

UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission



News Bulletin on UNAMI Activities

Issue No. 13

Mar 2007

SRSG Activities

SRSG Ashraf Qazi left Baghdad on 12 March 2007 to attend a meeting at the United Nations Headquarters that brought together the Government of Iraq and the international community together to review the substantive progress made in the development of the International Compact with Iraq (ICI).

Mr. Qazi delivered a speech before the preparatory meeting for the upcoming Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Neighbouring States of Iraq which took place in Baghdad on 10 March. Few days earlier, he met with Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari; the Spokesperson for the Prime Minister, Dr. Ali Dabbagh; and Vice President Adil Abdul Mahdi.

On 8 March, Mr. Qazi met with Dr. Iyad Allawi, head of Iraqiya list to discuss the latest developments on the situation in Iraq. On the same day, he also met with MNF-I Commanding General David Petraeus to discuss the progress of the Baghdad Security Plan.

On 7 March, the SRSG attended a conference on accelerating investment projects in Baghdad, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh.

DSRSG Michael Schulenburg was the UNAMI OIC from 12 to 19 March. During this period, he held separate meetings with the Iraqi Vice-Presidents, Tariq Al-Hashemi and Adel Abdul Mahdi. The DSRSG also met Dr. Rowsh Shaways, an Iraqi parliamentarian and personal representative of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Masoud Barzani, at the Iraqi National Security Council. The DSRSG consulted National Security Advisor Dr. Mowaffaq Al-Rubai'e on the new Baghdad Security Plan and attended meetings with Mr. Ali Baban, the Minister of Planning, and Abdul-Hussein Al-Hindawi, the ECI Chairman. The DSRSG also attended the Iraqi army Officers Conference for National Reconciliation. Additionally, a number of working meetings were held with Iraqi politicians and members of the Baghdad diplomatic corps. On 1 March, the DSRSG paid on a courtesy visit to



SRSG Ashraf Qazi

Vice-President Adel Abdul Mehdi, who survived an assassination attempt a few days earlier.

On 4 March, SRSG Ashraf Qazi returned to Baghdad after he completed his tour of regional countries which included Turkey, Kuwait, Qatar and Iran.

SRSG Qazi Addresses Recent Meeting on Iraq in Baghdad

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ashraf Qazi, delivered a speech before a meeting on Iraq, which took place in Baghdad on 10 March 2007. It was attended by representatives of Iraq's neighbouring countries, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Following is the text of Mr. Qazi's speech:

Mr Chairman, your excellencies,

it is an honour and pleasure to address this meeting – and as the last Speaker before lunch, I have been advised by my team to let brevity be the soul of virtue.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr Ban Ki-moon extends

his greetings, and wishes you success in your deliberations to contribute to the reduction of violence, the pursuit of national reconciliation and an agreement on peace building processes in Iraq.

The United Nations fully endorses the congratulations extended by the participants to the Government of Iraq, and particularly the efforts of Prime Minister Maliki and Foreign Minister Zebari for convening this meeting in Baghdad. In accordance with the decision at the Foreign Ministers meeting in New York on 18 September last year, the United Nations hopes that it will be possible to hold a subsequent ministerial level meeting in Baghdad.

In my recent tour of regional capitals I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to discuss many of the issues under consideration today with your governments. There can be no doubt that each one of Iraq's neighbours has a critical and indispensable role in promoting peace and reconciliation in Iraq. Your collective wisdom, experience, understanding, and stake in the peace and stability of your own region, including Iraq, should constitute an invaluable asset in developing a concerted strategy to help Iraq overcome the several challenges it faces today which, if not resolved, will negatively impact on the region and beyond. This collective and coordinated role should of course be

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discharged in full cooperation with the Government of Iraq as the peace building process in Iraq can only be an Iraqi owned and driven process.

In my discussions with senior officials throughout the region I have been struck by the many commonalities in their views on Iraq, especially their commitment to the unity and the territorial integrity of Iraq. All of them, without exception, have a fundamental interest in enabling Iraq to avoid the chaos and tragedy of conflict and division, the consequences of which would inevitably engulf them. Accordingly, I hope that this meeting will provide an opportunity for all Iraq's neighbours to contribute to avoiding such scenarios through support for a process that reduces violence, strengthens dialogue, increases participation, justly distributes revenues, generates job opportunities, and creates conditions for a major improvement in the living conditions and reduction in the trauma of the Iraqi people.

