**Set to Explode: Impact of Mines, Booby Traps and Explosive Remnants of War on Civilians in NorthernS Syria**

Report from [Médecins Sans Frontières](http://reliefweb.int/organization/msf)

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**Syria: Explosive devices have deadly impact on people fleeing or returning home**

***Retreating fighters booby-trap everything from TVs to teddy bears***

Amsterdam/North Syria – As fighting intensifies across northern [Syria](http://www.msf.org/en/article/syria-medical-staff-and-patient-killed-attack-msf-supported-hospital), explosive devices and mines are having a devastating impact on civilians, warns Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in a [report released today](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/msf-syria-settoexplode.pdf). MSF calls for demining activities to be stepped up urgently to reduce the risks people face while fleeing or attempting to return home.

As the frontlines shift in northern Syria, people fleeing their homes or returning to villages vacated by Islamic State (IS) fighters find a deadly landscape littered with mines, booby-traps and unexploded ordnance. Hundreds of people have been killed or maimed by devices planted in roads, fields and houses, says MSF’s new report “[Set to explode](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/msf-syria-settoexplode.pdf)”, based on the testimonies of MSF medical teams, patients and their families in northern Syria.

“It is extremely dangerous for people returning to their homes,” says Karline Kleijer, MSF’s emergency manager for Syria. “Booby-traps have been planted everywhere – under the carpet, in the fridge, even in children’s teddy bears.”

Over the course of just four weeks in the summer of 2016, hospital staff in the Manbij area alone received more than 190 people injured by blasts from explosive devices.

“Truckloads of injured patients started arriving at the hospital,” says an MSF doctor in Arin hospital. “To avoid the armed conflict, civilians took the roads they considered safe to travel on, but instead ending up in the minefields.”

Jasem, a resident of Jirn village, near Tal Abyad, lives with two mines planted just metres from his doorstep. “I can’t sleep because I’m always worried that one of my four children, or a dog or a sheep, will step on one of the mines around the house,” he says. “When an animal approaches the house, we all run away in case it detonates a mine.”

At present, almost no demining activities are being carried out, either by humanitarian or military organisations, prompting local people to do the job themselves – often with lethal consequences.

“People are risking their lives to make their villages safe,” says Kleijer. “We heard about five local men in Ayn Al Arab/Kobane who volunteered to clear houses of mines to earn some money. None of those men are alive today.”

As long as these areas remain mined and scattered with unexploded ordnance, people inside the warzones will be unable to flee, while those who fled previously will be deterred from returning to their homes.

Until these areas are cleared, the threat posed by such explosive devices and booby-traps will continue to have a devastating impact on people’s safety and livelihoods. At the same time, aid organisations will be deterred from working there, causing yet more suffering to the population of the region, whose health system has been shattered by years of war.

MSF calls on all warring parties and their allies to ensure the protection of civilians and allow humanitarian demining activities to be carried out in northern Syria. MSF also calls on the international community to significantly step up their support to international demining organisations to increase their activities in northern Syria in order to ensure the safety of civilians and the provision of humanitarian aid.