



UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission

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The Iraqi Parliament Passes Provincial Election Law



The Iraqi Council of Representatives in session

By Randa Jamal

Following a prolonged gridlock, the Iraqi Parliament passed the Provincial Election Law on September 24, 2008. The next step is for the law to be approved by the three-person Presidency Council, headed by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. Following approval, provincial governorate elections will be held, according to the law by the end of January 2009, in fourteen of the eighteen Iraqi Governorates.

Legislators agreed to form a parliamentary committee for the four remaining governorates, particularly Kirkuk, and to present recommendations to the Parliament by 31 March 2009. They also agreed to establish a committee that will closely work with the United Nations (UN) to ensure representation of Christians and other minorities in Iraq. The law specified that 25% of the representatives must be women and also stated that campaign material cannot be posted in mosques, churches or government buildings.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has played a significant role in brokering an agreement among all parties, by facilitating constructive dialogue and making recommendations that contributed to reaching a concurrence. In addressing its members, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq (SRSG), Staffan de Mistura, congratulated the parliament after it voted on the law, saying, *"It's been a very delicate issue and it's taken a lot of time, but the outcome is what matters"*. However, Mr. de Mistura, expressed concern over the exclusion of article 50, which will not allow for the participation of Iraqi Christians and other minorities in the country. *"I was surprised and disappointed that Article 50 was not included in the provincial elections law"*, he said, emphasizing that *"Article 50 should be reinstated into the legislation as soon as possible so minorities can participate in the upcoming elections that will be held sometime before 31 January 2009."*

The UN will continue to assist the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), to establish procedures for voting and election balloting. Ms. Sandra Mitchell, International Advisor to the Election Commission, highlighted cooperation and assistance, but also emphasized that the Iraqi Presidency Council must finalize the law quickly in order to meet the deadline. *"The staff of IHEC are all working very hard and the successful voter registration update in July and August has put IHEC in a strong position to meet the target date of January 31, 2009"*, she said.

In a press statement, the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, welcomed Iraq's new provincial election law and said, *"This is a very important step forward which should contribute to political normalization in Iraq."*

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The Role of Media in Elections

By Jacky Sutton

The confirmation that Iraqi lawmakers have passed a law paving the way for provincial elections in January 2009 was a critical step on the hard road towards reconciliation, reconstruction and sustainable peace for the war-torn country.

The UN-led International Election Assistance Team is supporting this process by providing technical assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and to other national institutions and stakeholders. Part of this involves facilitating dialogue between election officials and media professionals on their respective rights and responsibilities regarding the electoral process and to raise public awareness of the role of the media in engaging with this process.

Several activities have already taken place to highlight the importance of media in elections; one was a workshop in Baghdad in August which brought together over 50 media professionals and IHEC officials to discuss electoral procedures, while another was a nationwide campaign to lobby for the right of journalists to report the elections in safety.

Other initiatives being planned in the run up to January's vote include a series of You Tube films and blogs on elections, nationwide training for local journalists and IHEC officials in



Waset Governor Opening the Workshop on "Violence Against Journalists and their Role in the Elections"

the provinces, and radio-led voter education programmes forming a national electoral education network programme.

The media is a key stakeholder in the electoral process, with a dual role of both informing the electorate and of monitoring the electoral process to expose wrongdoing and to force public figures to be accountable to those they seek to represent.

The Iraqi media environment is one of the most dynamic in the world. The fall of Saddam Hussein heralded an era of unprecedented expansion across the sector and Iraqis now have access to hundreds of media outlets, ranging from small FM radio stations to multi-million dollar satellite TV networks. However more outlets are not necessarily representative of pluralism.

While most media institutions, whether inside the country or in the Diaspora, are ethno-sectarian or

seek to advocate particular interests or parties, independent media outlets and professionals are being squeezed out of the market by security concerns or because advertising revenue is tied to editorial content. According to Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), Iraq remains the most dangerous country in the world for mainstream journalists, with 86 killed in 2007, a 244 % increase in just five.

