

Ongoing Battle: Unwavering Mine Action Endeavors in Tal Kaif

“I looked at my house with tears in my eyes and a broken heart when I left that day. I never thought that I would return safely to my house after the devastating attack we witnessed” said Shaimaa Ali, a mother and head of household in Khawaja Khalil village in Tal Kaif district.



Shaimaa Ali telling her story of returning to her home to UNMAS Iraq staff, Tal Kaif, November 2024

In 2014, the residents of Khawaja Khalil village were forced to abandon their homes and belongings, fleeing for their lives from the violent attacks by ISIL. Three years later, in 2017, Tal Kaif district was finally liberated following extensive military operations.

Following the coordination with the DMA, the village and surrounded areas were cleared by UNMAS Iraq implementing

partner, Global Clearance Solutions (GCS) in 2023. These clearance operations highlighted vast areas of contamination, paving the way for the safe return of displaced families.

The clearance operations had a profound impact, enabling the community to rebuild their lives. Families, including Shaimaa's, could return home safely and rebuild their lives through agricultural activities. The villagers restored their hopes to future, contributing to the development of the local community, and stabilization of the region.



Land farmed after the clearance and removal of explosive ordnance, Tal Kaif, November 2024

Still, the locals face a new challenge: the presence of explosive threats in and surrounding the village. In Ninewa governorate, the majority of civilian casualties after the liberation were caused by EO items, including different types of ERW and numerous improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This is another reminder that the battle against ISIL has not completely ended until such time all EO items have been removed from the ground.

Following 40 years of conflict, Iraq is one of the world's most EO contaminated countries. As of March 2024, there are approximately 2,723 square kilometres of recorded contaminated land across Iraq. UNMAS Iraq, with support from the international donors and coordination with DMA, shall continue its dedicated endeavors to make Iraq free from EO threats.