The United Nations regards the establishment of working groups as an excellent initiative that will enable issues to be discussed in a context and level of detail that has so far not been possible. This should increase the emphasis on practical outcomes and the identification of workable solutions. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq is ready to support these working groups in any way that this meeting may deem appropriate. The United Nations will of course continue its support for the Constitutional Review Process and its efforts to increase awareness of and practical assistance for displaced Iraqis both in Iraq and outside.

As a framework for the collective endeavours of the neighbours of Iraq, it would be useful to agree on a concept of support to the reform and reconciliation efforts of the government of Iraq, and a set of commitments to assist the international partnership envisaged by the International Compact for Iraq. Such an initiative would do much to build confidence in the commitment of the region as a whole to reduce the levels of mutual threat perceptions and mistrust that have acted as barriers to effective regional cooperation in support of Iraq's democratic transformation.

This will in turn contribute to the creation of an environment in which a more inclusive political process can emerge and take root in Iraq. Indeed, this is the only way to ensure a sustained improvement in the security situation and the establishment of conditions necessary for progress towards a National Vision shared by all the peoples of Iraq, as envisaged by the International Compact of Iraq.

Thank you.

Political Update

The main focus of the second week of March 2007 was on the meeting of the Foreign Ministries of Iraq neighbours' – the first event of this kind held in Baghdad since 1990. Egypt and Turkey proposed hosting the next Ministers' meetings and the Iraqi Foreign Ministry will coordinate with the participants on the location, timing and format of the event. The chairman's statement contains recommendations to establish expert working groups on security cooperation and coordination, displaced persons, and fuel and energy supplies. The UN is expected to play a coordinating role. Response to the conference across the political spectrum and within the region was generally positive, although the so-called Islamic State of Iraq sharply criticized it.

The Fadhila Party, which holds the Basra governorship and 15 seats in the Council of Representatives (CoR), announced its withdrawal from the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) on 7 March. Nadim Al-Jabiri, party spokesperson, explained the move as leaving behind the sectarian affiliations that have permeated the country's politics.

On 9 March, Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, the UIA leader, in an address to Shi'a pilgrims in Karbala, criticized the remarks of Amr Moussa, the Arab League's Secretary General, on addressing Iraq's problems though a binding UN Security Council resolution.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani was flown to Jordan for an urgent medical checkup on 25 February. The President's office announced that his health condition did not raise serious concerns.

On 22 February, the Iraqi Presidential Council signed the 2007 national budget into law after it had been passed by the Parliament. Four days later, the Iraqi Government endorsed a new hydrocarbon law. It will be presented to the Council of Representatives (CoR) for final approval. Prime Minister Al-Maliki said that the law is "a firm pillar of unity of Iraqis and consolidates their social structure," because the revenues will be distributed among all governorates according to their population.

On 1 March, the Iraqiya List led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, which holds 25 seats in the CoR and six ministerial posts, stated that it might withdraw from Maliki's government. This announcement came shortly after a number of meetings between different political parties, facilitated by Iraqiya, in pursuit of forming a new, more broadly-based bloc in the CoR.

On 3 March, Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki stated that he would reshuffle his cabinet

within two weeks and resolve the government crisis triggered by the former boycott by six Sadrist ministers in November 2006.

The Army Officers' Conference for National Reconciliation was held in Baghdad on 4 March. It was attended by hundreds of former officers who had been dismissed since the fall of the former regime. The conference is the fourth event of this kind within the framework of the national reconciliation policy announced by the Prime Minister in June last year. Also on 4 March a Foreign Ministers meeting of the Arab League was held in Cairo. The League approved appointment of Tariq Abdul Salam, a Lebanese national, as the new Head of the Arab League Mission in Baghdad.

The Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) was formally launched on 13 February 2007 in a live televised address by General Qanbar on behalf of Prime Minister Al-Maliki. He stated that the new plan would give him sweeping emergency powers, combining the command of the police and armed forces. He announced the closure of the two border crossings with Syria and four with Iran for 72 hours. At full strength under the BSP 50,000 Iraqi police and military and 35,000 MNF-I will be deployed.

On 15 February, Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi, the head of Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) criticized the BSP by claiming that "delays in implementation allowed leaders of some Shiite militias to hide their weapons and slip out of Baghdad without trial". General Caldwell, the US military spokesman in Baghdad, announced on 13 February that Moqtada Al-Sadr had gone to Iran. Top Sadrist leaders denied rumors that Sadr had fled the country. Sadrist bloc in parliament stated that they supported the BSP as long as it conformed to the mechanism proposed by the Prime Minister i.e. the decisions, mechanisms and leadership of the BSP must be Iraqi.

The Plan envisages the creation of 'popular committees' that will be unarmed and tasked with "supporting the BSP". Ahmad Al-Jalabi, the head of the 'committee for popular mobilization' said that six such committees will be created throughout Baghdad. Al-Jalabi described the role of the committees as a link between the security forces and municipal councils. He also said that the committees will be present during raids "to prevent human Rights violations". These Committees are also expected to assist in returning IDPs to their homes.

Iraqi Vice-President Adil Al-Mahdi announced that he would be ready to serve as Prime Minister of Iraq. On 16 February he told the BBC that he had supported both Ibrahim Jaafari and Nouri Al-Maliki but "should there be a change in Iraq, I am still there".

Al-Hayat newspaper dated 13 February 2007 reported that a joint Sunni – Shiite committee was formed in Basra for the protection of Sunni mosques. The decision to this effect was taken at a meeting in the city on 10 February 2007 with the joint initiative of the Iraqi Islamic Party, Association of Muslim Scholars and the Sadrist Movement, calling for the re-opening Sunni mosques in Basra. These were closed in the aftermath of the attack on the Samarra shrine in February 2006.

On 20 February 2007, an allegation of rape by an Iraqi woman on a Jazeera TV channel caused frictions at the highest level of the Iraqi Government. The woman claimed that she was taken from her home to a police station in Baghdad where she was accused of helping insurgents - and then raped by policemen. Prime Minister Al- Maliki described the woman as a criminal and a liar and stated that the three policeman should be commended. He said medical evidence showed that she had not been sexually assaulted.

Constitutional Support Newsflash

The Office of Constitutional Support (OCS) has finalized its reports on the series of study tours and inter-party dialogues for the Constitutional Review Committee, conducted with the assistance and support of the UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS). OCS now is preparing for a period of intensive engagement with the Constitutional Review Committee over the coming weeks. During this period, OCS will present to the Committee a set of concrete recommendations on possible constitutional amendments. With the support of UNOPS, OCS prepared two workshops to be held in Erbil at the end of March, in the context of the Iraqi constitutional review process. The first of these workshops will bring together the Governors and Heads of Governorate Councils to discuss constitutional aspects and challenges of Iraqi federalism, while the second will entail a discussion with Kurdish political leaders and intellectuals on the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and constitutional issues in the North.

At present, OCS is evaluating the outcomes of the last two workshops which were held in Cairo and Dubai along with the study tours to Madrid, Germany and Malaysia. The purpose is to finalize OCS recommendations to the CRC. The general subject areas for these recommendations include the role and structure of the Iraqi judiciary, at both the federal and regional level; human rights; mechanisms for the transfer of power between levels of government; the role of independent institutions in Iraqi multilevel governance, resource sharing; border boundary disputes, as well as the function of an upper house of Parliament in the context of the Iraqi federation.

Human Rights News

UNAMI Human Rights office (HRO) continued to follow the issue of detentions, further requesting information on particular detainees from the Ministry of Human Rights Prison Monitoring Department. This process is lengthy and the frequently results in replies that the requested names were not listed in any Iraqi detention facilities.

The Palestinian Human Rights Association informed HRO of the case of three detained Palestinians' families who have not been able to secure their relatives' release. The families are increasingly worried about the detainees' safety and HRO, together with UNHCR, has followed up with the Ministry of Interior. HRO organized and facilitated a MoI core working group meeting on 8 March, discussing with donors the request by the MoI Director of the Donor Coordination Department.

