Landmines Still a Threat on Tajik-Uzbek Border

Author: Kamar Ahror

Mines laid by the Uzbek military over a decade ago continue to threaten lives in neighbouring Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan planted anti-personnel mines along the border with northern Tajikistan in 2000 to deter Islamic militants operating in the area at the time. The mines were supposed to have been cleared subsequently, but that has not happened everywhere.

Much of the border has not been marked out so it is easy to stray across inadvertently. People living in these areas, areas risk life and limb in minefields areas, and being detained or having their livestock confiscated by Uzbek border guards elsewhere.

Since 2000, a total of 76 people have been killed and 81 injured along Tajikistan’s northern border. Yet no demining is taking place in this sector.

Muzaffar Bobojonov, who heads an charity that works with landmine victims in northern Tajikistan, says the lack of clarity about where the border runs has so far made it impossible to pinpoint where mines are located.

Kamar Ahror is an IWPR-trained radio reporter in Tajikistan.

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