



UNAMI FOCUS

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The Situation of Human Rights in Iraq-UNAMI's 12th Quarterly Report



Press Covering the Launch of the 12th Human Rights Report

On Saturday, 15 March 2008, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) issued its twelfth report on the human rights situation in the country covering the period 1 July – 31 December 2007. The report recognizes:

- The last three months of 2007 were characterized by a marked decrease in violent attacks involving mass casualties, including suicide attacks and car bombings.
- It notes the enormous challenges the Government of Iraq continued to face during the reporting period in its efforts to bring sectarian violence and other criminal activity under control against a backdrop of political instability and stalled efforts in revitalizing a national reconciliation process.
- It cautions that, "as security improved in parts of Baghdad and other locations, it deteriorated elsewhere with heightened activity by insurgent groups and others in governorates such as Mosul and Diyala." Armed groups and militia continue to target civilians or attack densely populated

residential areas systematically and deliberately, causing horrific suffering.

- It welcomes measures taken by the Government of Iraq and the judicial authorities to improve the handling of detainees, including efforts to ensure more effective judicial oversight and alleviate overcrowding.
- It notes that additional and sustained efforts are needed, however, to address continuing prolonged delays in reviewing detainee cases.
- It recognizes the positive measures taken by Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to address a range of human rights issues.
- It warns that the detention of suspects for indefinite periods without charge remains of serious concern.
- It underscores that the plight of women across Iraq requires urgent measures to combat both gender-based violence, including so-called honor crimes, and to assist women who have been displaced with their children as a result of violent attacks perpetrated by armed groups and the sectarian violence in many parts of the country.
- Acknowledges that the MNF authorities introduced measures designed to improve the handling of detainees' cases by expediting reviews and decisions on releases. However, UNAMI's long-standing concerns with respect to due proc-

ess rights of detainees within the legal framework adopted by the MNF remained unaddressed, and large numbers of juvenile detainees remain in MNF custody.

- It expresses concern that civilian deaths resulting from actions by private security contractors and in the course of military operations conducted by the MNF-I remains a serious issue.
- UNAMI welcomes the Iraqi Government's decision to ratify the UN Convention Against Torture.

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International Women's Day Celebration in Baghdad



International Women's Day Celebration

To celebrate the International Women's Day, UNAMI sponsored a high-profile cultural festival, in partnership with the Iraqi Corporation for Culture and Arts, Al-Mada. The one-day event which took place at Al-Alwiya Gardens in Baghdad, was attended by close to 1,000 participants guests, representing women's associations, artists, academia, government authorities, civil society and the media.

Emphasizing the significant role Iraqi women play in society and the unique challenges and difficulties they have faced for decades, the celebration of the International Women's Day was an occasion to honor those forgotten and silent victims of the ongoing violence in the country. The event highlighted the premise that the wellbeing of Iraqi women is fundamental to Iraq's recovery, as they are the fulcrum of every Iraqi family and have an extraordinary role to play in building a better future for the country.

The many activities on the Day's program included: a drawing competition between 30 Iraqi painters, depicting the current condition of Iraqi women; a photo gallery and a book exhibition on Iraqi women; testimonies by Iraqi women on the adversities they face, folkloric music, dance and sports exhibitions as well as a theater piece.

The program also included a roundtable discussion on the

Iraqi Personal Status Draft Law, followed by the adoption of a series of recommendations for the Draft Law.

1,000 T-Shirts and 1,000 folders promoting the theme "Progress for Women is Progress for All," were printed and distributed to the participants, as well as 1,000 copies of the UN Secretary General's "In depth study on all forms of violence against women" (A/61/122/Add.1), and the Secretary General's press release launching the campaign to end violence against women.

A documentary film and a quadri-color booklet wrapping up the event will also be offered to the participants, as a remembrance that the 8th of March is not only a one-day event in a year.

United Nations Conference on Anti-Corruption and the International Compact with Iraq



Image of All Panel Participants during the Anti-Corruption Conference

On Monday, 17 March 2008, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized an Anti-Corruption Conference in Baghdad, entitled *International Compact with Iraq: Initiative on Good Governance and Anti-Corruption – Conference on UN Convention Against Corruption*. The conference is part of activities to support good governance. The funding for the conference was provided by the European Commission via UNDP.

