

UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission



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SG Annan calls for inclusive government to end sectarian violence

Voicing grave concern over sectarian violence in Iraq, Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called for a fully inclusive government and an end to mass detention, torture and extrajudicial killings, pledging full United Nations support for such efforts to bring peace and stability to the violence-torn country.

“As demonstrated by the heinous bombing of the shrine of Imams Al-Hadi and Al-Askari in Samarra and its aftermath, sectarian violence has emerged as a main threat to the security and stability of Iraq,” Mr. Annan states of the most recent bloodbath in his latest report on the country to the Security Council.

“The need for sustained intercommunal dialogue and confidence-building measures to promote national reconciliation is all the more urgent now. The United Nations will continue to do everything possible to support such efforts,” he says, adding that with the recent national elections Iraq has now met all the technical benchmarks of its transition after Saddam Hussein’s regime was ousted by the United States-led invasion of 2003.

He also underlines the need for a dedicated protection force to enable the UN to carry out its manifold political and humanitarian activities in a country where terrorists bombed its Baghdad headquarters in 2003, killing Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello and 22 others, and he calls for a new integrated UN complex in Iraq. After the bomb attack many operations were moved to Amman, Jordan.

Noting that the elections resulted in a new Council of Representatives broadly representative of Iraq’s communities and including a substantial percentage of women, Mr. Annan calls on the parties to “work with resolve towards the early

formation of a fully inclusive Government, which remains a major challenge.”

He stresses that while political facilitation will remain a priority in 2006 for the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), set up in 2003 to help in the transition from Saddam Hussein’s regime, activities in other key areas of its mandate, particularly reconstruction and development, will be strengthened.

“One of the key priorities of the new Government of Iraq will be tangible improvement of the quality of life for all Iraqis,” he says.

“Ultimately, the best way to address the security situation, beyond the training of Iraqi security forces, is to ensure a credible and inclusive political process and rapid improvement in the basic living conditions of the Iraqi people.”

Mr. Annan underscores the imperative of improving the human rights situation, following a UN report on mass detention, torture and extrajudicial killings, stressing that the US-led Multinational Force and Iraqi security forces have a particular responsibility to act in full accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

“There is a need for further measures to ensure that both past and present abuses are dealt with on the basis of the rule of law and in accordance with international obligations,” he writes. “Without an improvement in the human rights situation, the development of mutual trust and national reconciliation efforts will prove elusive.”

On UN security in the country he says staff members remain at risk of becoming targets of violence and their safety remains the Mission’s overarching guiding principle.

“I look forward to continuing engagement with Member States on the practical steps that need to be taken to provide UNAMI with the necessary level of support to fulfill the long-term commitment of the United Nations to supporting the people of Iraq. The development of a new integrated United Nations complex in Iraq will be essential in this regard,” he writes.

SRSB: Iraq’s Political Transition Increasingly Threatened By Inter-Sectarian Violence



SRSB Qazi addresses SC-15/3/06

In his statement before the SC, the SRSB said despite the notable achievement of all the political transition benchmarks in 2005 that had been envisaged in resolution 1546, Iraq continued to face enormous security, political and reconstruction challenges, given which the country’s progress in meeting transitional benchmarks was all the more remarkable.

Those achievements had provided a basis for the next phase of the political process, characterized by a fully sovereign and democratically elected Government.

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He noted, however, that the bombing of the Shia shrine in Samarra on 22 February and its violent aftermath had demonstrated that Iraq's political transition was increasingly threatened by inter-sectarian violence, exacerbated by the continuing insurgency and counter-insurgency, acts of terror and a deteriorating human rights situation.

While sectarian fissures had always been an integral part of Iraq's political history, they had come to dominate and almost define the country's politics and its future prospects. It was fed by growing mistrust between the communities, despite the fact that in their daily lives and individual attitudes towards each other most Iraqis emphatically rejected and transcended that divide. Unless Iraq's political leadership undertook the responsibility to overcome the sectarian divide with the urgency it required, efforts to promote security and strengthen national cohesion would be severely undermined.

