

# UNAMI FOCUS

## *Voice of the Mission*



News Bulletin on UNAMI Activities

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### SRSR Activities

On 17 March, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ashraf Qazi, concluded his visit to the United Nations Headquarters in New York where he briefed the Security Council. He then traveled to Washington where he was received by the US Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Advisor. He discussed Iraq and the United Nations important role with several think-tanks, including the Brookings Institution, the US Institute for Peace, and the American Enterprise Institute. In Washington, he also met with the Washington Times editorial board and Jim Hoagland of the Washington Post. The reception he received is indicative of the importance the US, and other key stakeholders in Iraq, afford to the United Nations presence in the country.

From Washington, Mr. Qazi traveled to Khartoum to address the Arab League Foreign Ministers on the situation in Iraq. He also attended the 18th League of Arab States Summit in Khartoum, where the subject of Iraq was top of the agenda.

On 27 March, Mr. Qazi called for quick formation of government as violence worsens. He said "Iraq must come together to overcome violence. There is a need, more than ever before, to speed up the formation of a government that will assert respect for Human Rights and the rule of law in an alarmingly deteriorating security situation in Iraq. Sectarian tensions are higher than ever and mutilated bodies continue to appear on the streets on a daily basis." He added that he was appalled by the daily cases of torture, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial executions that have affected all communities and led to the internal displacement of Iraqi civilians.

On 7 April, Mr. Qazi strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the Buratha Mosque which killed more than 60 innocent civilians and caused the injury of at least 160 others.



SRSR Qazi, Arab Summit, Khartoum, 26/03/06

Mr. Qazi noted that this attack and the car bomb the day before, which killed at least 10 people near the Sacred Imam Ali Shrine

in Najaf, were likely to increase the sectarian violence further and undermine peace and stability in the country. He called on political and religious leaders to dedicate efforts to ensure the respect for human rights and the protection of holy sites and places of worship.

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### Statement by SRSR Qazi to the 18th League of Arab States Summit in Khartoum on 26 March 2006

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Your Excellencies, Foreign Ministers of the Arab States and Esteemed Guests,  
Peace, God's Mercy and Blessings be upon you,

The convening of this meeting could not come at a more appropriate time. The daily tragedies that we are witnessing in Iraq demands renewed focus and determination to seek collective solutions, whether among Iraq's political and communal leaders or as here among concerned governments. Despite the achievements that were realized by the Iraqi people and leadership last year, this did not improve the living conditions or security which has seen a deterioration since the destruction of the shrines in Samarra. Moreover, the human rights situation in Iraq is still of major concern to all international and local parties.

In my recent speech to the Security Council, I warned that the situation was not yet that of civil war but that the scale and scope of political violence in Iraq might degenerate into further chaos, if not contained and controlled before it is too late. I sincerely hope that this meeting of the League of Arab States will be seen as a turning point where real help will be offered.

The United Nations is proud to have assisted the League of Arab States in the convening of the National Accord preparatory conference in Cairo last November 2005. The meeting was the first real sign that Iraq's political leaders could, with wise and neutral facilitation, discuss the nature of the problems facing the political process and begin to find common ground. As we are all aware, following the increase in tension in the aftermath of Samarra has been part of a series of cumulatively negative developments. They undermined the promise of Cairo. More importantly these events increased the fear that the political process will fail with dire consequences for the prospects for peace and reconstruction in Iraq.

### INDEX:

- SRSR Activities	1
- SRSR Speech before Arab Summit	1
- Electoral Update	2
- UNAMI HR Bi-monthly Report	2
- Political Developments	2
- Human Rights News	3
- Relief, Reconst & Develop Activities	3
- Political Update	3
- Constitutional Support Newsflash	3
- Brief from PIO	4
- Fiji Guard Unit Suffers 1st Loss	4

This meeting provides you as Arab states with an opportunity to restate some fundamental points of agreement on Iraq. Firstly, Iraq urgently needs a government that is capable of articulating common aspirations and tackling its duties with a shared sense of responsibility. To the fullest extent possible a government in such a crisis situation should seek to govern by consent and win the trust of Iraq's citizens regardless of their ethnic and sectarian background. While fully upholding respect for the sovereignty,

independence, territorial integrity, the international community has a duty to caution Iraq's political leaders that there is no alternative to the creation of a national government. An administration which is perceived as merely a loose collection of interest groups will not succeed and is far below what Iraqis deserve.