New media is an important factor in the Iraqi media landscape. They can dilute the influence of partisan 'old media' institutions. Across the region developments in information technology have meant that communication tools are in the hands of increasingly heterogeneous constituencies and have expanded the public space. This has undermined elite monopoly of the flow of information and created an expectation of public dissent necessary for any meaningful pluralist politics.

In New-York and in Geneva, the UN Pays Tribute to the Victims of the August 2003 Bombing in Baghdad The Secretary-General calls the victims "True Heroes"



The Secretary-General calls the victims "True Heroes"

On 1st September 2008, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon led a solemn ceremony at the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva to commemorate the 5th anniversary of the bombing of the United Nations Headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, which killed 22 UN staff members and injured over 150.

The ceremony was attended by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and over a thousand senior officials from the United Nations and intergovernmental organizations, members of the diplomatic corps, non-governmental organizations and family members of the victims, all led by a guard of honour marching to the tune of solemn music.

At the start of his remarks, the Secretary-General requested the observance of a minute of silence. In his statement, he paid tribute to our fallen colleagues saying that *"no words can do justice to what they gave us. No*

acts can right the injustice of their deaths".

The Secretary-General pledged that the Organization will carry on with the work that some colleagues paid for with their lives and vowed to do all he could to prevent such tragedies from happening again by ensuring the safety and security of UN staff.

Ms. Rula Al-Farra, the representative of the families of the victims also addressed the gathering, urging the United Nations not to abandon its work in Baghdad, but rather to carry on with the work left behind by the victims.

Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Special



SG Ban Ki-moon addressing the audience at the Geneva Commemoration

Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, also spoke at the ceremony and said that despite the current precarious security conditions in Iraq, the United Nations was still present in the country carrying on with its mandate to assist the Iraqis.

A representative of the survivors, an Iraqi national, spoke of the UN as the source of hope for the Iraqi people in terms of giving them employment and humanitarian assistance and made a call to the Organization to continue its work in Iraq.

Children of the victims and the survivors were led to the podium to lay a flower each at the base of a burning flame before the ceremony was brought to an end.

In an official ceremony held in New-York on 19 August, the United Nations Secretary-General said that, over the past five years, the United Nations has continued to help the people of Iraq - and others throughout the world - who suffer from violence and disease. *"This work is often dangerous, but it must go on. Those who died on August 19th, 2003 would have it no other way."*

The Secretary General emphasized the work that continues to be done to strengthen UN staff security, and added that protecting staff requires more than barricades and shatter-proof glass. *"We must continue to explain, clearly and consistently, what we do and who we are"*, the Secretary-General added.

The New-York ceremony included a wreath laying and a minute of silence in honour of fallen staff. Afterward, the *Daedalus Quartet*, a classical music group, performed a piece composed by Steve Heitzeg for the occasion.

Remarks by the Secretary-General at the Geneva Ceremony

May I ask all to rise and join me in a minute of silence? Thank you, please sit down.

Dear families of the victims,

Dear survivors,

Dear colleagues and friends, Excellencies

First, let me thank those who have traveled long distances to be here today with us. I've had the privilege of meeting some of you before, but this is the first time that we are all here together.

This is a solemn gathering, but I hope it can also be an opportunity for us to look forward.

The bombing in Baghdad stunned me, even though I wasn't with the United Nations at the time. When the United Nations was hit again, last year in Algiers, I experienced the devastation at first hand. It was heartbreaking. But then you don't need me to tell you that. You know it all too well.

The past five years have been hard for many of you. Reliving what happened. Wondering why it did. Thinking about whether and how it could have been prevented.

Today, my team from Headquarters will give you a full account of the status of the various investigations into the bombing, and will respond to all of your questions. Do use this opportunity to get as many of the answers you need. We owe you that much.

And rest assured that I have moved decisively to ensure that we take every possible measure to protect our staff around the world.

For now, let me just say a few words from the heart. There have been many tributes to your loved ones. Yet no words can do justice to what they gave us. No acts can right the injustice of their deaths.

