

Section of an interview with **Shirin Ebadi**, the Iranian lawyer and activist who, on December 10 2003, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her significant and pioneering efforts for democracy and human rights.. She is the first Iranian and the first Muslim woman to receive the prize.

by Manal Lutfi of Asharq Al-Awsat, the leading Arabic international paper
<http://aawsat.com/english/default.asp>

Ms. Ebadi:

“...I am also part of another organization, which with the help of friends; we set up to take action against the mines [in Iran].

After approximately 18 years following the Iraqi-Iranian war, Iran still has 4 million hectares containing landmines. These mines are not only on the borders; some are planted inside Iranian cities. On average 2-3 people are injured or killed by landmines every day in Iran. This is not a subject that is discussed in Iran and there are no civil institutions that work for that cause, however three years ago we set up an organization that addresses this issue. Amidst the preoccupation with politics, people forget about the social problems.

The most important activities that we undertake at the center are the exchange of information and we are careful to always announce the number of remaining mines to Iranians and the rest of the world. I am very pleased to say that because of our efforts, the government has decided to increase the budget allocated for removing the mines and took the matter seriously. But that is not enough. Iran must join the Ottawa Treaty which prohibits the use of landmines, whether using or manufacturing them.

The Iranian government not only manufactures mines, it also uses them. What is the use of clearing the land of mines if there is a possibility they will be used again in the future? The reason that drove the international community to declare the use of landmines illegal is that during times of war you know that you are using them to kill the enemy but after a truce has been reached you only kill innocent civilians. The cost of making a mine is US \$2, while removing it costs US \$1,000 per mine, which is why the Ottawa Treaty declared their manufacture and use illegal. The Iranian government should accede to the treaty and ratify their joining...”

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