In other detention related issues, a positive development was recorded in the Kurdistan regional Government (KRG), where the Chief of Staff at the KRG Presidency, Divan Fuad Hussein, announced that a committee comprising representatives of the regional parliament, MoI, Justice and Human Rights, General Security Department and other related institutions to investigate conditions of detainees and prisoners in Kurdistan. Last year HRO reported on an attack on a prison in Basra, where nine prisoners were abducted and summarily executed and called for the protection of detention facilities throughout Iraq. An attack on a prison was recorded again on 6 March, when some 300 'Islamic State in Iraq' militia stormed Badoush prison in Mosul allowing 140 inmates, including 36 foreigners, to escape.

Attacks against the Iraqi security forces as well as against prominent officials appeared to have increased in the past few weeks. With detainee numbers expected to surge, the MOI alleged that it would require space for as many as 6,500 additional detainees in the coming months. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians continued throughout the reporting period.

HRO monitored the situation of five women sentenced to death for terrorism-related crimes and currently held at the Khadimiyah female prison in Baghdad. All have appealed their sentences before the Iraqi Appeals Court, and at least one case was returned to the Cassation Court for retrial. In Erbil, HRO learned about a number of reported honour killings/attempted murders of women. In at least two such cases, the victims filed petitions with a court in the KRG Region.

HRO held several meetings in Baghdad, Amman and Erbil, including meetings with representatives of the Iraqi Bar Association who requested legal refresher courses for their members.

Relief, Reconstruction & Development Activities

A two-day workshop on operational challenges facing the humanitarian community was organized by UNAMI in Amman in late February with over 80 participants, primarily from international and Iraqi NGOs. Consultations with NGO partners and UN agencies continued in the wake of the Humanitarian Planning Workshop, with Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) consultant advice on advocacy, protection and information management. This included a fact sheet for dissemination at the Geneva meeting on 2 March, attended by member states; UN agencies; and partner organizations, as well as representatives from Iraq and its neighbouring states. Participants consulted on the humanitarian situation in Iraq. Broadly recognizing the problem, they called for strengthened humanitarian coordination, including a strategic framework under UN leadership for humanitarian action on Iraq.

In Geneva, DSRSG/HC Jen Marie Fakhouri also met with the Iraqi Ambassador Al-Shibib for discussions on the humanitarian situation and the response capacity of various actors, including the Iraqi Government, regarding planning and resources. The Ambassador pledged his support and promised to convey messages from the meeting to the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.

The UN Country Team made preparations for the International Reconstruction Fund Facility (IRFFI) Donors Meeting in Istanbul on 20 March, including on Clusters representation interaction with donors. Meanwhile, Deputy Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator (DHRC) Guy Siri returned to Baghdad, where he engaged several governmental counterparts and donors on the Joint Priority Action Plan and the International Compact with Iraq (ICI). Both the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning confirmed their attendance at an ICI meeting in New York on 16 March to review progress on the Compact.

The Iraq Reconstruction Forum's (IRFO) and IRFFI's meeting agenda items were developed primarily with the Iraqi Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation. In addition, the DHRC consulted with donor community representatives on the future of IRFFI and its financing.

Electoral Update

After passage of the law establishing the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) at the end of January, much of February was spent waiting for the

Presidency Council to sign and enact the law. Objections to the law were raised by Vice President Adel Abdul Mehdi regarding the retirement benefits of out-going election commissioners, the selection process of new commissioners and limitations on the civil service status of election staff. The objections were ultimately resolved and President Jalal Talabani signed the law on February 26th. The CoR now has 60 days to appoint new commissioners.

Many of the current Independent Electoral Commission in Iraq (IECI) commissioners are not seeking reappointment. They have expressed concerns over the IHEC's independence and the downgrading of their posts from ministerial to deputy minister rank. UNAMI has provided the CoR with advice and recommendations for a broad-based nomination and selection process (with civil society, bar associations and public announcements) for new commissioners. UNAMI is also urging the reappointment, if possible, of some commissioners for the sake of institutional knowledge and consistency. CoR Deputy Speaker Attiya supports the selection process recommended by UNAMI and has requested the CoR to appoint a committee to move the selection process of IHEC commissioners forward.

