



UNAMI FOCUS

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Interview with Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Head of Political Office



Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Head of Political Office

UNAMI Focus: What did you do before this position?

AG: Prior to coming here last November, I was Deputy or Acting Political Director in the Office of the Secretary-General in New York for approximately 2 years. Before then, I spent three years as the Political Advisor in the UN office in West Africa, operating in 16 countries, many of which were experiencing great political, economic and security problems. Prior to that, I was the Head of the Regional and Political Unit of the UN office for the Middle East Peace Process, based in Jerusalem and Gaza.

UNAMI Focus: What do you hope to achieve during your assignment in Iraq?

AG: We have an expanded mandate in light of UNSC resolution 1770, adopted in August 2007 which has many aspects to it, and we have made progress on many of them. At the same time we are searching for new approaches to maximize

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USG Pascoe Reiterates UN Commitment to Iraq at the Third Ministerial Conference of Neighboring Countries

By Randa Jamal

The Third Expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq held in Kuwait on April 22, 2008, highlighted several central themes, but most prominently regional dialogue and the role of neighboring countries in promoting stability in Iraq. Succeeding in achieving several constructive steps, the conference also generated a momentum among participants for working towards a peaceful, stable and developed Iraq. Both regional and international partners echoed these sentiments and goals. As part of this, the participants agreed to hold the next Ministerial Meeting in Baghdad.

With the objective to perk up communication and to promote understanding between Iraq and its neighbors, the first Expanded Ministerial Conference was launched in Sharm El Sheikh in May 2007. The second conference followed in November and was held in Istanbul. As a consequence of these meetings, three working groups were established in the areas of energy, refugees and border security. During these meetings, participating countries (Iraq's neighboring countries, Egypt, Bahrain, permanent members of the UN Security Council and the G8) anticipated solutions for common problems and explored new avenues for cooperation. Iraq took the lead in setting up an *ad hoc* support mechanism for regional dialogue.

As with earlier conferences, participants in the Kuwait conference were adamant that a secure and



The Third Expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq

stable Iraq is in everyone's interest. The UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs, Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe, representing the Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, was especially keen on this issue, and he consistently emphasized further dialogue with, and stronger support from, Iraq's neighbors for stabilizing the war torn country.

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our helpfulness to the Government plus people of Iraq.

We have been fortunate that there is a greater willingness, on the part of many people, including our UN HQ, for the UNAMI to play a more prominent and active role in Iraq.

UNAMI Focus: As the head of the Political Office in UNAMI, what are the challenges you face in achieving the mandate of SCR1770?

AG: There are two areas on the political side in resolution 1770 where UNAMI has an unofficial lead in the international community to assist the Government of Iraq. The first area is elections and we are playing an important role in helping the electoral commission ensure the legitimacy of elections results. In eight provinces, GEOs had not been selected as a result of political disagreement over the choice of candidate, we have managed the selection process for these 8.

UNAMI is also playing a key role on the issue of disputed internal boundaries.

One particular pressing issue when we arrived in November was the impending deadline of Article 140 of the constitution. A number of interlocutors, both Iraqi and international, clearly indicated that they wanted UNAMI to play a role in ensuring that the deadline, which ended on 31 December 2007, did not lead to negative political or security consequences.

We have been working on a number of specific disputed territories since that time and expect to present some analysis and suggestions to Iraq to the Presidency Council and others in mid-May. This will be followed by work on other territories including Kirkuk governorate.

UNAMI Focus: How is UNAMI contributing to national reconciliation in Iraq and strengthening regional dialogue?

AG: There are many ways UNAMI is working on this, some of them are very much behind the scenes in promoting dialogue between Iraqi parties who are deeply suspicious of one another. But one area of national reconciliation that we are very actively involved in relates to the territorial aspect of Arab-Kurdish relations in Iraq, as mentioned above.

UNAMI Focus: How is UNAMI expanding its operations?

AG: We are doing that in many ways, first of all by expanding our presence outside Baghdad. We have an office in Basra, which proved to be very useful during the events of the past few weeks. Second, the SRSG visited Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani and other senior members of *Marjaiah*, to assess how we can establish a presence in Najaf. Third, we will soon be deploying officials in Kirkuk and Ramadi. Fourth, our Erbil office has been expanded both in terms of numbers and in terms of political and social economic activities. Fifth, we have embarked on a series of visits to the disputed internal areas. It is essential to consult with the stakeholders living in these areas before we make any recommendations to the Presidency Council and the Prime Minister.

We have also deployed nine governorate liaison officers in a number of provinces as a way of increasing our contacts with the leaders of the various provinces and providing us with more information; and to enable us to better assess the situation within each province, with the aim of ultimately increasing UN assistance to them.

