

Extension requests for mine clearance under Article 5 of the Mine Ban Convention

ICRC comments on Algeria

28 November 2011

With regard to the **Algerian** extension request, the ICRC would like to note the following:

The colonial wars in Algeria have left a terrible legacy of minefields, well over 1000 kms long minefields along the Tunisian and Moroccan borders containing over 11 million anti-personnel mines in 1962. The Mine Ban Convention entered into force for Algeria in 2002 and extensive achievements have been recorded. The extension request makes it clear that all suspected minefields have been cleared in the south west of the country, while 65% of the job is still to be done in the east of the country, and 35% is to be done in the north west of the country.

The ICRC would very much like to welcome the filing by Algeria of an amended request in August this year. This amended request brings much more clarity as to the extent of the contamination remaining, in particular by providing consolidated tables in annexes 3, 4 and 5 of the new request. Secondly, the amended request provides detailed information as to the amount of areas that were mined by the Algerian forces in 1994 and 1995 and the date where they have been fully cleared. Thirdly, we also welcome the inclusion in this amended request of precise information concerning the neutralisation of isolated AP mines or improvised explosive devices that were found on Algerian territory between 2007 and 2011 (this can be found in annex 18 of the amended request).

During the intersessional meetings in June this year, we raised a concern regarding the absence of marking of minefields in accordance with article 5.2 of the Convention. The ICRC welcomes the clarification by Algeria that 'in some cases the security situations has made it impossible to mark minefields in a timely manner, but Algeria marks its minefields as soon as the security situation allows' (page 16 of the request). We hope that Algeria will regularly review these situations and will be able to mark its minefields at the earliest opportunity, in order to keep the civilian population away from these minefields and avoid accidents.

Furthermore, we appreciate the commitment made by Algeria in this amended request to clear all AP mines contained in the two open air museums; Algeria will as a result be in a position in 2017 to be in full compliance with article 5 of the Convention.

In conclusion, Algeria seems to have requested the minimum extension period necessary based on the remained existing work. We commend Algeria for presenting a well-reasoned and well documented request in order to obtain an extension of 5 years in order to complete its obligations under article 5 of the Convention.