This conference was the first comprehensive anti-corruption event that took place in Baghdad. Chaired by the United Na-

tions Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, Mr Staffan de Mistura, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Barham Saleh, addressed the audience and briefed them on measures taken by the government in combating corruption.

The keynote address was given by United Nations Under-Secretary General and Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr Antonio Maria Costa.

The Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Barham Salih, accompanied by all four Iraqi institutions working on anti-corruption: the Joint Anti-Corruption Councils, the Board of Supreme Audit (BSA), the Commission of Public Integrity, and the Inspector General, all made opening statements related to the topic of the conference and Gol's effort to combat corruption. Visiting Vice-President of The World Bank, Dr Daniela F. Gressani, and Executive Director of the UN Office of Project Services, Mr. Ian Mattsson, also addressed the conference. Other participants included Members of the Iraqi Council of Representatives and high level representatives of donors in Baghdad.

The two day Conference included presentations and discussions of technical papers on topics such as prevention and institutional development and capacity building; criminalization and law enforcement; and the role of non-state actors: media, civil society organizations and public outreach.

The UN system appreciates the commitment of Iraq to the International Compact with Iraq, co-chaired by Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki, and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, as a significant drive towards integrity in governance accompanied by democratic processes and sector growth. The primary purpose

of the conference lies in support of UN system to strengthen those Iraqi institutions which play a critical role in securing transparency and efficiency in implementing the Compact.

The GoI has taken the first steps towards ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption. As a future signatory to the Convention, the GoI will undertake initiatives in compliance with principles and commitments under the Convention, and will be able to seek UN assistance for its programmes and activities to address corruption.

Emergency Aid Appeal Targets \$265 Million for Iraq



Panel Speakers Addressing the Audience during Launch of Emergency Aid Appeal

Baghdad, 12 February 2008

By Randa Jamal

In light of urgent humanitarian needs and enduring suffering in Iraq, the United Nations launched an appeal for US \$265 million in aid for 2008, at Baghdad's Al Rasheed Hotel on 12 February 2008.

The 2008 Iraq Consolidated Appeal is an action plan to meet immediate priority needs of the most vulnerable Iraqis in the country over a 12-month period. It brings UN Agencies and NGOs together in an overall framework to enable a more strategic and effective response to humanitarian needs.

The event was attended by the Iraqi Government, NGOs and the UN Country Team, which included the World Health Organization. The United Nations officials included the Special

Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. David Shearer. Iraqi officials included the Minister of Displacement and Migration, Dr. Abd Al-Samad Sultan, and the Government's spokesperson, Dr. Ali Al-Dabbagh. During the event, the spokesperson announced the Government's commitment to the appeal and also that it would channel \$40 million towards it.

The UN told the audience that 4 million Iraqis are struggling to feed themselves and 40 percent of the country's 27 million people have no access to safe water. Similarly, the political unravel of the country has displaced over 4 million people: 2.2 million are internally displaced and another 2 million are dispersed in neighboring countries. "We aim to meet vulnerable people's most urgent needs wherever we have access," Mr. Shearer emphasized during the event.

Officials elaborated on the activities they will undertake to ensure that the appeal sufficiently addresses the needs of Iraqis and on how the \$265 million appeal is structured: \$97 million towards food, \$37 million towards shelter, \$32 million towards health, \$26 million towards protection and human rights, \$21 million towards water and sanitation, \$20 million towards education, and \$6.5 million towards agriculture. Additionally \$6.5 million will be allocated to coordination and support and \$20 million for an Emergency Response Fund. Dr. Naeema Algasseer, the WHO Representative for Iraq, highlighted top priorities in the allocation made towards the health sector as: access to essential drugs, prevention of outbreak diseases—especially cholera—and facilities for mental health services.

The Future Elections in Iraq and the UN Role



Press Conference at ICC on 14 February 2008

By Randa Jamal

During a press conference held in the Iraqi Convention Center, on 14 February 2008, the Special Representative of the Secretary General to the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI), Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Iraqi President of the Council of Representatives (CoR) Mr. Mahmoud Mashhadani, and his two deputies, Mr. Khalid Al-Atiya and Mr. Aref Tayfour, announced a process for selecting the remaining eight Governorate Election Offices Directors. This event coincided with new legislation concerning governorate elections, passed the previous day.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Mashhadani announced that elections would be held throughout the Iraqi Governorates before 1 October 2008. He also said that the United Nations will lead the process and ensure that the selection of the directors, and later the elections, are conducted in a transparent fashion. He assured the Iraqi people that this time around the elections would be free and open. He also said that the Iraqi Government would fully cooperate with the United Nations. After his remarks, Mr. Mashhadani gave the floor to Mr. de Mistura to explain how the UN will ensure transparency in the selection process.

