

AMMAN ACADEMY MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2026

United Nations General Assembly (GA)



**Addressing Landmine Contamination and Explosive
Remnants of War in Afghanistan**

Dear Delegates,

Regarding the use of ChatGPT in AAMUN'25, we will allow its usage as a **research engine only**. Please be aware that it was last updated in **August 2026**. Therefore, there is a high probability that it will provide you with incorrect information about the topic. If used, we encourage you to fact check the information to prevent any issues throughout the debate.

- Committee -

For this topic, the General Assembly is concerned with the continued danger caused by landmines and other explosive remnants of war across Afghanistan. These explosives have been left behind after decades of conflict and continue to affect civilians even in areas where active fighting has ended. They can prevent families from safely returning home, limit access to farmland and roads, and place children and other vulnerable groups at serious risk. The committee will therefore focus on how the international community can support Afghanistan in reducing this danger. Delegates should consider ways to improve mine clearance, educate civilians on explosive risks, assist those who have been injured, and strengthen international funding. They will also need to think carefully about how humanitarian support can be delivered responsibly in Afghanistan's current political situation while making sure that aid reaches the communities that need it most.

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- INTRODUCTION-

Afghanistan has faced conflict for more than four decades, and one of the most dangerous results of this history is the large amount of explosive material that remains across the country. The problem became especially severe during the Soviet-Afghan War, which began in 1979, when landmines were widely used to control roads, military positions, border areas, and routes used by armed groups. However, the contamination did not end with the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Civil war continued throughout the 1990s, followed by fighting involving the Taliban, the Afghan government, and international forces after 2001. Each stage of conflict left behind new mines, abandoned ammunition, improvised explosive devices, and unexploded weapons.

This means that Afghanistan is not dealing with explosives from only one war. Some hazards may date back decades, while others are much more recent. A landmine can remain underground long after the people who planted it have left, while a bomb, mortar, or rocket that failed to explode can remain dangerous until it is safely removed. As a result, civilians can still be killed or injured years after fighting in their area has ended.

The impact on civilians remains extremely serious. According to the United Nations Mine Action Service, approximately 45,941 Afghan civilians have been recorded as killed or injured by landmines and explosive remnants of war since 1989. Afghanistan continues to record around

40 civilian casualties every month, while children represented approximately 70% of recorded casualties in 2025. Children are especially vulnerable because they may not recognize explosive objects and can encounter them while playing, collecting scrap materials, walking to school, or herding animals.

Explosive contamination also affects much more than individual safety. Large areas of agricultural and grazing land cannot be used safely, while mines and unexploded weapons can block roads, irrigation systems, houses, schools, and health facilities. UNMAS reported that almost 1,070 square kilometers of identified hazardous land will remain in Afghanistan in 2026, affecting around 1,565 communities. This makes landmine contamination an obstacle not only to civilian safety but also to food production, education, transportation, reconstruction, and economic development.

Another major concern is the return of displaced people. Many Afghans have been forced to leave their homes during decades of conflict, either moving within the country or becoming refugees in neighboring states such as Pakistan and Iran. When families return to areas they have not lived in for many years, they may be unaware of nearby minefields or unexploded weapons. This makes mine clearance and risk education especially important in communities receiving returnees.

Afghanistan has already made major progress in dealing with the problem. The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan has been operating since 1989 and has built years of experience in mine clearance and explosive ordnance disposal. Since then, humanitarian mine-action organizations have removed millions of explosive items and released thousands of square kilometers of previously dangerous land for civilian use. Risk-education programs have also reached millions of people and helped communities understand how to avoid explosive hazards. However, one of the greatest difficulties today is the lack of stable funding. At its peak in 2011, the Afghan mine-action sector employed more than 14,900 people, while current staffing has fallen to around 1,145, a decline of more than 92%. This has reduced the number of active projects and placed experienced Afghan mine-action organizations at risk of shutting down. Afghanistan therefore continues to have both a major contamination problem and a shortage of resources needed to deal with it.

