



Commencement of the explosive hazards clearance activities in Mosul's Old City

Baghdad, 06 December 2017 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has recently been granted access to the Old City of Mosul to assess, survey and clear explosive hazards including improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war to complement the work of the Iraqi Security Forces. This will not only facilitate rehabilitation of infrastructure and assist the stabilization process but also allow for the safe return of displaced families to their homes.

A general assessment of the Old City started on 20 November following a multi-partner technical workshop, which was held in Mosul on 16 November. The aim of this assessment is to get a better understanding of the explosive hazards threat levels in the Old City to advise UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO and UNHABITAT on possible areas that need to be cleared before they start their respective work. This, together with other assessments by the above UN organizations, will also assist in giving the best advice to the Government.

In the first two days of the assessment, over 100 explosive hazards were reported by civilians and other national agencies to the clearance teams on Ninewa Road, the main street running from West to East through the Old City. On 22 November, during the monitoring visit to Al Shifa Hospital Complex, West Mosul, the Delegation of the European Union to Iraq had the opportunity to pass through the Old City via the Ninewa road, on a street that had just being cleared. They were the first members of the international community to access this part of the Old City. Thanks to the generous contribution of the European Union, UNMAS and partners could clear this critical access road.

If the current assessment and clearance pace is maintained and no major events occur, it is estimated that Mosul's Old City will still need many years of clearance before being declared free from the threat of explosive hazards. Clearing explosive hazards from infrastructure is a critical first step before any rehabilitation can commence. With the contribution from the EU Delegation to Iraq, UNMAS and partners will continue conducting clearance activities in the Old City of Mosul and supporting families to return home safely.

Mr Pehr Lodhammar, Senior Programme Manager UNMAS Iraq, stated that “The extent of explosive contamination in Mosul is of a previously unseen magnitude. The generous support from the EU is critical for UNMAS to establish access to Mosul Old City.”

Mr Tomas Reyes Ortega, Deputy Head of Mission at the EU Delegation in Baghdad, who recently visited Mosul's Old City together with an EU delegation, highlighted the key coordinating role played by the EU in facilitating the clearance of explosive contamination in Iraq and the excellent cooperation with UNMAS.

Mr Reyes Ortega said that "the clearance of explosives creates the conditions for a safe, voluntary and dignified return of internally displaced persons who are striving to return safely to their homes", adding that "the EU has recently agreed on a further contribution of 10 million

euros in support of UNMAS' work in Iraq."

Contact

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