As result of all these measures, we are carrying out the wish of the Security Council and the Secretary General to expand our profile and our scale of activities inside Iraq.

The aim is to do this as first as possible, while taking due consideration of security conditions.

Internally Displaced Children in Erbil ask SRSG Coomaraswamy for "security"



The SRSG visiting an exhibition of children's drawings

By Sabah Abdulrahman

Alarmed by the fact that more than half of Iraqi Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees are children, who face a great deal of difficulties in their new places of settlement, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Children and Armed Conflict Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy concluded her five-day fact-finding mission to Iraq with a visit to internally displaced families, and an elementary school for internally displaced children in Erbil.

Most of the pupils hosted at the elementary school originate from central and southern Iraq. After listening to the school principal explaining the challenges of opening and running a school designated for internally displaced children, SRSG Coomaraswamy met with the teachers, who also come from central and southern Iraq. Most of them told her that they had to leave their places of origin either following the assassination of one of their family members or after having been subjected to death threats.

Asked about the most important things she wanted the UN to do, an 11-year-old girl had a one-word answer to Ms. Coomaraswamy, "Security"!

Moving to Shawes, a community where many IDPs live 10 kilometers north of the city of Erbil, the SRSG first discussed with the local police chief issues pertaining to the safety and the security

of the IDPs. Then she visited a number of displaced families. One of them, displaced from Baghdad, was headed by a blind old man selling groceries. His daughter-in-law was helping him by selling mobile scratch cards to cover the additional expenses of sending their 6th grader Zahra to school downtown, as there were none nearby. Zahra wanted to become a teacher upon graduation.

The second family Ms. Coomaraswamy visited was composed of about 25 persons who moved from Dyala province northeast Baghdad leaving behind their houses and jobs to settle in a 4-room house in Shaws.

During her lunch meeting in Erbil with Iraq's First Lady, Mrs. Hero Talabani, who is also the founder of Kurdistan Save the Children, Ms Coomaraswamy inquired about the effects of war on children and on the actions needed to help alleviate their sufferings. With representatives of Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Authority and UNDP, she also focused on the situation of children victims of mines, as she learned from her interlocutors that Iraqi Kurdistan was among the largest mine fields in the world that requires decades to be removed.

The SRSG had started her extensive agenda in Baghdad with meetings with Iraqi officials from the ministries of Justice, Labor and Social Affairs, Public services and Human Rights as well as with Women, Families and Children delegations. In Erbil, she had discussions with KRG Coordinator for UN Affairs Dindar Zebari, as well as with each of the KRG's Ministers of Education, Security Affairs, Labor and Social Affairs, and the Director-General of Displacement and Migration at the Ministry of Extra-Regional Affairs.

"Let peace in Iraq begin with the protection of Children", the SRSG told a press conference ending her visit to Iraq.

John Holmes Highlights the Gravity of the Humanitarian Situation in Iraq



USG Holmes and DSRSG Shearer during their press conference in Amman - Photo by Reuters

In March, United Nations Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes visited the Arab Region. At his first stop was in Jordan, he met with relevant officials, agencies and NGOs that deal with the humanitarian situation in Iraq. Then he visited Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar.

John Holmes initially planned to go to Iraq to see for himself the humanitarian conditions, however the security situation made it impossible.

During a joint press conference with David Shearer, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, at his final destination in Amman, John Holmes highlighted the magnitude of the humanitarian situation inside Iraq, noting that the needs have risen significantly because of the continuous hostilities and deterioration of the basic services and infrastructures.

He called for an end to the deadly violence and for opening humanitarian access routes to enable the safe passage of aid workers trying to deliver food, clean water and other vital supplies to millions in need. "Unfortunately, in Iraq today access is often hindered by ongoing hostilities and restrictions on freedom of movement" he said, adding that the combination had worsened the situation of the Iraqi people in the last two years.

Noting that 4 million people do not have enough food, while the Public Distribution System (PDS) is not functioning the way it

should, Holmes expressed his concern regarding the "worrying figures of malnutrition, including 4 to 9% of malnourished Iraqi children". He emphasized the need to make the most of any "localized security improvements and pockets of stability" to expand relief efforts.

Mr. Holmes reiterated the international community's commitment to respond to both the humanitarian crisis inside Iraq and to the displacement it has prompted in the region, on the basis of independence and impartiality. "We are doing all we can to meet the needs of millions of suffering Iraqis, both inside the country and beyond its borders, by strengthening our overall humanitarian coordination and response" he said, adding that the organization has already offered a good deal of relief assistance, and tracked US\$ 300 million in 2007 inside Iraq. "We are scaling up the emergency response wherever conditions allow, and hope that the \$265 million appeal

launched in February will be fully funded by donors”, he said, noting that this may not be sufficient in comparison to the cost of the conflict. He additionally praised the hospitality of both Syrian and Jordanian governments for hosting hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees, whom he worked closely with.