He said that the calls by a large spectrum of Iraq's political and religious leaders for restraint and peaceful dialogue, and the quick government action to bring the situation under control, were promising signs of the continuing existence of the potential for peaceful political solutions. The Office of the Special Representative had stepped up its engagement with political, religious and civic leaders with a view to encouraging greater intercommunal understanding, including through the Political Consultative Committee formed in response to the Samarra attack and its aftermath. UNAMI was also urging the Government, political and religious leaders and civil society to demonstrate that they would not be divided and defeated by the nefarious aims of those seeking to undermine the political process, and instead take measures to promote the rule of law and human rights.

Despite grounds for hope, the overall situation remained tense and volatile, and recent developments had made negotiations on government formation more difficult, creating a dangerous and elongated political vacuum, he said.

To prevent the situation from deteriorating further, and to foster an environment in which all Iraqis could discuss the future of their country free of intimidation and fear, all efforts must now be directed at strengthening the momentum of the political process with a view to developing an agreed national compact that would be responsive to the aspirations of all communities.

Emphasizing that Iraq's stability was intrinsically linked to the stability in the region and vice versa, he said UNAMI remained engaged with regional countries and intended to step up efforts in the coming months. Over the past 18 months, the Special Representative and his deputies

had visited Syria, Turkey, Iran, Jordan and Kuwait.

A meeting was scheduled for 28 March with leaders at the eighteenth Arab Summit in Khartoum, where the regional situation as it related to Iraq would be discussed. The establishment of a regional contact group would bring together Iraq's regional neighbours to discuss how to improve stability in the country.

In addition to UNAMI's mandated political activities, it was also seeking to strengthen its activities in other key areas, like reconstruction and development, humanitarian assistance and human rights, he said. To that end, UNAMI was developing a phased approach that would integrate all its activities into its overall political strategy to promote national dialogue and reconciliation. The urgency of activities under that part of the mandate had been demonstrated by the deteriorating human situation. While the Government had taken initial steps, there was a need for more determined measures -- particularly with regard to de facto arbitrary detentions, torture and extrajudicial killings -- in the absence of which efforts to strengthen national cohesion, mutual trust and national reconciliation might prove elusive. The current situation clearly constituted a serious obstacle to the effective implementation of infrastructural and income-generating projects designed to address unemployment and the provision of basic services. If not effectively addressed, ongoing violence would prevent donor programmes from having their desired impact.

In the current political and security environment, United Nations staff members remained at risk of becoming targets of violence, he said. Staff security, therefore, remained UNAMI's overarching guiding principle. If a more robust role was expected of the United Nations in the next phase of Iraq's political transition, there would be a concomitant need to enhance the necessary capacities within UNAMI. One requirement would be for dedicated air assets to assure greater operational mobility and flexibility.

Despite many requests to Member States, UNAMI had been unable to secure the safety and security of UNAMI staff and premises would require additional support. With the Multinational Force moving into strategic over-watch and the Iraqi security forces not yet fully formed, trained and tested, the safety and security of UNAMI staff and premises would require additional support.

SRSB Activities

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSB) Ashraf Qazi Presented the latest Secretary-General's report before the Security Council on 15 March..

Before leaving for the United Nations headquarters in News York, the SRSB

continued his meetings with Iraqi politicians and leaders as part of UN efforts to promote national dialogue.

On March 13, the SRSB called on the country's political and religious leaders to do everything possible to avert sectarian conflict after the 12 March "criminal bombings" in four crowded markets in Sadr City in Baghdad, which killed 64 innocent civilians and injured at least 300 hundred more. Expressing his "outrage" at the crime, he urged the leaders to "rise to the challenges posed by the perpetrators of these killings in order to ensure that their plans to fan the flames of sectarian strife are thwarted." He also called upon the leaders to "redouble their efforts to form a broad based government as soon as possible in order to promote national reconciliation and defeat the violent designs of these extremists."

He visited Amman on 9 March, where many of the UNAMI's operations have been based since the attack on the UN's Baghdad headquarters in August 2003.

Mr. Qazi met with Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Al-Khatib, whom he thanked for facilitating the work of the mission, "without which our operations in Iraq will be less effective."

He briefed the minister on the latest political developments in Iraq, including the convening of the Iraqi National Assembly, formation of the government and efforts to promote national harmony following the attack on a Shiite shrine in Samarra last month and the ensuing rioting, destruction and deaths.

