



UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission

News Bulletin

Issue No. 32

April 2009

The United Nations Issues its 14th Report on the Human Rights Situation in Iraq

On April 29 2009, UNAMI issued its 14th report on the human rights situation in Iraq, June through December 2008. The report notes:

1. The second half of 2008 was marked by further improvements in the security situation, already noted during the first months of the year, with additional decrease in the number of high-visibility mass-casualty attacks by militias, insurgents and criminal groups.
2. For the first time since 2007, the Ministry of Health published the number of civilian casualties in Iraq. According to the Ministry, a total of 6,787 civilians were killed and 20,178 injured in 2008.
3. UNAMI) remains concerned about the overall human rights situation in Iraq as indiscriminate attacks remained a frequent occurrence; the targeted killings of security forces, high ranking officials and civil servants, religious and political leaders, professional groups such as journalists, educators, medical doctors, judges and lawyers and other civilians continued at a high rate, as did criminal abductions for ransom.
4. Of equal concern, the reporting was also marked by increased attacks against minority leaders and the large displacement of over 12,000 Christians from Mosul in October.
5. Violence against women in the Region of Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq remained one of the issues of serious concern as the pattern of the recorded incidents of suicide often points towards "honor"-related homicides
6. The improvement in the security situation was not accompanied by a full re-establishment of the rule of law and by systematically addressing impunity. In most cases, the perpetrators of human rights abuses were not brought to justice. UNAMI has continuously stated that security may not be sustainable unless significant steps are taken in the area of human rights such as strengthening the rule of law and addressing impunity.

7. With regards to the situation in prisons and detention centers, at the end of the reporting period a total of 41,2712 individuals remained detained under the custody of different authorities such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and MNF-I. The number of detainees under Iraqi control in December 2008 was 26,249 and those under the con-

8. During the reporting period:

- The Iraqi High Judiciary Council reports that 127,431 persons were eligible for amnesty under the General Amnesty Law of 27 February, 2008.
- According to the Ministry of Human Rights, as of 31 December 2008, the number of cases favorably processed under such a law was as follows: detainees of the Ministry of Justice: 3,232 released and 109 cases under consideration; Ministry of Interior: 2,715 released and 2,795 cases favorably considered for amnesty but not released as they are under pre-trial detention for other crimes not covered by the Amnesty Law; Ministry of Defense: 1,252 beneficiaries and under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: 343 beneficiaries.
- As of 31 December 2008, the implementation of the Amnesty legislation was still in progress but did not alleviate the overcrowded situation in prisons and places of detention.

INDEX

The United Nations Issues its 14th Report on the Human Rights Situation in Iraq _____ 1

OCHA Holds a Workshop to Train Iraqi Local NGOs _____ 2

Flowers of Iraq: Iraqi Children Perform in Baghdad _____ 3

The Government of Iraq and WHO Raise Media Awareness on Swine Flue Prevention _____ 4

UN Agencies Active in Iraq _____ 5

trol of MNF-I was 15,058.

8. The Iraqi High Judiciary Council reports that 127,431 persons were eligible for amnesty under the General Amnesty Law of 27 February, 2008. According to the Ministry of Human Rights, as of 31 December 2008, the number of cases favorably processed under such a law was as follows: detainees of the Ministry of Justice: 3,232 released and 109 cases under consideration; Ministry of Interior: 2,715 released and 2,795 cases favorably considered for amnesty but not released as they are under pre-trial detention for other crimes not covered by the Amnesty Law; Ministry of Defense: 1,252 beneficiaries and under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: 343 beneficiaries. As of 31 December 2008, the implementation of the Amnesty legislation was still in progress but did not alleviate the overcrowded situation in prisons and places of detention.

9. There were important institutional and legal developments that took place during the reporting period such as the signing into law of the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (CAT), expected to lead to the harmonization of existing legislation and the enforcement of obligations under the treaty.