That they were each such exceptional individuals makes their absence even harder to bear.

But we have two precious heirlooms that our colleagues left us: the memory of the lives they lived, and the power of the ideals they embodied.

The only way I can honour this legacy is to ensure that the UN continues to help the Iraqi people while protecting its staff – there and everywhere.

Our work in Iraq continues on many fronts. In the political realm, we are helping to seek a compromise on the impasse in Parliament. We are addressing the sensitive issue of internal boundaries. We recently announced, with the Government, a new strategy to help Iraq use more of its own resources for relief, reconstruction and development. Just today, we took another step forward with the signing of an agreement paving the way for greater cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. I witnessed the signing between the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Supachai Panitchpakdi, and Mr. Raed Fahmi, Iraq's Minister of Science and Technology.

Our Iraqi national colleagues work with 300 international staff on the ground, mostly in Baghdad's Green Zone, though we have been increasing our numbers in the provinces. With financial support from Member States and the Government, we plan to construct a larger, better fortified compound that can safely house additional UN staff.

You will hear more about our way forward in Iraq from my Special Representative, Mr. Staffan de Mistura.

For now, let me say that I am determined to do all we can to prevent such tragedies from happening again. We cannot eliminate risk, of course. The world in which the UN operates is growing more dangerous, not less.

But we will do all we can to ensure the safety and security of UN staff. After the December bombing in Algiers, we commissioned the Independent Panel on Safety and Security to do a worldwide review of UN security. We shall act decisively on its recommendations.

We must also address the root of the problem. Too many people in the world do not understand what the UN does, or its role as an impartial friend to all. This remains one of our most significant strategic communications challenges.

The flag that flew outside UN Headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August 2003 was badly damaged. Today, it hangs in pride of place in the visitors lobby of UN Headquarters in New York.

Before I came here to attend this solemn ceremony, I paid my respects to the flag that flew outside UN House in Algiers, and which now hangs here in the Palais des Nations. It was even more severely damaged than the one in Baghdad.

Yet the symbol of these two flags -- the symbol that for more than 60 years has carried such hope for millions of people around the world -- stands proud and unbowed. It stands for the sacrifice of our colleagues. It stands for our determination to persevere.

We who survive have a duty to honour this symbol and our fallen friends. We will strive to be worthy guardians of their memory and of their legacy. You can count on that.

Our commitment -- our pledge in the name of "we the peoples" -- must never change. We will work every day to live up to the standards they set us.

Special Envoy to Iraq Visits Al-Anbar

By Randa Jamal

On 29 September 2008, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, revealed upcoming plans for a United Nations presence in Al Anbar as soon as mid October. On a one-day visit to the province, he met with the Governor of Al Anbar, Mr. Mamoun Sami Rashid, along with several religious leaders, heads of tribes, professors and intellectuals.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will be the first UN organization to be present in Al Anbar, followed by the Human Rights Office of UNAMI, the SRSG announced. Discussions also focused on the potential presence of other UN agencies that could be of benefit to the province.

The Special Representative congratulated the Governor and others hosting the meeting for gains made in security, economic development and reconstruction. He said, *"Al-Anbaris were able to take their security in their own hands."*

In light of participating in the political process, Mr. de Mistura highlighted the significance of having more than 360,000 registered voters from Al-Anbar province. *"Taking part in the elections and being part of the process is important for Al-Anbar"*, he emphasized.

The Governor welcomed the UN plans for presence in Al-Anbar and pledged his full support, saying *"Once the UN is here, its presence will send positive signals indicating that security gains are tangible and therefore foreign investors will be attracted to the province"*.

Those present echoed his welcoming sentiment and noted that the neutrality and justice seeking nature of the UN is evident, not only in Iraq, but throughout the world.

In a show of solidarity, toward the end of the meeting, one of the participants asked everyone, including the UN delegation, to stand up for a minute of silence to pay tribute to the late Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues, who were victims of the atrocious bombing of August 2003.