Secondly, a new atmosphere is needed in Iraq to establish mutual confidence and a more imaginative political discourse built on demonstrating mutual respect and political flexibility. Reading so much commentary on the current situation one is struck by the appearance of only two alternatives: civil war or the dismemberment of the country which are not desired by the Iraqi people. Thus, an inclusive political process built on objectives which are directed to serve the public national interest should be given priority. These in turn depend on the willingness of Iraq's leaders to see beyond their opponent's identity politics, and to articulate a future vision of Iraq that sees in multilateralism an important balance to serve Iraq's national unity.

Thirdly, at the local and international levels, lack of adequate security, is considered as serious impediments to rehabilitation and reconstruction and disruption to basic services, all have a huge financial and social cost. In such an environment, no assistance programs whether by the UN and World Bank or by bilateral or regional donors can compensate such losses. In order to limit these losses, political violence, criminal activity or the weak links between local and central authorities shall be addressed. When realizing this end, huge gains await for investors and citizens alike.

In order to reach such a peace dividend, all Iraqi parties have to work towards achieving joint national reconciliation instead of local conflicting interests. The constitutional review process may be considered as a good opportunity to reach this end. A wide-base government that realizes fair participation in power and wealth will not be achieved, unless the political process is marked by group competition instead of national programs and ideas. Fourthly, the neighboring and regional states have a special responsibility

to assure the Iraqi people that their involvement in supporting Iraq's political process is intended to ensure the success of the national accord. Cairo's preparatory conference was considered as positive starting point. After the establishment of the national unity government, we hope that the conference that will be held in Baghdad in June 2006 and that it will strengthen the national and regional support for the Iraqi political process. This meeting shall send a firm message that Iraqis have not been abandoned by the international community, that Arab solidarity supports all of Iraq's communities and that support is on offer in helping Iraq move beyond this most difficult challenge. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) stands ready to provide support to these efforts, in accordance with its mandate.

Finally, I would like to offer my special thanks to the Arab League, on the top of which it's Secretary General, Mr. Amre Mousa, for holding this important conference. I also would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to the Government and the people of Sudan for their warm hospitality.

God it is who bestows success,  
Peace, God's Mercy and Blessings be upon you

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## Electoral Update

The Agenda for the Cyprus Lessons Learned Conference is now in the hands of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) board for review. The list of participants from IECI and nomination of co-chairpersons of the conference is ready. The Kurdish Institute for Elections - a Suleymaniya based NGO - will conduct a workshop on the electoral process.

Plans are underway to establish a Library/Resource Centre in Baghdad. A comprehensive report on voter registration from 2004 to 2005 has been finalized and submitted to the IEAT leadership

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## UNAMI Human Rights Bi-monthly Report calls on Iraq's Government to assert control as killings and torture increase

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) issued on 22 March its third bi-monthly report on human rights situation in Iraq. In the report, the mission called on Iraq's Government to urgently assert control over the security forces and

all armed groups in the war-torn country, saying February's attack on a shrine in Samarra had led to a worsening situation, resulting in hundreds of cases of killings, torture, illegal detention and displacement.

"Throughout the reporting period, insurgent activities, including terrorist acts, intensified after 22 February and continue to affect the civilian population," says the bi-monthly report which covers the first two months of this year.

"Allegations that 'death squads' operate in the country grew stronger following the discovery by the Multi-National Forces in Iraq (MNF-I) and the Iraqi Security Forces of a suspicious group, acting within the structures of the Ministry of Interior," the report says. It also points out that "families living in mixed neighbourhoods were forcibly evicted from their homes or left voluntarily because of threats of violence from militias, insurgents and other armed groups," adding that civilians - "especially women and children" - continue to bear the brunt of the human rights violations.

Following the destruction of the Shia Shrine in Samarra, the report notes that "serious incidents of violence erupted in and around Baghdad, in Basra as well as in other parts of the country," and in retaliation a significant number of Sunni mosques were reportedly attacked "and clerics were among those assassinated." "Street clashes and assaults by armed groups continued for days. Many individuals were reportedly detained at improvised checkpoints, or were abducted from homes and mosques," it adds.

The report also says that the Ministry of Interior announced that 249 people had been killed from 22-25 February, figures that "reflect a new high in a trend that has been steadily increasing and provide an important indicator of the absence of protection of the right to life which still prevails at this time in Iraq."

UNAMI is continuing to receive reports that minorities, including Palestinians, Syrians and Sudanese, are still suffering human rights violations, and also that Christians, among other religious groups, "continue to live in fear."

The seven-page report also emphasizes throughout UNAMI's apprehension over the treatment of detainees in Iraq, adding that international law and best practice must be upheld.