On 2 March, the SRSB strongly condemning the continuing violent attacks in Iraq which are taking an ever-increasing number of civilian lives, particularly those of innocent children, and appealed to the country's leaders to step back from the brink.

Electoral Update

The International Electoral Assistance Team (IEAT) briefed the SRSB on the electoral plan for 2006 in preparation for his upcoming visit to UN New York and Washington. The meeting focused on: preparation for electoral events in 2006; capacity building within the election administration, i.e. the urgently required work on the voter register; and reform issues concerning the election law and the IECI itself. A central focus of the meeting was the interim agenda for the IEAT. A number of proposals were made concerning the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) Board of Commissioners and the voter registry project. Furthermore, it was noted that voter registration models needed to be discussed and decided on in the near future and that a voter registration expert or assessment mission should be deployed as soon as possible. An additional issue addressed was the IECI Board of

Commissioners' concerns regarding their pensions, and separating the issue from all other IECI functions.

The Referendum and Council of Representatives archive is being finalized and placed on the IECI central computer drive in addition to the archive index. In February and March, the Legal, Administration (i.e. Human Resources, Language Services, Transport, etc.), and Finance departments began their respective workshops. In addition, the first draft of the procurement instruction CD was presented to the IEAT Electoral Assistance Division (EAD)/Officer-In-Charge for comments and review.

14 containers of election materials were moved by the MNF-I to the IECI free-market warehouse. Separately, the IECI conducted field trips to Talil and Balad, during which complete inventory checks of all IECI Jan 05 electoral materials were conducted.

Mr. Richard John, the new head of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) team arrived in Baghdad. He will be responsible for coordinating IFES staff within the IEAT, and will ensure smooth interaction between IFES and its international counterpart organizations.

Human Rights News

On 6 March, Iraqi media reported the arrival of 125 bodies in Karbala cemetery. Contacts of the Human Rights Office in Karbala informed UNAMI that 97 of the corpses are likely victims of the latest round of violence (since 22 February), brought from Baghdad and Nahrawan area where recent insurgent and terrorist attacks have reportedly claimed many victims. Reportedly all of these corpses are male and died of shot gun wounds. The rest of the bodies (about 25-30) are from different incidents prior to 22 February, kept in the refrigerator of the Al Hussein Hospital in Karbala. They are reportedly all unidentified victims from the south-central region (Karbala, Hilla, Najaf). Most of the bodies are decomposed and 3 are beheaded. Karbala municipality is assisting with the burial.

On 5 March HRO started the first of a series of four-day seminars to train senior Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army and Iraqi Correctional Service officers in Jordan. Under the title "The Citizen in Uniform", the discussions focused, in the first instance, upon relevant aspects of human-rights and international-humanitarian law governing *inter alia* the use of force. Among the participants of the first seminar for Ministry of Interior (MOI) personnel are the deputy chief of the Baghdad police, the police chief of Falluja, and the Inspector General of MOI, who is the senior member of the delegation.

In Early March, Amnesty international published a scathing report criticizing the legal framework and harsh conditions of detention of Iraqi detainees in MNF-I and Iraqi jails.

UN holds workshop on building national human rights commission in Iraq

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) have organized a workshop on building a national commission to address abuses in the war-ravaged country.

Iraqi Government officials, members of the country's Council of Representatives, civil society organizations and United Nations workers came together in Larnaca, Cyprus, from 8 to 10 March to discuss the body's establishment.

The workshop aimed to lay the groundwork for the building of an independent national human rights commission for Iraq, as provided for in the Constitution approved by referendum last October, according to UNAMI.

In a message to the meeting, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said the establishment of a commission is part of the process of creating a strong national protection system in Iraq, as it could help ensure the provision of remedies for abuses and contribute to the building of a culture of human rights.

Nermin Othman, Iraq's Acting Minister of Human Rights, encouraged those present to air their views for the benefit of all, including the representatives from other national human rights commissions.

During the workshop, participants discussed a range of topics including the independence of a national human rights commission; its core functions, structure and methodology; and best practices from other similar commissions. Representatives from the Afghan and Malaysian national human rights commissions shared their experiences. The participants adopted a Statement of Principles and Plan of Action for follow up work toward the creation of the commission in Iraq.