David Shearer, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, who recently conducted a joint response mission with Iraqi officials to Basra, following the outbreak of violence, told reporters that victims of hostilities in recent weeks were overwhelmingly civilians. *“More than 700 lives claimed and 1,500 wounded”*, he said, adding that 8 ambulances were fired at, and humanitarian workers were threatened and targeted. *“While we are no longer facing a humanitarian crisis in Basra, some families still need support”* Shearer said, adding that *“the UN’s priority now is to support Basra’s local government in redoubling its own assistance efforts for the most vulnerable families.”* Regarding the situation in Sadr City in Baghdad, Shearer admitted that *“limited humanitarian access continues to impede aid efforts to some of the city’s poorest areas”*, adding that it is essential to work together with the government and neighbouring countries to alleviate the plight of the Iraqi people.

The main point of Holmes visit to Gulf countries was to deliver a keynote speech at the 5th Dubai International Humanitarian and Development Conference (DIHAD). The Chief UN Humanitarian Coordinator also had talks with the governments and humanitarian organizations of the region on how to work closely and systematically with the United Nations and the international humanitarian system, in the area of humanitarian aid and creating long-term partnerships. He expressed his *“reasonable optimism”* that, over time, the discussions he had in the Gulf region - aimed at encouraging those Governments to channel more of the assistance they already gave bilaterally through multilateral channels - would bear fruit.

Iraqi Governorate Liaison Officers Assume their Responsibilities

By Randa Jamal

Amongst the steps taken in light of the UN expanded mandate under UNSC 1770, was the recruitment of Governorate Liaison Officers (GLOs), which has been instrumental in UNAMI’s geographical outreach programme.

This process, embarked on by UNAMI last year, was initiated by a written request from the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, asking each Governor to nominate four candidates for these positions and provide space in his/her office for them to work. Once the list of recommended candidates was submitted, UNAMI selected GLOs through a competitive interview process.

The GLOs will be deployed in 15 Iraqi governorates. Their role consists of increasing UNAMI’s understanding of the conditions in the governorates, in view of facilitating the mission’s ability to target its assistance to priority areas.

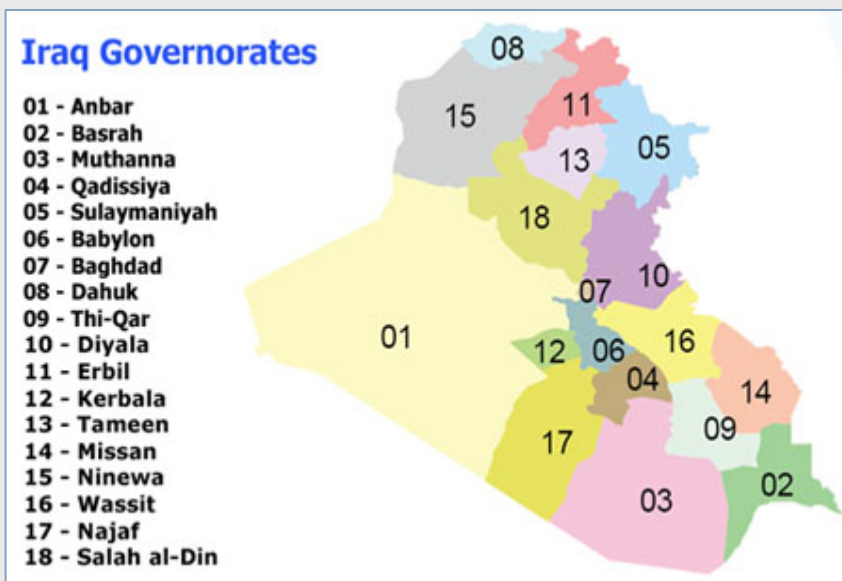
UNAMI has limited access throughout Iraq due to security constraints that stifle UN movement and activities. Consequently, GLOs will provide inputs on the humanitarian situation in their respective governorates, including the delivery of basic

services, health, education, food distribution, and electricity. Additionally, GLOs will report on the political and security situation, particularly in the areas of effective governance. They will also liaise between UNAMI and governorate officials, civil society and political parties’ representatives.

Thus far, nine GLOs have been selected from Tikrit, Wasit, Baghdad, Nasiriya, Qadisiya, Karbala, Najaf, Babylon, and Muthana. Efforts are underway to recruit six others for the governorates of Basra, Missan, Al-Anbar, Ninevah, Tameem, and Diyala. The recruitment of another three for the Kurdistan Region is imminent.