UNAMI has repeatedly expressed concerns to relevant members of the Government about allegations of systematic human rights violations in detention centres under the direct or indirect control of the Ministries of Interior and Defence.

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## Human Rights News

The worrisome trend of reprisal attacks against Sunni and Shia mosques has continued. Open sources report that some 30 people were killed on 13 and 14 April in Baqubah, resulting from the attacks on three mosques, one of which was Shiite and two Sunni. General violence, sectarian hostilities and criminal activities continued throughout the country.

UNAMI is particularly concerned about the treatment of minorities and the alarming trend of militias and other armed groups turning to intimidation and killing of ethnic and religious minorities. Because of threat letters, or other types of intimidation, many families have left and continue to leave their houses and are seeking refuge among the members of the same ethnic/religious group.

Members of the Christian community have lodged complaints with the UNAMI on the treatment and intimidation of the Christian community in the North, and reported that in Mosul alone some 400 families migrated from the city to the villages with Christian majority. Four persons of Christian denomination have been reported killed in the course of the month of April.

Impunity and the lack of law and order in certain areas of Iraq lead to armed groups establishing a state of terror under the justification of reinstating "justice." Kidnapping and assassination of 11 Sunni construction workers in Basra on 14 April has been interpreted as a retribution for their company's association with the Ba'ath party. Similarly, three Basra police officers have been allegedly killed by Shia militias over their engagement in the previous regime's security forces. A member of the small Basra Ahwazi minority was kidnapped and then executed as well. The Human Rights Office (HRO) received uncorroborated reports from Basra on identity profiling in schools and marking of Sunni houses.

HRO continued to follow up on a number of cases with Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR), including the case of 17 Sunni of the Al Said group arrested by the MoI in Baghdad on 27 March 2006, and notes with concern the unabated number of honour killings as recently reported by Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Ministry of Health (MoH). The MoH recorded 534 cases of burning incidents since the beginning of 2006.

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### Quotation from UNAMI Bi-monthly Report on Human Rights in Iraq

"Throughout the reporting period, insurgent activities, including terrorist acts, intensified after 22 February and continue to affect the civilian population."

## Relief, Reconstruction & Development Activities

A special UN Country Team – Iraq (UNCT) meeting was chaired by the SRSG from Baghdad via video link, with DSRSG de Mistura present in Amman.

The meeting discussed the UNAMI national peace accord initiative and there was consensus on the need for partnership in the development of this initiative between the political side of the mission and the UNCT.

The UNCT should be involved from the start to enhance the access and capacity of the process through the UNCT's network of interlocutors and national staff. In addition to this, many of the current and future UNCT programme activities have peace building components inherent in them, which could be tapped. As part of the regular updates on activities at the provincial levels, Cluster representatives provided the SRSG with a briefing on UNCT activities per cluster in Najaf and Kerbala Governorates

Donor coordination continues in Baghdad. Informal Donor Coordination meetings have been held regularly, with the last on 30 April 2006. Preparations for regional dialogue on the National Development Strategy (NDS) continued as well. In this regard, UNAMI, with financial support from UNDP, is supporting the Ministry of Planning to bring provincial delegations to Baghdad for discussions on the NDS as well as other centre/provinces issues including resource allocation, budgeting and incorporation of the Provincial Development Strategies into an updated version of the NDS. The consultations are tentatively scheduled to start in mid-May.

The UNCT, with support from the ACCESS Unit, is preparing a set of provincial fact sheets for use with donors and Iraqi counterparts. They will be launched for the IRFFI Meeting scheduled to be held in Amman from 23-24 May.

UNAMI and the UNCT continue to monitor the situation of recently displaced families due to violence or the threat of violence in many parts of the country. The recent increase in population movements represents a worrying trend, and it is estimated by MoDM that 15,000 families (approximately 90,000 individuals) were newly displaced over the past two months, with the most affected governorates being Baghdad, Najaf, Anbar, Karbala, and Diyala. In response, the UNCT has provided over US\$ 750,000 in emergency assistance to some of the displaced families to cover basic needs. Cluster F developed a coordinated initiative for funding consideration by the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund.

Two new international staff recently joined the UNAMI Humanitarian, Reconstruction and Development team. Ms Rosemary Knight took up her position as Deputy Area Coordinator in Erbil. Mr. Christopher Freeman started in his role as Associate Humanitarian Affairs Officer in Amman.