10. The inclusion of provisions for minority representation in the electoral law was a significant step in favor of the recognition of the special status of minorities in accordance with article 125 of the Constitution. Additionally, after over two years of debate, the Iraqi Parliament adopted the law on the Independent High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) which should become an essential institution for the protection of the rights of all people residing or working on the territory of Iraq. In the Kurdistan Region, two significant initiatives have taken place: the establishment of three committees to deal with violence against women and the adoption of a new media law. UNAMI welcomes these developments. ■

OCHA Holds a Workshop to Train Iraqi Local NGOs



OCHA conducting the Training at Al-Rasheed Hotel (UN/photo Richard Bajornas)

By Randa Jamal

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) held a workshop on 8 April 2009 to train Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on preparing and submitting project proposals to the Expanded Humanitarian Response Fund (ERF). The ERF was created to fund international and local NGOs and UN agencies responding to urgent and pressing humanitarian needs, for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and for the areas of shelter, health, education, water and sanitation. Ms. Eman El-Wazir, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, OCHA, said *“the Fund is designed for emergency related issues that are defined by circumstances”*.

Circumstances are defined by vulnerability rather than status. When asked for an example, El-Wazir, elaborated, *“for instance, a widow who is well off has a status that does not have a bearing on her living standards. However, a woman who is married, and who is an IDP and poor, is in fact vulnerable”*. Therefore this distinction is necessary to focus on emergency related vulnerability.

Proposals to ERF take 17 work-

ing days to process from the day of receipt. The workshop was based on an application model comprised of *inputs, activities, outputs, objectives, and goal results* and the training provided an overview of the ERF Charter application process, including self-assessment and needs assessment. Results based management was also addressed, such as how to plan and create indicators based on performance monitoring, and how to formulate and define knowledge-based results.

The criteria for participating included previous experience and interventions in the humanitarian field and there were certain eligibility criteria that NGOs—that are potential partners to the ERF—had to meet. Michele Servadei, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, UNAMI/OCHA, said that he was impressed with the number of participants and noted *“We actually set the number of participants at 35 and we had 44”*. The only governorate not present was Salah El Din.

Participants discussed basic principles of a complex humanitarian emergency, lifesaving interventions, and protection of livelihoods. Head of Office a.i OCHA/



Manual for Training Course (UN/photo: Richard Bajornas)

Iraq, Yasmine Rothenfeller, said "The ERF is critical to our efforts to ensure that the emergency needs of vulnerable Iraqis are met in a timely manner." She further elaborated, "The ERF supported water sanitation and public health interventions as part of the broader efforts to control the 2008 Cholera outbreak in Iraq." Additionally ERF grants were allocated to support livelihood protection projects including, for example, assistance to prevent the spread of life stock diseases that could have negative impact on Iraqi farmers, she emphasized. Most participants came with specific ideas for future proposals and the training helped them to tailor their interventions for targeted communities on the basis of vulnerability rather than status, an important distinction for needs assessment.

Eman El-Wazir said she was struck by the level of enthusiasm by the participants taking part in such an activity. One of them, Mr. Habib Shaker Mahmoud, also known as Abu Jihad, who heads the Handicapped Association in Wassit, and whose goal is to rehabilitate the handicapped and reintegrate them into society noted that "through the UN, we learned how to write a project proposal, specifying the needs, priorities, and mechanisms for obtaining funding".

More than 10,000 handicapped people are registered in his organization (4,000 women and 6,000 men) and Mr. Mahmoud has two pressing priorities for the Governorate of Wassit:

1. Locate and disarm landmines in the areas of the governorate that border with Iran, as many of the association's members are victims of landmine detona-

tions. These victims, especially children, need assistance, equipments, crutches, and wheel chairs to enable them to move around easily and attend school activities. He also emphasized the need to provide women with equipment, given the double alienation they suffer through their gender and their handicap.

2. The second priority he is seeking to fund aims to de-pollute the water in the area of Kut to reduce disease, especially among children. The training has equipped him with the technical skills that will allow him to apply for funding.