SRSG, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Addressing the Audience at the Geneva Commemoration

Statement of the SRSG for Iraq Staffan de Mistura at the Geneva Ceremony

Mr. Secretary-General,

Dear Relatives, Friends, Colleagues,

Dear Iraqi friends – Assalam Ayleikum

I came from Baghdad at your request, Mr. Secretary-General, representing the 354 international colleagues and more than 420 Iraqi colleagues who are working under the flag of the UN today in Iraq.

They are here with you in the spirit in this very moment. A little bit more than two weeks ago we had our own ceremony in Baghdad in our new office called Diwan. We had brought there the emblem you saw in the video of the UN Headquarters in the Canal Hotel. We brought it back, we put it on the side of our entrance, we prayed, we listened to a special Iraqi poetry and music made for our colleagues on that day, together in Baghdad. Some of us cried because those colleagues were also very good friends.

The UN is back. The UN never left Iraq. We went through a moment of trauma and for a period the UN kept a low-key approach, but our local national courageous Iraqi staff were always there, and kept the programmes going. Things have changed, things have moved; even things in Iraq have been improved, not perfectly, but have improved. And the UN has increased its footprint. Resolution 1770 and the strong support, Mr. Secretary-General, from yourself, made sure that the UN would try to be as proactive as possible in the current circumstances in order to assist the Iraqis.

During that ceremony we were reminded that the most important messages we have received from those who died is

their legacy. And in fact, this is the message I would like to bring to you, families and friends.

During the last three years five million children have been vaccinated through the UN assistance, 4,8 million have received books. The UN team has also been active in assisting refugees and more than 2 million *internally displaced persons*. We have been and are involved in issues related to water and sanitation. Cholera could be a major problem but so far we have helped to avoid an epidemic.

We've been actively involved in two elections, the constitution, the referendum, and now we are involved in a very complicated area called the "disputed territories", which is going to be a challenge in the next 3-4 months, and the future provincial elections. In other words, the UN is very much back in Iraq in assisting the Iraqis to face their own challenges.

Now, we have to recognize that things are still complicated and rather dangerous in Iraq in spite of clear improvements. I would like you however to know that when days are very hot, when sandstorms are taking place, when rockets are coming inside the Green Zone, like it did happen in May, and when we have a feeling that things are not moving as we would like to, what keeps us going is the feeling of duty and privilege that we are there to ensure that those friends and colleagues who died did not die in vain.

I know, dear relatives, this is a small, small comfort, compared to the pain you have come through, the pain you will be going through because these are pains that will never be forgotten. But I hope on behalf of my colleagues in Iraq that it might be a slight comfort for you to know that we are there also and mostly to prove that your loved ones did not die in vain.

Thank you.

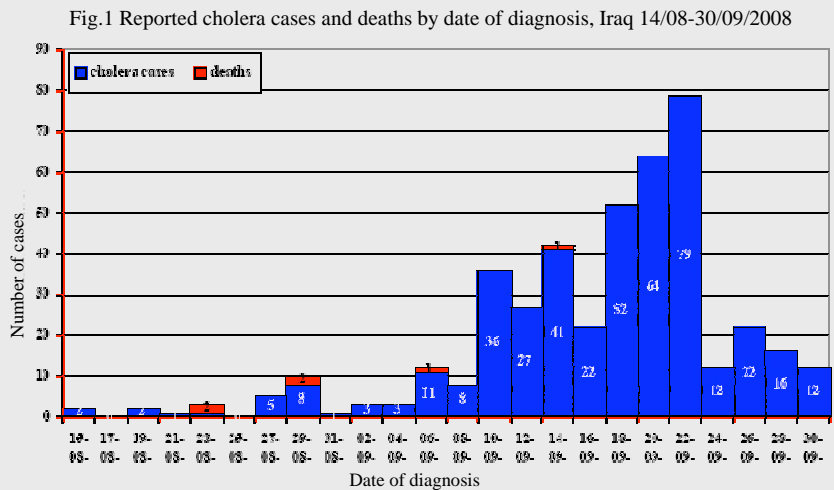
Latest Information Up to 30 September on the Cholera Outbreak in Iraq