Mr. de Mistura emphasized that it is vital that steps are taken to ensure that the Independent

High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is fully prepared for future elections. "We hope that by ensuring transparency and professionalism in the selection that this can be achieved", he added.

Additionally, Mr. de Mistura explained that this work is being conducted by the UN at the request of the Iraqi Government. Following this request, UNAMI has agreed to assist in the identification of qualified candidates. Vacant positions, announced throughout the country via newspapers and radios, are available for the following governorates: Baghdad (two offices), Basra, Diyala, Karbala, Najaf, Ninawa and Wassit. Qualified candidates are encouraged to apply for these positions through the UNAMI website, which includes the Terms of Reference for the vacancies, applications and how to submit them. Once candidates have applied, they will be evaluated by international electoral experts. A list of qualified candidates will be submitted to CoR and IHEC for the final stage of selection.

Mr. de Mistura responded to questions from the press mostly on the process, technical expertise and the role of the United Nations. He emphasized how transparency, professionalism and Iraqi institution-building will allow the commission to be fully operational for the upcoming elections.

Update on the Process of Selection of GEOs since the Press Conference of 14 February 2008

From Electoral Office

Since the press conference held on 14 February 2008, the identification of qualified candidates for the positions of Governorate Election Office (GEO) Directors

is underway. The positions are for the following governorates: Baghdad (2 offices), Ninawa, Karbala, Najaf, Diyala, Wassit, and Basra. More than 800 valid applications were received between 14 February and 28 February 2008. The applications were vetted and UNAMI convened an expert panel to short list candidates for the COR to select five to send to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC).

When this process is fully complete, the short-lists will be sent from the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to the office of the Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives (CoR). Then, CoR will have 10 days to submit five candidates from each of the UNAMI short-lists to IHEC. The IHEC will then choose one successful candidate from the five submitted by CoR and will announce a provisional appointment. A seven-day period will follow where the IHEC Board will hear complaints based on firm evidence as stipulated in its internal rules of procedure.

Erbil Hosts a Roundtable on the Iraqi NGO Law



UNAMI-UNOPS roundtable on the Iraqi NGOs law

By Sabah Abdulrahman

In light of the UN Security Council Resolution 1770 and in line with its

continuous assistance to the people of Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Office for Project Services

(UNOPS) jointly organized a Roundtable on the draft Iraqi NGO Law, which was held in Erbil from 1 to 3 March 2008.

Representatives of civil society organizations from Kurdistan Region and the rest of Iraq, as well as key policymakers from the three executive, legislative and judicial authorities in Iraq and Kurdistan Region participated in the 3-day roundtable entitled "Towards an Enabling Legal Framework for a Strong Civil Society in Iraq". The European Union provided the funding through the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG ITF).

Three experts from Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco as well as others from the UN participated in the roundtable as facilitators, and helped the Iraqi stakeholders with examples and references from contexts similar to that of Iraq, as well as with envisaging solutions to controversial issues. UNAMI's Head of Office in Erbil Mr. Mark Rutgers opened the first session with a short speech underlining the importance of a legal framework for the work of civil society organizations and renewed the UN commitment to provide the Iraqis with the technical assistance needed on this important aspect of communal life and on other issues. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister of Region for Civil Society Affairs, Mr. George Mansour and the KRG Coordinator for UN Affairs Dr. Dindar Zebari also delivered opening remarks before the start of the working sessions.

The working sessions were mainly devoted to discussing key issues that remain controversial, as presently addressed in the draft law, as well as the specificities of the Iraqi context. It also indicated a common de-

termination, particularly from the NGOs representatives, to pass this important law as soon as possible.

At the end of the roundtable, the participants worked on formulating a shared declaration of principles to be used by the Iraqi Ministry of Civil Society in fine-tuning the draft law before presenting it to the Council of Representatives for endorsement.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres, Visits Iraq, Jordan and Syria



UN High Commissioner for Refugees (in the middle) holding a press conference following his meeting with PM Nouri al-Maliki

By Randa Jamal

During a week-long mission from 11 to 18 February 2008, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres, visited three countries—Jordan, Iraq and Syria—to highlight the issue of Iraqi refugees and to put it at the forefront of Iraq and its neighbors agenda. He also appealed to the international community to provide urgent support to Iraqi refugees and to increase the number of places for resettlement.