Political Update

On 16 March, The Iraqi Parliament convened without electing a Speaker. Mr. Adnan Al-Bachchi, the oldest member presided over the session. The political discussions over government formation continued with renewed rancor as efforts to counter Prime Minister Jaafari's nomination for the post of Prime Minister became public. President Talabani has made it known that he will actively seek a coalition, comprised of the Kurdish Alliance, Tawafuq and Allawi's list, to counter Jaafari's ability to become Prime Minister.

The 2nd meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, formed in the aftermath of the Samarra incident, met early in March to continue discussions around joint actions for all political parties. SRSQ Qazi attended the meeting hosted by Prime Minister Jaafari, and is working with the Prime Minister to ensure effective follow-up.

Relief, Reconstruction & Development Activities

Over the past two weeks, the focus to a certain degree of humanitarian, reconstruction and development activities has been the response to the destruction of the Al Askarya Shrine in Samarra and its aftermath. Plans are in progress to have a UN team of experts led by UNESCO, to support the government's technical team.

At the same time that discussions are underway to address the structural damages of the violence, the Emergency Working Group is meeting to determine what contingency planning is needed to address potential widespread displacement resulting from the rising conflict. It is recognised that civil strife is not a humanitarian crisis unto itself, but it has humanitarian implications that the UN and its partners need to assess and determine what, if anything, can be done at this time.

As the UNCT finalises its workplan for the period 2006-2008, they have been asked to keep in consideration the need to focus on new areas for initiatives, particularly Al-Anbar Province in response to the outcomes of the SRSQ's recent mission to the area. This is part of the growing strategy of diversification of impact areas, circumstances permitting, to avoid the potential perception of preferential allocation of resources either geographically or along ethnic or religious lines.

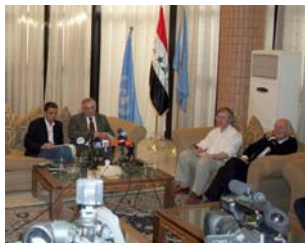
On a visit to Mosul and Erbil, the Deputy Reconstruction and Humanitarian Coordinator led a UNAMI team comprising the Area Coordinator for the North, Senior Human Rights Officer, Political Affairs Officer and the Senior Military Advisor to the SRSQ. In Mosul, the team met with the Provincial officials, the US PRT and embassy representatives, and the MNF-I Commander. The key issue raised by the Governor and his senior provincial officials was the gap between the province and Baghdad especially as regard budgetary allocations and financial support. In Erbil, the team met with the Speaker of the KRG National Assembly, the Minister of Interior, the KRG Coordinator to the UN, the Ministry of Human Rights as well as with UN national staff and the NGO community. Greater UN support to the KRG was sought especially in capacity building of newly merged KRG ministries, technical assistance in the drafting of the regional constitution as well as attracting greater international donor support for the reconstruction and development efforts.

There was a meeting of the Iraqi Strategic Review Board, which considered six initiatives from the UN Clusters as well as programmes from other donors. Although there were requests for some amendments, four out of the six, were endorsed. A fifth was deferred as the relevant ministry was not prepared to present it, and a sixth required significant changes before being reconsidered by the ISRB.

Constitutional Support Newflash

As part of its broader plan of multilateral engagements, an Office of Constitutional Support (OCS)-led study tour to South Africa for senior Iraq parliamentarians, with a particular focus on issues of reconciliation and transitional justice, is progressing as planned. The study tour started on 6 March and was completed on 11 March. In addition, coordination with partners in Baghdad and Amman regarding the organization of multilateral engagements on the area of Federalism and Decentralization, Judiciary and Human Rights has continued. Identified international experts, all of them already associated with OCS as a result of collaboration in the previous phase, have been contacted and informally invited.

In early March, OCS also completed its Report on Activities in Support of the Iraqi Constitution-Making Process (September 2004 - February 2006). The Report was distributed to UNAMI/UNDP senior staff.