For the candidates who have been selected, comprehensive three day training was provided at UNAMI’s office in Baghdad. The induction programme between 25-27 March 2008 provided an overview of UNAMI’s operations and mandate, which was followed by an elaboration on the tasks that the GLOs will undertake, and how significant their role will be in liaising between governorates and the mission. Various staff members from each substantive section of UNAMI also familiarized the participants with their respective field of work in assisting the Iraqi government and people.

The GLOs assumed their responsibilities as soon as the training was completed.



Eighteen Iraqi Governorates

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In his speech, USG Pascoe focused on UN boosted efforts in Iraq in light of its expanded SCR 1770 mandate. He said that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is helping the Government of Iraq to strengthen regional dialogue, propose potential solutions to resolve the internally disputed areas, and hold governorate elections this year, and is assisting with constitutional and legislative matters.

Mr. Pascoe also praised the positive developments on the ground: "Even though violence, political tensions and slow economic progress persist, the institutions set up in Iraq in 2005 through democratic elections and a constitutional referendum are progressively taking root. "A fundamental consensus on a democratic sovereign, united and federal Iraq is emerging," he said. Nevertheless, he stressed, "despite continuing improve-

ments in the capacity of Iraq's national security forces, the security situation still remains fragile."

One of Iraq's most serious problems is the humanitarian situation of over 4 million refugees in Iraq and in neighboring countries. The USG underscored that alleviating their suffering is also paramount to regional stability and that failing to address the issue of Iraqi refugees will have regional ramifications. The United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees estimates that of 26 million Iraqis, 4.4 million are still uprooted, of which 2.4 million are displaced internally and 2 million are in neighboring countries—mainly in Jordan and Syria.

Mr. Pascoe emphasized that together, the Government of Iraq, the wider international community, and the UN should assist the host countries—particularly Jordan and Syria—

with humanitarian and technical support. He also told conference participants that "the UN is developing a programme for refugee return to ensure that the Government of Iraq and aid agencies are ready when the conditions are ripe for this to take place."

Prior to attending the Third Expanded Ministerial Conference in Kuwait, the USG spent a few days in Baghdad. The objectives of his trip were to further familiarize himself with the activities of UNAMI and its staff on the ground, and to meet with Iraqi and international officials. In meetings with the Deputy Prime Minister, Barham Saleh, and Vice President, Adel Abd Al-Mahdi, USG Pascoe reiterated the UN's commitment and willingness to assist developing a stable Iraq, including in the various areas of health, education, refugees, elections, and constitutional matters.

The International Legislative Roundtable: what they hope to achieve

By Randa Jamal

The International Legislative Roundtable (ILR), co-chaired by UNAMI, is a working level forum for Baghdad-based representations of the International Community and was developed in November 2007 by the UN Office of Constitutional Support, along with their international and NGO partners, including the European Commission. The ILR created a forum where in-depth discussions are held bi-weekly and information is exchanged on legislative and constitutional developments, around pre-identified themes. At time, the modus operandi is to invite Iraqi Representatives and/or Iraqi experts present to present on related topics.



Participants Gathered at the 6th International Legislative Roundtable

The section head of the Office of Constitutional Support, Mr. Sven Spengemann, said that, in January 2008, "the ILR was honored to have hosted Judge Ghazi Al-Janabi, President of the Iraqi Shura Council. Judge Al Janabi took the opportunity to outline the role of the Shura Council in reviewing pieces of legislation

within the parliamentary process. He also commented on the effectiveness of the Council and its powers within the Iraqi legal apparatus more generally." In addition, Mr. Spengemann stated that other topics discussed during previous sessions of the ILR included the draft Law on Governorates not Organized

into Regions; the future of federalism in Iraq; elections and electoral systems; the Justice and Accountability and Amnesty legislation; as well as the Iraqi parliamentary process and regional governance

For the 6th roundtable held on 16 April 08, updates were provided by the UN Mission on legislative developments and the Mission's involvement as experts in focused consultations with Iraqi interlocutors. UNAMI also delivered an update on its

technical support to the Constitutional Review Committee.

UNAMI also provided participants with a brief on the study tour for Iraqi Parliamentarians that was conducted in Northern Ireland under the auspices of the UN Constitutional Support Office in Iraq, with funding from the European Commission. Mr. Mohammad Al Ghannam, a Legal Affairs Officer, who headed the UN delegation, said "the most significant example for Iraqi participants was the Northern Ireland experience with na-

tional reconciliation, particularly not excluding anyone from sitting around the same table, even those who were involved in armed groups". He emphasized the importance of such experiences in building Iraqi capacities and strengthening national and/or regional institutions. The Disputed Internal Boundaries and potential approaches to resolving the issue were also mentioned.

The next Roundtable will include an extensive discussion on the Iraqi Hydro-Carbon Law.

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

Extensions: 2644

Visit our web site www.uniraq.org