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## Political Update

The government formation is still under negotiation. While agreements appear to have been struck on the principle of a national unity government, the structures and programmes, as well as the choices related to the office of Prime minister are hindering the process. Prime Minister Jaafari still insists that, as the elected Prime Minister nominee from the largest block in the new parliament, he would not withdraw his candidacy. The impasse on the political front with the escalating tension and violence in the country has led to a rapid deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation leading to a growing numbers of internally displaced persons.

However, other coalitions that are likely to participate in the new government are not supportive of the choice of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). If there is no solution to this crisis soon, the issue of government formation is likely to come to the floor of the Parliament according to procedures laid out in the Constitution.

UNAMI is presently conferring bilaterally with the League of Arab States (LAS) on the modalities of a National Accord Conference in Baghdad as a follow up to the Cairo meeting initiated by the LAS last November. Discussions revolve around the timing, agenda, likely participants, and the nature of UNAMI's assistance to the LAS initiative.

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## Constitutional Support Newsflash

The multilateral engagement on "Judiciary in Iraq: Role, Competence and Perspectives for the Constitutional Review and Implementation Process", was held 10-13 April with a visit to the Italian Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and Mafia Commission in Rome, followed by a three-day seminar in Siracusa, Italy (11-13 April). Eighteen Iraqi delegates representing political parties, the judiciary, Bar Association and academia identified issues pertinent to the work of the Constitutional Review Committee, often suggesting textual amendments. They worked on a set of recommendations on issues for consideration by the review and implementation of the new constitution, and agreed to set up a Working Group to continue their debates. The forum will act as a mechanism through which to address some of the important issues raised on the judiciary by the Iraqi constitution. The next event in the OCS's programme of multiparty engagement will be on the fiscal and financial constitutional arrangements, the distribution of resources, and the management of the economy of Iraq in the context of post-conflict reconstruction and development. This is scheduled for mid May in Jordan.

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## Brief from Public Information Office (PIO)

The PIO arranged an interview for SRSG with the American TV channel NBC where Rinhard Engel, the reporter, discussed the impact of SRSG's visit to Najaf on the end of the deadlock in the government formation. Many Iraqi and International media made the connection between the role of the UN visit to Najaf and the political breakthrough in Baghdad, quoting a statement made by the Kurdish leader Fouad Masoum that Al-Jaafari's change of heart followed meetings Wednesday in the Shiite holy city of Najaf between U.N. envoy Ashraf Qazi and both Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Al-Sadr. "There was a signal from Najaf," Othman said. "Qazi's meetings with [al-Sistani] and al-Sadr were the chief reason that untied the knot."

PIO joined SRSG in his visit to Najaf and arranged for 2 encounters with the local media, one after his meetings with Ayatollah Al Sistani, and Al Sadr. SRSG gave a short statement on both occasions saying that he conveyed SG's greetings to all his interlocutors, and discussed the delay in the government formation process reiterating the UN's readiness to assist the Iraqis in every possible way.

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## FIJI GUARD UNIT SUFFERS FIRST LOSS

The Fiji Guard Unit recently suffered the loss of one of its own soldier's on Thursday 16 Mar 2006 when Corporal Sekuri Soko passed away at 0815 hours.



Late Fijian Corporal Sekuri Soko

Corporal Soko was on his way to breakfast when he collapsed and died despite the brave efforts of his comrades and the medical team to revive him.

Corporal Soko, who was 44 years old, was an experienced peacekeeper, having also served in Sinai and South Lebanon. After a short funeral service and traditional ceremonies in Diwan, an escort officer accompanied the late Corporal Soko on his final journey home to Fiji and on Wednesday 29 Mar 2006, after a full military funeral, this loyal son of Fiji was finally laid to rest, at the Fiji Military Cemetery in Suva, Fiji Islands. Corporal Soko leaves behind a wife and three children.

Corporal Soko paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace and his passing will only strengthen our resolve to accomplish our mission — his death will not be in vain. He gave his best, he gave his all and in honouring him we must all continue to do the good work he did.

The Contingent Commander, Officers, men and women of the Fiji Contingent would like to express our deep felt appreciation for the kind words of condolences and assistance rendered to the unit during the untimely death of Corporal Soko — your words of comfort, understanding and comradeship during this sad and difficult time is indeed appreciated by all of us.

May he rest in peace.

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## PHOTOS FROM ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT, KHARTOUM



SRSG Qazi, with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zibari, Khartoum, 26/03/06



SRSG Qazi, with USG for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari, Khartoum, 26/03/06



SRSG Qazi, with Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol, Khartoum, 26/03/06

## UNAMI Focus

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