Project for Landmine Clearance and the UN-backed Yemen Mine Action Center.

The United States and European countries have financed decades of demining efforts in Yemen and continue to do so both directly and through [UN organizations](#).

Yes, but: Funding and training for demining initiatives are inadequate.

Clearing landmines makes land more valuable, so it can spark or inflame land ownership disputes that are difficult to resolve in the absence of a proper land registration system in Yemen.

Demining efforts in Yemen often do not follow international guidelines, putting lives at risk and highlighting the need for better training and oversight.

The bottom line: Landmines will remain a [formidable challenge](#) in Yemen, but clearance efforts can have an outsize impact, especially if supported by improvements in local governance.

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