The political situation since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021 has made international cooperation more complicated. Many countries continue to support humanitarian assistance for the Afghan population, but they are cautious about providing money directly through Taliban-controlled institutions. Because of this, organizations such as the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Assistance Mission in

Afghanistan, and independent humanitarian organizations are especially important in helping international funding reach mine-action projects while maintaining oversight over how the money is used. International law also plays an important role. Afghanistan is a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, also known as the Ottawa Convention, which prohibits the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Afghanistan became bound by the Convention in 2003. However, the country's explosive contamination includes much more than anti-personnel mines. Unexploded bombs, shells, rockets, grenades, and other abandoned explosives must also be addressed. This is why international cooperation on explosive remnants of war remains necessary even when anti-personnel mines themselves are prohibited.

For the General Assembly, the challenge is therefore not simply deciding whether landmines should be removed. Delegates must discuss how mine-action programs should be funded, which communities should be prioritized first, how civilians can be educated about explosive risks, and how victims can receive long-term support. They must also consider how the United Nations and donor states can work inside Afghanistan without allowing political disagreements to prevent necessary humanitarian assistance. A successful resolution should aim to protect civilians while also helping communities safely return to homes, farms, schools, and public spaces.

-Major Parties involved-

Afghanistan: the state bearing the contamination itself, negotiating access and coordination with international demining bodies from a position of political isolation. The Islamic Emirate government controls which provinces deminers can enter, and its lack of international recognition has complicated formal cooperation with UN agencies and donor states.

United States: historically the single largest donor to Afghan mine action through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund. In January 2025 it suspended its funding to the program, a decision that triggered the sharpest drop in clearance capacity in the sector's history and remains central to the current crisis.

United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden: together with the US, these states form the traditional donor block for Afghan mine action, funding both UNMAS coordination and NGO operators such as HALO Trust. Each now faces pressure over whether continued funding to an unrecognized government is politically sustainable, even as humanitarian need grows.

Pakistan: shares a heavily contaminated frontier region with Afghanistan and hosts large numbers of Afghan refugees, giving it a direct security and humanitarian stake in how the crisis is addressed.

Qatar: has served as the Taliban's main diplomatic channel to the outside world since hosting its political office for years before 2021, and continues to mediate contacts between Kabul and Western governments that maintain no formal ties. Its position gives it unique leverage to facilitate the access and coordination that funding-focused donor states cannot secure on their own.

-Timeline-

1979–1989: The Soviet-Afghan War;

The Soviet invasion and the decade-long resistance war that followed left Afghanistan saturated with landmines, as both Soviet forces and Afghan mujahideen laid minefields across the countryside. This period established the base layer of contamination that has never been fully cleared.

1988: HALO Trust founded;

Two former British army officers founded the HALO Trust specifically to address the ordnance left behind by the Soviet occupation, making Afghanistan the birthplace of what would become the world's largest demining organization.

1992-1996: Civil War;

Fighting among rival mujahideen factions for control of Kabul added a new layer of contamination, particularly urban and roadside mining, compounding the rural contamination from the 1980s.

1997: Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty signed;

The international treaty banning the use, production, and stockpiling of antipersonnel mines was signed by 122 countries, marking a turning point in global mine-action policy, though Afghanistan itself would not join for several more years.

1996-2001: Taliban rule and renewed conflict;

continued fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance added further contamination, while active hostilities restricted humanitarian access to affected areas.

2001–2021: Post-2001 insurgency and NATO-led conflict;

Two decades of insurgency added a new generation of explosive hazards, particularly improvised mines and IEDs, layered on top of decades-old Soviet and civil-war contamination. Despite ongoing conflict, this period also saw sustained international demining investment and coordination through UNMAS.

2002: Afghanistan ratifies the Ottawa Convention;

Afghanistan formally committed to clearing its mine contamination and banning antipersonnel mines,

beginning a series of extension deadlines that continue to the present day.

June 2021: Attack on HALO Trust deminers;

Gunmen killed 10 demining staff and injured 16 others at a HALO Trust camp in Baghlan province; an Islamic State affiliate later claimed responsibility. The attack occurred weeks before the Taliban's return to power.

August 2021: Taliban retakes Kabul;

The Taliban's return to power and the completion of the U.S. withdrawal fundamentally changed the operating environment for mine action, cutting off formal diplomatic channels between Kabul and major donor governments.

September 2021: HALO Trust resumes operations;

HALO reached a working agreement with the new Taliban authorities allowing its more than 2,500 Afghan staff to return to clearance work, demonstrating that operational access remained possible even without political recognition.