OCHA plans to hold four workshops in total in Baghdad, Erbil, Basra and Amman. The first three will target Iraqi NGOs and the last will target international partners. The workshop would not have been possible without the training and the support of OCHA staff and the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

For more information on ERF, please visit:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/iraq/ AppealsFunding/ ExpandedResponseFundERF/ tabid/2378/language/en-US/ Default.aspx>

Flowers of Iraq: Iraqi Children Perform in Baghdad



Iraqi Children Performing at the Flowers of Iraq Concert Series (UN/Photo: Richard Bajornas)

By Randa Jamal

The Children in Iraq suffered, and continue to suffer, much hardship because of devastating wars.

Windows of opportunities are rare and if there are any in Iraq, they are quickly grabbed by its youngsters to satisfy their unfulfilled dreams and aspirations.

Flowers of Iraq: Peace Through Art is a theme that the Iraqi Association of Music Scholars hopes will inspire impoverished children by providing them with better opportunities through the practice of music. On 3 April 2009, the association held a concert at Al Rash-eed Hotel where Iraqi children, aged 9-16 performed.

Karim Wasfi, a musician and the Director of the *Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra* (INSO), said that this initiative is founded on the ground of providing a better life for Iraqi children. Another factor he explained is to encourage Iraqi musicians who were abroad to come back home and provide children with opportunities to learn music. Wasfi said that he had managed to bring back 28 musicians through initiatives that are motivating and have clear goals. Another 16 musicians, currently spread in neighboring countries, are considering incentives to return to Iraq.

The INSO members have trained children for months prior to their performance on the 3rd of April. Under the banner of *Flowers of Iraq Concert Series*, 55 young performers are playing various musical instruments including violin, viola, clarinet, oboe, flute, contrabass, piano, tuba, trombone, trumpet, horn and saxophone. Some of them trained as long as seven months while others trained for only two. According to the organizers the children were solicited through word of mouth with 30% of them from Al-Sadr city and the rest from Baghdad's other neighborhoods. If this initiative succeeds, Wasfi said he will do the same in other provinces in Iraq and even beyond to other war-ridden countries.

Muhammad, one of the musicians who trained children on playing the violin, said the feeling of educating children on music and teaching them to play certain in-

struments is fulfilling. "These exercises are important, especially that schools are not keen on including music instruments into the education curricula, viewing music as secondary and not primary", he said. The testimonies that came from children were loud and energetic in transmitting such a message. Mustafa, who is 13 years of age, said that he trained on the flute for two months. "I always loved jazz music and dreamed of playing the flute one day", he said.

Another child, who is only 10, Shams said that she loved the "kaman" instrument and when she hears it play, she would always listen intently. "My mother encouraged me to practice", she said. The same theme was repeated time and again with Abboudi, who is only 9, and who has been training with the group: "I love music and all my brothers and sisters do as well. This is why they hope that I will become a musician one day".

The Conductor of the flowers of Iraq, Mr. Ali Khassab, said that this has been a wonderful experience for him as "it provides an



A standing ovation concluded the Performance (UN/Photo: Richard Bajornas)

opportunity for the future by helping create a new generation of musicians for Iraq".

The audience was full of joy and positive energy at the site of children. It was indeed a memorable experience for all those present. This performance highlighted the plight and danger facing Iraqi children, and at the same time it showed the extraordinary capabilities of Iraq's children when given the right opportunities. ■

The Government of Iraq and WHO Raise Media Awareness on Swine Flue Prevention



The participants addressing the Media (UN/Photo)

By Randa Jamal

On 29 April 2009, the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the World Health Organization (WHO) held a workshop aimed at the role of media in ensuring a timely response to any future epidemic related to influenza A (H1N1) in Iraq, also known as Swine Flue. Dr. Ibtissam Aziz, member of the High level Committee for Preventing the Pandemic Influenza at the Prime Minister's Office, said that the workshop is held to support the National Health Strategy to combat the Swine Flue Epidemic.

