

PRESS RELEASE
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**HANDICAP
INTERNATIONAL**

Serious accident during a training session in Albania

A form of munition exploded yesterday morning during a training session for deminers in Kukes, north east Albania. An unconfirmed report mentions two dead and ten injured deminers.

Everybody present belonged to the Handicap International Albanian team. All at Handicap International are deeply shocked following this tragic accident, which is the first lethal accident in 10 years of humanitarian demining activities.

At this stage, there is no clear explanation for what happened. Handicap International is working closely with the Albanian authorities and the UN representatives, who were sent on site to investigate the accident.

The accident took place on a project financed by the European Union through the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). The project's objective is to train Albanian deminers, who will work in North East Albania to:

- Evaluate the scope of the pollution by anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance, which threaten civilian populations, notably near the borders between Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro
- Ensure that local deminer teams can work autonomously to clear polluted areas, under the responsibility of the Albanian Mine Action Executive.

Handicap International has been involved in demining activities and training of deminers since 1994. Projects of this kind have been set up in Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, the Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania) and recently in Iraq.

Notes for editors

Handicap International is an international NGO working in 55 countries worldwide. Its mission is to provide support to disabled people and landmine/UXOs victims. The organisation is co-founder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which was awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

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