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Commemoration, 5th Anniversary of the UN HQ Bombing in Baghdad



UNAMI commemoration of the 5th anniversary of the atrocious attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad

By Randa Jamal

A commemoration, organized by UNAMI (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq), was held on 13 August 2008 in Baghdad, marking the 5th anniversary of the tragic bombing that struck the United Nations (UN) on 19 August 2003 at the Canal Hotel. A special music segment, composed by Iraqi oud musician Sami Naseem, was performed, including a poem delivered by an Iraqi poet Hamza Alhilfi. The music piece entitled *Blue Bird* carried the theme of the plight of the

victims, who fell at outset of the atrocious bombing, with their strong instinct for humanitarian change. In highlighting the humanitarian nature of the UN, the piece, along with the Arabic poem echoing throughout UNAMI's parameters, transcended a global message of solidarity particularly between the Iraqi people and the UN towards a stable and secure Iraq.

Inspired by this solidarity, both UN and Iraqi top officials delivered short speeches underlining the importance of this commemoration.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Mr. Staffan de Mistura, said, "On this special occasion, we are sending a signal that the UN is back to stay, the UN is back to increase its efforts, and its activities so long as the Iraqis require our assistance." On the victims who fell in August 2003, Mr. de Mistura said, "the lives of our colleagues and friends were not lost in



Paying Tribute to the Victims of the Bombing of UNAMI HQ in Baghdad

vain and in fact we are proud and privileged to continue carrying their flag, the UN flag and the banner and purpose of this mission." He concluded his remarks by saying, "This is why we are here today, praying for their memory because they are the stimulus for us to move ahead."

The government of Iraq representative, Gorges Bakoos, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq, emphasized the scale of impact the bombing had on Iraq entirely. "The attack against the UN was painful for all Iraqis as the martyrs were carrying out their humanitarian mission in relieving the Iraqi people from sufferance", he said. In light of the annual event, he added "We stand here today, commemorating them, honoring them, and respecting them for their role in promoting peace towards a secure and a stable democratic Iraq." Regarding UNAMI's role in Iraq, the representative said, "We, the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people, appreciate the role of the UN and this painful event didn't stop them from working in Iraq. On the contrary, the UN expanded their role in the

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country." In his concluding remarks, the advisor expressed his appreciation for the role of the UN and the role of the SRSG in assisting the Iraqi people.

The first in the series of several events held (including New York and Geneva), the commemoration in Baghdad was held a week in advance of the annual anniversary. The Baghdad commemoration was particularly significant because it included survivors of the tragic bombing and was held in the Iraqi capital.

In full solitude, and in her own words, an Iraqi woman who survived the atrocious attack stated:

"During the event of last week, I was very sad, on the verge of tears, I felt like it just happened. During the bombing, I was trying to hold myself together, not to collapse into pieces, I felt as if the world is coming to an end. I was heavily bleeding, I had a clue where my injuries were since the blood was pouring from top to bottom. I was soaked with blood. It was very hot too. It was very difficult especially since I lost two of my girl friends and others that I got to know through work. Our 10 meter office was completely destroyed and the 3 meters where I sat are the only area that remained. I lost my glasses, and my chair was spinning at the rate of 5 Kilometers per second; it was horrific and yet it feels like it was yesterday. In order to salvage the injuries I sustained, I got 30 stitches throughout the various parts of my scalp. Without an anesthesia, and due to the lack of medical supplies in Baghdad, the stitching was extremely painful but nothing in comparison to the experience of going through the bombing. I was six months pregnant at the time and lost my baby and of course this drastically changed my life in every-way possible."

Despite this horrific experience, the 38 year-old UN staff member said, "The minute I walked out of the bombing, I looked up and saw the UN blue flag, still flying on top of the remains of the Canal Hotel, instantly a sharp sense of hope and outlook to the future stroked me". "I take pride in working for the UN and if anything this experience made me stronger and increased the sense of pride I take in working for the international organization", she concluded.

Government of Iraq and the United Nations Sign a Cooperation Agreement



DRSG Shearer and Planning Minister Baban Shake hands after Signing Cooperation Agreement

The three year cooperation agreement, signed on 13 August by the Iraqi government and the United Nations, supports Iraq's reconstruction, development and humanitarian needs. The agreement is perceived as a major step towards improving the situation in the country and promoting greater cooperation between the two.

The strategy aims at promoting the government's ownership and taking charge of national reconstruction and development at all levels. In line with this, Planning Minister Baban at the ceremony in Baghdad said, "This represents an important step in Iraq's recovery process. It brings the whole UN organisation together in partnership with Iraq and its people, to reduce poverty, foster growth and consolidate democracy in our country."