***Total cholera cases, up to 30/09 reached 389 with no additional confirmed cases in the last 24 hours.**

- One case in Diala
- 3 cases in each of Baghdad Al Rosafa and Missan
- 5 cases in Najaf
- 7 cases in Anbar
- 19 cases in Diwanyia
- 32 cases in Karbala
- 43 cases in Basra
- 66 cases in Baghdad-Kerkh
- 210 cases in Babil province all confirmed at the CPHL

*** Cases under investigation:**

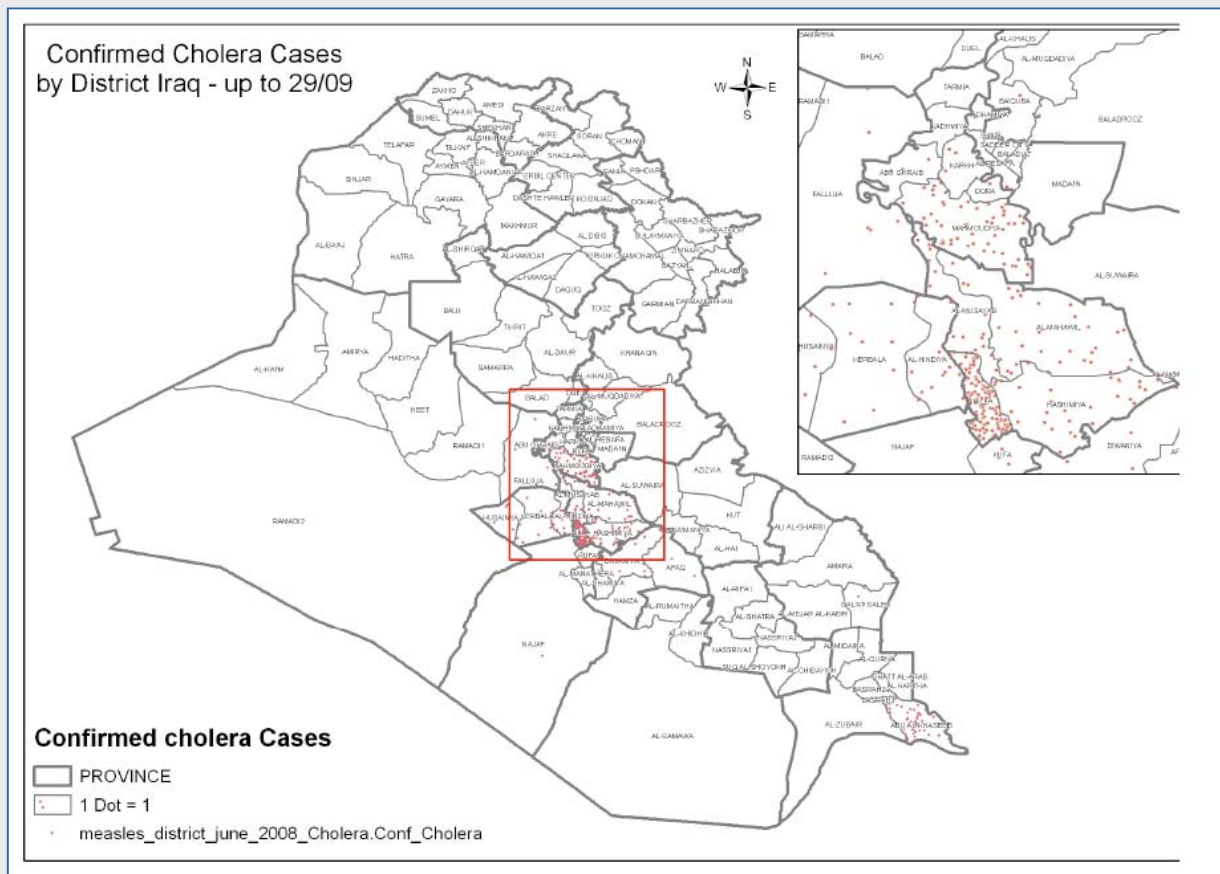
- Karbala (2) cases diagnosed by provincial Lab.
- Diwanyia (2) case diagnosed by provincial Lab.
- Basra (2) cases diagnosed by provincial Lab.
- Babil (21) cases diagnosed by provincial Lab. during the last few days.
- Najaf (3) cases diagnosed by provincial Lab.
- Wasit (1) case diagnosed by provincial Lab.