An inter-agency capacity-building plan for staff and new commissioners is being finalized by UNAMI, UNDP and UNOPS. Two new capacity-building experts arrived in Baghdad, one with UNAMI and the other from IFES/USAID. UNAMI continued to advocate for clarify on the often discussed "referendum on disputed territories, including Kirkuk." No election planning can begin on this election event until there is political agreement on the geographical area to be covered by a referendum, the eligibility criteria for voters, the question to be asked on the ballot and the thresholds for holding the referendum. Similarly, voter registration for such a referendum cannot begin without clarity on voter eligibility and the affected geographical area.

Discussions by to advance the election date of governorates elections from January 2009 (current plan) to 2007 increased with the second reading of a draft "law on governorates not part of regions." UNAMI has provided the CoR with written comments on the draft law noting many gaps and implementation difficulties and urging the drafting of a separate election law of governorate councils. UNAMI continues to advocate for a condition based approach towards governorate elections which includes a functioning IHEC, adequate legal framework, agreements on boundary delimitation, progress on voter registration and budget appropriations. Until this political timeline is in place, the operational timeline (estimated to be six months) cannot begin.

Brief from PIO

UNAMI Public Information Office (PIO) continued its regular daily monitoring of Iraq, regional and international media. Other PIO activities included support for the International Reconstruction Fund Facility (IRFFI) donor meeting which took place on 21 March in Istanbul. Support activities included contacting media representatives in Istanbul, printing Arabic and English information kits, and designating a staff member to accompany the UN delegation. On 7 March, PIO publicized the Secretary-General's statement condemning attacks against Shi'a pilgrims en route to Karbala.

On Tuesday, 27 February the PIO issued a press release on behalf of the SG and the SRSR condemning the assassination attempt on Iraqi Vice president Adel Abdul Mehdi.

On 20 and 25 February, PIO issued a press release on SRSR's meetings in Tehran with Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Motraki and Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Araghchi, as well as a statement by the SRSR, respectively, condemning the Al-Mustansariyah University and the Hay Al-Umma mosque bombings in Baghdad. On 26 February, the PIO Chief met with some Iraqi chief editors of Iraqi dailies. Options for launching a media-training centre were discussed.

Fiji Guard Activities

The Fiji Guard Unit -5 has only got 2 months before they end their six months Tour of Duty (TOD) and handover their responsibility to UNGU-6 in May. Despite all the prior preparation for that handover FGU still commence with all daily activities.

FGU has completed their final rotation of troops in the second week of this month as part of the FGU TOD rotation plan. The troops from Erbil adapted well to their new working environment after rigorous training. Operation Officer from Erbil (OPSO-Erbil), Lieutenant Sukani said that troops had to undergo training with the Bravo Company Standing Order Procedure (SOP) and Technique Procedure (TTP). The Training Officer for Fiji Guard Unit (FGU), Lieutenant Waqanisau also provided the same kind of training with troops that arrived into Diwan.

The Operational Readiness Check (ORC) on the 26th of February was a success and the results appear to show a significant improve in comparison to the results from January 2007. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Moses Tikoitoga was impressed with the overall results, however he said that there was room for improvement and perhaps we can improve on it on the last ORC next month. Platoon number 2, led by Second Lieutenant Kolinisau won the overall results of the 3 day ORC, followed by Battalion Headquarter elements.

UNGU 5 still maintains its ties with other professional stakeholders who operate within its immediate area of interest.

UNGU 5 looks forward to its final ORC next month and most of all the preparation for the medal parade on the 12 of April 2007. UNGU 5 is currently undergoing its preparation for the medal parade in the form of displaying traditional dances and meal and most of customs and culture.



Two Fijian soldiers at UNAMI Headquarters- Baghdad, March, 2007

UNAMI Focus

Is an internal bulletin produced by the Public Information Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. The views printed in it do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

For further information contact e-mail:

unami-information@un.org

Or Adnan Jarrar,

Phone + 962 6 550 4700

Extensions: 2644

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