On his first stop, in Jordan, the High Commissioner held talks with the Jordanian King, in addition to several government officials, on the status of Iraqi refugees. A 2007 survey conducted by the Norwegian Research Foundation (Fafo), under the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees

(UNHCR), estimated that between 450,000 and 500,000 Iraqi refugees are in Jordan. Jordan pledged that despite the challenges facing the country, it will continue to host refugees until conditions in Iraq, including security, improve sufficiently to permit their return. The Minister of Planning, Mr. Suhair al-Ali, emphasized that over the last three years the cost of hosting Iraqi refugees is approximately 1.6 billion JD for infrastructure, education and health facilities.

In Syria, Mr. Guterres discussed with President Bashar Assad and Vice President Farouq al-Sharaa an increase in funding and generating further mechanisms to help the Syrian government cope with an influx of Iraqi refugees. Noting that 70,000 Iraqi refugees have expressed their wish to resettle in the countries they currently take refuge in, Mr. Guterres asked that the host countries increase their resettlement options.

In Syria alone, the Refugee agency and other UN agencies estimate that the number of Iraqi refugees is around 1.5 million. According to Syrian officials the influx of refugees has drained the country's education, health and housing infrastructure, incurring an estimated annual expenditure of \$1.6 billion. This phenomenon has pushed the Syrian Government to appeal for international assistance and has also led it to impose visa restrictions on Iraqis who wish to enter Syria.

According to a January 2008 UNHCR report on Iraqi refugees in Syria, there are more than 19,000 individuals—or 1 in 5 Iraqis—who were victims of torture and/or violence in their homeland. Mr. Guterres said, "Some Iraqi families will not be able to go back to their country because they have been tortured or have family members

who were all killed or because of some other situation". He added, "The number of resettlement opportunities for the most vulnerable are very important."

Consequently UNHCR and its partners are prioritizing psychosocial support, such as providing regular referrals to psychiatrists and mental health institutions. Financial assistance for funding this initiative was generated through an appeal for \$261 million to aid Iraqis, including refugees and IDPs. However, a notable problem is the scarcity of mental health institutions, including psychiatric and social support services, not only in Syria, but in the region overall.

Mr. Guterres indicated that he received assurances from both governments that they would not push refugees to return to Iraq and that they would respect their right to asylum. His comments to the international community stressed the need for it to give more support through programmes that could assist Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. He emphasized that until now, international assistance has been insufficient to meet the challenges facing the host countries.

During his two-day visit to Iraq, Mr. Guterres held several meetings with Iraqi officials, including a meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. Nuri al-Maliki. The high commissioner provided an update on his mission's findings on the region, including the results generated through his meetings held in Jordan and Syria. He also addressed the issue of Iraqi refugees. While a few had requested resettlement, a majority expressed pride in their Iraqi identity and their strong desire to return once circumstances improve. Mr. Guterres emphasized a stronger dialogue between the Iraqi Government and its

neighboring countries, mainly Jordan and Syria.

In return, the Prime Minister expressed his gratitude for all the efforts expended thus far by UNHCR. He also said that he would like UNHCR, jointly with the government, to work towards returning refugees. He has informed all his ambassadors that they must assist all Iraqis in the countries where they serve. He said, "Our specific orders to all our ambassadors are that they must provide all Iraqis with passports, even to those who committed atrocities while residing in Iraq, to ensure that they are not subjected to humiliation."

In responding to Mr. al Maliki's request on facilitating returns, Mr. Guterres agreed to carry out a joint assessment on the feasibility of return and the conditions on which refugees could return. He indicated that the mechanisms of joint assessment are already underway and that the government should lead it. The High Commissioner also updated the Prime Minister on developments relating to UNHCR's plans to expand in Iraq where the bulk of the work lies.