As for the Deputy Representative of the Secretary General and Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs, David Shearer who signed the agreement with Baban, he emphasized, "We will now be able to consolidate achievements and shift focus, helping Iraq to mobilise its substantial capacity and resources, while we work to meet outstanding humanitarian needs".

The agreement will be funded through three primary mecha-

nisms to achieve its key economic and social goals: substantial cost-sharing by Iraq's government; international support through the Iraq Trust Fund; and the UN humanitarian appeal.

The agreement contains development and humanitarian solutions for better essential social services such as education and water, and protection for highly vulnerable groups. It will also focus on creating more jobs by boosting the country's private sector and building stronger and more accountable systems for governance.

Hoping for change, Basil al-Azawi, head of the Baghdad-based Commission for Civil Society Enterprises, an umbrella group of over 1,000 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), said "All Iraqis are going through a difficult deteriorating humanitarian situation with poor public services such as drinking water, sewage networks and electricity, coupled with damage to their environment". He added, "What has been offered so far by the Iraqi government and the international community is only simple help, and meets no more than 2% of real needs, in our view." In concluding, he noted that the Iraqi government and international community had disregarded these needs.

WHO Holds a four-day workshop for Iraqi Health Programme Managers



WHO Workshop Participant Presents Findings of Group

By Randa Jamal

A workshop on the “Logical Approach to Managing Programmes” was jointly held by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health (MoH), from 27-30 August 2008 at Al-Rahseed Hotel in Baghdad. The Health Organization targeted approximately 25 participants—programme health managers who represent the majority of Iraqi governorates—in an effort to enhance their knowledge and skills in the management of WHO collaborative programmes. Dr. Sussan Bassiri, Coordinator for Programme Planning, Moni-

toring and Evaluation, said, “This workshop aims at enabling us and our counterparts to reach a common understanding on programme management and monitoring of our joint programmes in Iraq. Additionally it is a good exposure to management techniques that are useful to our daily work”. This methodology includes setting and measuring programme targets.

The Coordinator elaborated on the objectives of the workshop by sharing tangible examples related to health issues in the various governorates. For example, she explained the surveil-

lance system, which supports case reporting in a timely and efficient manner, the detection of illness and communicable diseases. “Although this is the responsibility of the MoH”, Dr Bassiri explained, “We technically support them in the process of analysis, provide backstopping and laboratory logging.”

Participants from various medical departments welcomed the workshop’s focus on logic and strategic planning and the problem-solving approach it offered to daily management problems. As one participant observed, “This workshop is helping us in scaling up our skills to reach international standards and the opportunity to view issues from different prisms.” To support this approach, the workshop presented case studies on various phenomena that impact society, such as the eradication of poverty, to small groups of participants, who had to develop targeted recommendations.



Participants Discussing Workshop during Break

In general, the participants felt this workshop effectively enhanced their skills and helped them to set goals. The Representative of WHO in Iraq, Dr. Naeema Algaseer, said, “This will facilitate common language of planning and programming with our Iraqi counterparts. The transfer of knowledge and skills are critical for many health managers in general.” She added, “And for planning skills gained by the participants, they are life skills and can be applied to any programme.”

The WHO, in its joint efforts with the MoH and other stakeholders, continues to carry out various activities throughout the country.



Dr. Bassiri Presenting During Workshop on Assumptions and Risks

UN and Iraqi KRG Mark Youth Day through Chess Tournaments



A UN staff Member and Iraqi Kurdish Chess Player Mark the International Youth Day around Chess Boards

By: Sabah Abdulrahman

On the occasion of International Youth Day, UNAMI hosted in its Erbil Regional Office a friendly chess tournament on 12 August 2008. The KRG Ministry of Sports and Youth (MoSY) initiated the activity and provided chess boards and related accessories for the tournament. The MoSY team of 8 chess players and the accompanying senior ministry officials were received by the Head of UNAMI

Erbil Regional Office (ERO/HoA) Mr. Mark Rutgers and other UN staff who stayed after work hours to encourage their colleagues.

Mr. Rutgers welcomed the Ministry officials and players in an opening speech that echoed the Secretary-Generals' address on Youth Day. The UNAMI Erbil office also disseminated copies of the SG's speech, in both Arabic and English, to the tournament participants. "As the Sec-

retary-general said today, on this occasion, we cannot change the climate, but we can definitely change the way the world looks at the youth," Mr. Rutgers said.