Press conference held by the SRSG in Baghdad
5 March 06

Brief from Public Information Office (PIO)

Just few days before the SRSG departed for New York to present the latest Secretary-General report at the United Nations Headquarters, UNAMI PIO organized a press conference at the residence of the SRSG. Representatives of more than 15 Iraqi, regional and international news organizations attended the gathering. The SRSG's remarks during the press conference were widely covered in the following few days.

Following the SRSG's decision to create a media committee to explore possibilities of how the mission could support an independent press in Iraq, UNAMI PIO held an exploratory meeting on 4 March.

The committee consisted of UN Deputy Reconstruction and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Director of Public Information and Spokesperson, and UNAMI Advisor to the Minister of Planning and Development Cooperation in Iraq in addition to two editors from two Iraqi dailies.

The following proposals were discussed during the meeting: establishing a consultative press council that includes prominent press figures, law specialists,

civil society representatives and a representative from the Iraqi Journalists guild; and establishing an Iraqi Media Centre which will serve as a coordination body to assist Iraqi Press and can serve as a training hub.

The participating Iraqi journalists stressed the following: the need for training in the field of financial management of newspapers in addition to practical training in international news organizations; the need for an institute to hold short training sessions (two to three weeks each) on photography, news editing and basic journalistic skills; the need to have Training of the Trainers (TOT); and the need to support Iraqi newspapers through projects that promote a culture of tolerance and the establishment of an editors' syndicate. It has been agreed to hold the next meeting in three weeks and to invite more Iraqi participants.

Fiji Guard Contingent Visit to Erbil

The UN Fiji Guard Unit Commander visited the new UN Compound in Erbil over the period 18 - 21 Feb 06 as part of a UNAMI delegation from Baghdad.

The purpose of the visit was to verify and confirm various aspects of operational and logistic preparations and requirements that would facilitate the proposed deployment of additional Fijian guard personnel to the new UN Erbil compound.

In addition to inspecting, the UN Fiji Guard Unit Commander also paid a courtesy call on the Commanding General of the Zaytun Division of the Republic of Korea Army based in Erbil. The Korean operations staff gave the guests a comprehensive briefing on their activities and tasks.

On Mon, 20 Feb The UN Fiji Guard Unit Commander was given a tour of Camp Zaytun. The tour included Zaytun Hospital, briefs at their Check Points, Visitor Processing Centre and their Vocational Training Centre. The Contingent Commander was impressed with the extent of the ROKA operations, their professionalism and their ability to win the hearts and minds of the local population.

The Fiji Guard Units looks forward to working closely with the ROKA and other UN staff in Erbil.



Fijian Contingent Commander briefed by
Korean military staff in Erbil

Preventing and Alleviating Compassion Fatigue

By UNAMI Staff Counselor

Some of us are exposed to difficult situations on a regular basis. Sometimes, we may find it difficult to find compassion for others. We may feel callous, tired, indifferent, and even angry at other's misfortune or pain. A diagnosis for such symptoms in psychological terms is '**compassion fatigue**' or '**burnout**' as some people refer to it. Others feel the effects of trauma on themselves and experience flashback (sudden remembering), and other symptoms related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD can be addressed and people do recover, sometimes easily, depending on preceding trauma experience. **Secondary trauma or vicarious traumatization** are common with aid workers of all parts of the world.

First and foremost, you **MUST** take care of yourselves as much as possible by getting adequate sleep, eating regular meals, taking breaks, exercising, i.e running, walking and lifting weights, and talking with family and friends often.

Remember, if you don't take care of your own basic needs, you will not be able to take care of others in the long run. If you burnout, who will take your place? Of course in some situations this will be more possible than in others, but you must do the best you can!

Of course in a crisis, many of you are working 7 days a week. However, as soon as possible reduce work week to 4-5 days. What you are doing is so demanding and exhausting, you absolutely need time to rest and take care of basic things.

Carry your resources with you in your mind, and with pictures or small objects that remind you of them. Create comforting images of favorite people, places, and activities. Take mini-breaks frequently to call up these images in as much detail as possible. You need to remember you have a life and pleasures separate from the distressing (albeit valuable) work you are doing.

Accentuate the positive. Rather than focusing most of your thoughts on the tragedy at hand, spend blocks of time thinking about the good you and the other helpers are doing. Pay attention to how many lives you are helping and saving more than how many were lost or destroyed.

UNAMI Focus

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