During the joint press conference, held with the Foreign Minister Hosheyar Zibari, both officials responded to questions from the press. Both of them expressed their willingness to cooperate with one another, particularly on the joint assessment that will be led by the Iraqi Government, and on improving humanitarian assistance. Mr. Guterres highlighted safety and social re-integration as key issues concerning refugees who choose to return, while resettlement for certain Iraqis should remain an option, particularly for those who have been subject to traumas and are vulnerable. Additionally, Mr. Guterres stressed that while he supports

the return of Iraqi refugees to their country, circumstances are not yet suitable. Repatriation, he said, should depend on the restoration of security and stability in Iraq.

Mr. Guterres's mission to the region captured three issues relevant to Iraqi refugees: increased international attention to their plight; meeting the needs and livelihood of refugees in the host countries so that they are not forced against their will to return; and a joint assessment on the feasibility of return.

Iraqi Parliamentarians visit Northern Ireland



Iraqi Parliamentarians in Northern Ireland

2-8 March, Belfast, Northern Ireland

From the period 2-8 March 2008, the Office of Constitutional Support (OCS) jointly with United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS), with funding from the European Commission, organized a study tour to Northern Ireland for some of the members of the Constitutional Review Committee. The delegation was led by the Chair of the Constitutional Review Committee, Sheikh/ Humam Ham-moudi, and included the Chair of the Regions Committee, Mr. Hasheem Al Ta'ee, Vice Chair, Ms. Nada Al-Sudani, and the leader of the Sadrist bloc, Mr. Nassar Alrubaye. The diversity of Iraqi participants was prevalent in sect and ethnic background: Shia and Sunni Arabs,

Kurds, Christian Assyrians and Turcomans.

The delegation held several meetings: with the First Minister, Reverend Ian Paisley (DUP), Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness (Sinn Féin) and with Junior Minister, Hon. Jeffery Donaldson MP. Additionally, meetings were held with the British Council, representatives from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Human Rights Commission, Civil Society representatives, and major political parties among others.

In addition to concentrating on constitutional and legal issues, Iraqi Parliamentarians were provided with scenarios on reaching political consensus that could be applied to the Iraqi work process of review of the constitution. Irish counterparts emphasized the need for an inclusive process in the negotiations, which previously led to a peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland. The Iraqi counterparts also concluded that there are no alternatives to resolving disputes; only by dialogue they could be resolved. Thus it is important to include civil society and militias or armed groups in the negotiations process. Crucial to the process are the commitment to the principles of non violence, respect for human rights and institutional reform, guided by recognized international standards.

OCS will continue to assist the Iraqi Parliamentarians in facilitating a series of multi-party dialogues and roundtables to enhance the process of communication between political actors. This would lead to an improved understanding, in the exploration of options available, leading to consensus-based constitution making process.

Conference on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights



Conference on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights

After a series of discussion with representatives of the Government of Iraq, HRO organized a four-day seminar entitled "The Protection of Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism" in al-Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad. The seminar, which lasted from 9 to 12 March, was organized with the support of UNOPS and UNODC.

The seminar, designed for all actors engaged in combating and adjudicating counter-terrorism, created a valuable opportunity for discussion of existing counter-terrorism practices and legislation, best practices in addressing terrorism while protecting human rights, in the light of a human rights

perspective of counter terrorism measures as established by the various relevant United Nations instruments.

The seminar was opened by UN Special Representative of the

Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, as well as the Minister of Human Rights, the Minister of Interior and the Deputy Minister of State for National Security.

Experts from the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch and from the UK Police Force made presentations and engaged the participants in the discussion on investigation of terrorist acts, the UN global legal framework against terrorism, rule of law, due process and fair trial in the prosecution of terrorist offences within the Global Legal Framework Against Terrorism and the compatibility of the Iraqi anti-terrorism legislation with the Global Legal Framework. A representative of the Minister of Interior Counter-Terrorism Directorate delivered a presentation on the Iraqi experience in

combating terrorism. The Director of the Strategy and Planning in the

Counter-terrorism Bureau presented the recently approved Counter-terrorism Strategy for Iraq during the seminar.

The seminar was attended by mid-and high-level officials of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, members of Parliament, judges, prosecutors and defence counsels involved in crafting and implementing

policies to combat counter-terrorism and adjudication of terrorism-related offences. In total, there were approximately 80 participants attending all the sessions. On the last day, the participants agreed on a set of recommendations, committing to taking steps towards the ratification of the United Nations International Conventions and Protocols on Counter-Terrorism, the improvement of the current anti-terrorism legislation and the continuous provision of support and implement capacity building activities.

UNAMI Focus

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