Erbil UNAMI Head of Office & KRG Minister Taha Barwari About to Distribute Awards to Chess Players

Out of the eight matches, UNAMI players won two, lost five and the last one was announced a draw. "Regardless of who wins, we all should consider ourselves winners for the mere fact that we are here together to mark the *International Day of Youth* in a friendly atmosphere far from war and mortar shells," Mr. Rutgers said right before the start of the games. "By accepting the Ministry chess challenge, we as the UN family here in Erbil want to renew our commitment to assist the people of Iraq under SCR 1770 and also to show that we do this with passion and dedication," he added.

The KRG Minister of Sports and Youths Mr. Taha Barwari attended the last part of the activity during which prizes were distributed to the first and second winners, as well as special gifts for all the players. UNAMI also distributed mugs and organizers, carrying the UN emblem and a transcription that marked the occasion, to all the participants.

Iraqi Musician Volunteers at her Church and Practices in her Spare Time

By Randa Jamal

Annie, a 28-year-old Iraqi Armenian living in Baghdad, takes pride in her work as a musician with the Iraqi Orchestra and as a frequent volunteer at her church. Like the rest of her family—her great grandfather, a well-known expert craftsman, was brought to Iraq to build mosques—Annie was born and raised in Baghdad. More than 50% of the Armenian Iraqi population lives there, though in 2003, many had to flee because of deteriorating security. None-



The Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra Performance on 21 May 2008, in which Annie played her Violin

theless, Annie is proud of her Iraqi identity: she aspires to a safe and secure Iraq and is helping to grow a new generation of musicians.

A woman among a male majority, her passion for music, her black bouncy curls and charismatic personality distinguish her from other Iraqi orchestra members. She plays *Al Kaman* (Violin) and practices daily for



Violin (Al Kaman), Annie's Instrument

several hours. Annie credits her parents, who are not musicians, for pushing her to pursue her dreams of becoming a musician. At the age of nine, she says, "They put me through private lessons even when things deteriorated under sanctions, with very little money and with a dethroning Iraqi dinar." Even with great distances from tuition and full time jobs, both parents would find the time to take their daughter to various destinations for lessons and rehearsals.

But Annie exudes sadness when she talks about her talent and passion for music and the several teachers who inspired her passion for violin. Like everyone else in Iraq, the sanctions took a toll on her life. "Every time I would find a teacher that I would adjust to, they would leave the country because of the difficult circumstances they faced." She then recalls their names one by one: "teacher Hassan, teacher Zayin, teacher Nishan, and many others, we would start to practice, and then they would pick up and leave".

After the US led invasion of 2003, Annie had to reshuffle her priorities. Before the war she worked at a lab from early morning until around 3:00p.m. Then she would go home and rest for a couple of hours before practicing with fellow musicians until late at night. As the security of war-ravaged Baghdad deteriorated and became unstable, late night practice was no longer an option. So instead, she and her fellow musicians practiced during the day in order to sustain their talents and skills. This new arrangement forced Annie to choose between keeping

her lab job and practicing her instrument. With little hesitation, Annie traded her job for the practice of *Al Kaman*.

In addition to Annie's practice with the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra, she teaches violin at the *Baghdad Music School*. Annie says that she enjoys contributing towards producing a new generation of Iraqi musicians who can emphasize Iraq's art and culture. Annie also volunteers at her church—something she had been doing since before the war—providing Armenian language classes to children, and teaching handcraft and Christian studies. Because of her role there, in 2006, she was asked to lead, manage, teach and conduct the practice of the children's choir. Annie says, "This is a request I couldn't reject since the person who carried out this job had to leave the country". Two years on, it looks like Annie has found a place for her passion. Despite Annie's experience of teachers packing up and leaving, she has no intention of doing so.

Opening the doors to Holy Najaf

The first UN Country Team mission explores potential for partnership

A high-level delegation of UN Agencies visited Najaf this month, led by the Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General, David Shearer. The mission - one of the first of its kind in south/central Iraq - opened up new avenues for cooperation with one of Iraq's most progressive governorates.

The mission delegation saw a clear opportunities for development in Najaf's security record, growing resources and governance reforms. Najaf's Governor

and Provincial Council warmly welcomed the UN delegation and requested technical assistance and any other capacity-building support the UN could provide.

"Najaf's leaders told us they want to realize the governorate's potential and start investing their own resources wisely and sustainably in recovery," Shearer said. "The UN can support this goal, and we will be putting an

action plan in place over the coming months."

Security for the UN delegation inside the city of Najaf was fully and expertly provided by the Iraqi Security Forces, auguring well for future UN missions to the region.

Looking ahead, Shearer said that Najaf had the potential to support international UN staff on

a permanent basis. This would be a positive step on the road towards the UN's planned expansion of its presence across the country. Another UN Country Team mission to Najaf is planned for the coming weeks.

UNAMI Focus

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