*** Confirmed cholera deaths remain as 7 distributed:**

- Babil (3) deaths
- Basra (1) death
- Missan (1) death
- Baghdad Kerkh (1) death
- Diwanyia (1) death

*** There have been 7 deaths due to Acute Watery Diarrhea;** however, either stool specimens were not collected (3 deaths) or stool on examination were negative for cholera organism (4 deaths).



Information obtained from the Health and Nutrition Sector Outcome Team (HNSOT) Lead and OCHA

UNAMI Explores with International Partners Transitional Justice Mechanisms



NGOs, Judges, KRG Officials and Rights Activists discuss Transitional Justice Mechanisms (Photo by: Salah Mazin)

By Sabah Abdulrahman

With the logistical assistance of UNOPS, UNAMI Human Rights Office hosted on 16 and 17 September 2008 in Erbil a seminar on Transitional Justice with the participation of two experts from the US-based International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). The aim of the seminar was to explore with dozens of representatives from local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights activists and judges, as well as officials from the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Anfal and Martyrs Affairs mechanisms for transitional justice with a

particular focus on fact finding and reparations for victims of previous human rights abuses.

On behalf of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, the Head of UNAMI Erbil Regional Office, Mark Rutgers welcomed the participants who gathered to "embark on a seminal discussion of the concepts, lessons learned and application of transitional justice and how these notions and models can be applicable to the Iraqi context."

Throughout the two days of the seminar, the participants discussed in detail transitional justice initiatives, particularly in the Kurdistan Region, after listening to Morocco's implementation experiences of fact finding and reparations provided by Chaouqui Benyoub, a Moroccan lawyer and rights activist who himself was involved in his country's processes of fact finding and reparations.

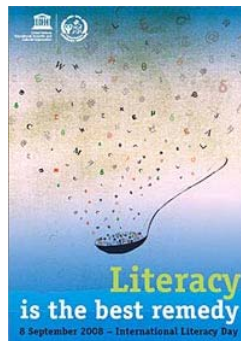
Upon successful completion of the discussion-based sessions, the participants were divided into two groups to formulate their recommendations for

fact finding and reparation mechanisms in Iraq. Noting the lack of a clear understanding from the side of the victims of their right to reparation as well as the absence of clear mechanisms at the government's level for such reparations, one of the two groups recommended the conduction of awareness raising campaigns "to put more pressure on the government to adopt legal measures to ensure the victims' reparations rights, as well as the required mechanisms for this purpose."

The participants expressed their full satisfaction with the seminar, particularly with bringing in ICTJ experts and a Moroccan lawyer who shared his country's experiences with the audience and said he found many similarities with the situation in Iraq. While a participant from a Sulaymaniya-based NGO commented worriedly that he was afraid the recommendations might "sit idle a government official's desk, rather than being translated into action", another participant advocated for "pushing and pushing until justice is done the way it should be done."

UNAMI had organized an introductory seminar on Transitional Justice in Iraqi Kurdistan Region in April 2007.

International Literacy Day 2008



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UNESCO supports the efforts of the Government of Iraq in addressing the illiteracy problems throughout the country through its programmes: Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) and Literacy Assessment and Monitoring (LAMP), and provides its support to the National Literacy Campaign in Iraq.

UNAMI Focus

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For further information contact e-mail:

unami-information@un.org

Or Randa Jamal,

jamalr@un.org

Phone + 962 6 550 4700

Extension: 2644

Visit our web site www.uniraq.org