2022-2024: Continued clearance amid growing funding strain;

Demining continued, but the sector faced rising strain from Afghanistan's parallel humanitarian crises, including severe flooding in 2024 across the north, northeast, and west of the country.

January 2025: The United States halts funding; the U.S., MAPA's principal donor, suspended its contribution, triggering immediate cuts to the UN's Mine Action Technical Cell and a sharp reduction in operating capacity across the country.

2025: The Afghan deminer workforce collapses; overall funding for Afghan mine action fell by half over two years, and the number of active Afghan deminers dropped from roughly 15,000 to about 3,000, a direct consequence of the funding cuts.

December 2025: UNMAS warns of program closure; UNMAS representatives publicly warned that the Afghanistan program could close entirely by March 2026 without new donor commitments, placing it alongside Nigeria and Ethiopia as the most at-risk mine-action programs globally.

2026: Record global need, record-low funding; UNMAS leadership described unprecedented levels of active global conflict alongside historically low mine-action funding, with Afghanistan remaining one of the most severely affected and least-resourced programs worldwide.

-Previous efforts-

Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA)

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan was created in 1989 to help identify and clear landmines and other explosive hazards. Since then, large areas of land have been made safer for communities. However, many dangerous areas still remain across the country.

United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

UNMAS supports mine clearance and helps coordinate mine action organizations in Afghanistan. It also helps identify dangerous areas and improve safety standards. Despite this, its work is often limited by a lack of stable funding.

Explosive Risk Education

Organizations have created programs to teach civilians how to recognize and avoid landmines and unexploded weapons. These programs are especially important for children and people returning to areas affected by conflict. However, risk education can only reduce danger and cannot replace the need for actual clearance.

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Afghanistan joined the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, also known as the Ottawa Convention, which

bans the use and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines. Afghanistan has destroyed its reported stockpiles, but clearing mines already left in the ground remains a major challenge.

-Glossary-

Landmine: An explosive device placed on or beneath the ground and designed to detonate when it is triggered by a person, vehicle, or other form of contact.

Anti-Personnel Mine: A type of mine designed mainly to injure or kill people. These mines are prohibited for States Parties under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Anti-Vehicle Mine: A landmine designed mainly to damage or destroy vehicles and usually requiring greater pressure to detonate than an anti-personnel mine.

Explosive Remnants of War (ERW): Explosive weapons left behind after conflict. This mainly includes unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO): A bomb, grenade, rocket, mortar, shell, or other explosive weapon that was used during conflict but failed to explode and remains dangerous.

Abandoned Explosive Ordnance (AXO): Explosive weapons or ammunition that were left behind by a party

to a conflict and remain unused but potentially dangerous.

The HALO Trust: a British humanitarian NGO, founded in 1988, that is the world's largest organization dedicated to clearing landmines and explosives, remnants of war; it is the primary operator carrying out demining work on the ground in Afghanistan.

Improvised Explosive Device (IED): An explosive device made or placed in an improvised way rather than as a standard military weapon. Some IEDs can function in a similar way to landmines.

Mine Action: The overall effort to reduce the danger caused by mines and explosive remnants of war. It includes clearance, risk education, victim assistance, advocacy, and stockpile destruction.

Mine Clearance / Demining: The process of locating, marking, removing, and safely destroying mines and other explosive hazards.

Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE): Programs that teach civilians how to recognize explosive hazards, avoid dangerous areas, and respond safely when suspicious objects are found.

Victim Assistance: Medical, psychological, social, and economic support given to people injured by mines or

other explosive weapons, as well as support for affected families and communities.

Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA): The network responsible for coordinating humanitarian mine-action work in Afghanistan, operating since 1989.

United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS): The UN body that supports and coordinates mine-action work, including clearance, risk education, technical support, planning, and funding.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA): A UN political mission that supports humanitarian coordination and helps assess and respond to explosive threats in Afghanistan.

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention / Ottawa

Convention: An international treaty that bans the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel mines and requires countries that are part of the treaty to clear contaminated land and destroy mine stockpiles.

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW):

An international treaty that limits or prohibits certain weapons considered especially harmful or dangerous. Its Protocol V specifically deals with explosive remnants of war.

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