The media present pressed the health officials on the effectiveness of the National Strategy and whether it will prevent the pandemic from reaching the country. Some of them expressed their disappointment regarding the lack of delivery of services particularly in the area of health.

The WHO is coordinating the global response to human cases of Swine Flue and monitoring the corresponding threat of a pandemic. WHO's Epidemiologist, Dr. Buthaina Ghannem, focused during the workshop on the prevention methods that should be used to combat Swine Flue, including avoiding close contact with people who appear unwell and who have fever and cough; washing hands with soap and water frequently and thoroughly;

practicing good health habits including adequate sleep, eating nutritious food, and keeping physically active.

She also explained that "any country is vulnerable to the pandemic and closing off the borders does not necessarily prevent it from spreading".

Although WHO advises no restriction on regular travel or closure of borders, it considers prudent for people who are ill to delay international travel and for people developing symptoms following international travel to seek medical attention, in line with guidance from national authorities.

Dr. Aziz emphasized the problem of foreign presence in Iraq, coming in and out of the country, that represents a risk that could facilitate importing the disease into Iraq.

Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Rafih Al-Issawi, was assigned the file of Influenza A (H1N1) and the Iraqi government showed readiness to provide all that is needed



Dr. Ghannem During her Presentation on Prevention Methods (UN/Photo)

to keep Iraq free from the pandemic. A 30 million US dollar budget was allocated towards precautionary measures to derail the epidemic, although no cases have been reported in Iraq thus far.

UN Agencies Active in Iraq Activities by Sector April 2009

- The **Governance Sector** through the rule of law team visited the Baghdad Model Court and met with the coordinating committee members of the Higher Judicial council.
- **UNDP** in corporation with **UNODC** conducted a joint workshop that was attended by several Iraqi anti-corruption organisations. The workshop aimed at developing an anti-corruption strategy to share with the government and other relevant parties.
- The **Health Sector Outcome Team** continued to address the ongoing measles outbreak. In the first 13 weeks of 2009, 13,679 cases have been reported and 35 children have died from the disease. **WHO**, through funding received from the Humanitarian Response and the Central Emergency Response Funds, and **UNICEF** are providing two million doses of vaccines and 7.5 million syringes with a focus on Diyala, Dahuk, Erbil, Najaf and Suleimaniyah.
- The **Economic Reconstruction Sector Outcome Team**, through **UNDP**, finalized and presented a Civil Aviation Master Plan to the Iraqi Government. Developed jointly with the International Civil Aviation Authority, the plan assesses and evaluates the state of Iraq's civil aviation infrastructure and suggests action in accordance with international standards and safety regulations.
- The **Education Sector Outcome Team**, through **UNESCO**, held a Training of Trainers on family education at the Jordan University for faculty members from Iraqi Colleges of Education and Sciences in Baghdad, Basra, Al-Anbar and Salah Al Din. A total of 308 lecturers from four Iraqi universities have already participated in capacity-building activities.
- The **WFP**, leader of the **Food Assistance Sector Outcome Team**, presented its new 2009-2014 Iraq strategy plan to the government and UN Country Team (UNCT). Their new strategy aims at shifting the focus towards a more comprehensive food assistance approach, to help the government address root causes of vulnerability and integrate vulnerable groups into society and the economy at large.
- **UN-HABITAT**, leader of the **Shelter and Housing Sector Outcome Team**, held a consultation with donor partners and government (including the Compact Secretariat) on a new country programme 2009-2011. UN-HABITAT's future operational strategy will focus on technical assistance and capacity building, and specific governorate-level strategies.
- The **Information and Analysis unit** enhanced the 3W database with new mapping tools and followed up with UN agencies on 3W project beneficiaries and themes. The IAU published a second series of the governorate profiles in English and Arabic. All governorate profiles and other information products are available on www.iauiraq.org

* Information provided by the UNAMI Humanitarian, Reconstruction & Development Section

UNAMI Focus

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

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