



UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission

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Update on Provincial Elections in Iraq

For the latest information on Provincial Elections in Iraq that will be held in fourteen out of the eighteen governorates by 31 January 2008, please visit:

www.uniraq.org/electoral/IraqElections.asp.

Under this link, several rubrics include Electoral Support; Latest Information on the Upcoming Elections in Iraq; Background and Working Papers; Information for Observers; Electoral Legal Framework; Updates and Press Releases, Basrah Referendum; and Voter Registration Updates for 2008.

Public Outreach

The Electoral Education Campaign (EEC) is a United Nations' project implemented by the United Nations of Project Services with the support of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, in close coordination with the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC).

The Electoral Education Campaign brings together the IHEC, Iraqi civil society and opinion leaders at the national and governorate levels with the aim to inform Iraqi citizens about the electoral process. The EEC has created the Electoral Education Forum, a joint advisory body for electoral education which includes representatives of the IHEC and the Iraqi civil society. The Forum has in turn developed the National Electoral Education Plan (NEEP) and the Electoral Education Manual (EEM) to provide a strategic framework to guide public outreach activities.

SRSR Staffan de Mistura Visits Kirkuk



SRSR Mr. Staffan de Mistura holding a meeting with the Governor of Kirkuk Mr. Abdul Rahmad Mustafa

The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSR) for Iraq Staffan de Mistura conducted a two day mission, 16-17 December 2008, to Kirkuk to meet with the various components including local leaders and representatives of communities. In a show of solidarity with the people of Kirkuk, Mr. de Mistura emphasized the heinous bombing that killed and wounded dozens of innocent civilians at a popular restaurant on 11 December 2008 and how such a tragic bombing should not deter the people of Kirkuk from continuing to unify their ranks and coming together in harmony.

During his mission, Mr. de Mistura discussed the importance of the article 23 committee and the need to start their work as soon as possible. He also stressed that the "UN stands ready to provide technical

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assistance". In addition to this, he explored with his counterparts some of the methods and means through which the international organization could augment its contribution towards the reconstruction and development of Kirkuk.

During the meetings held with the Kirkuk Provincial Council, heads of the different political parties and religious, civil society and tribal, leaders, Mr. de Mistura took note of suggestions and ideas for increased engagement between the UN and the people of Kirkuk.

On the final day of the visit, a press conference was held during which Mr. de Mistura spoke about the objectives of his mission: solidarity in light of the tragic bombing, meetings with the various components of Kirkuk; stressed the importance of the article 23 committee; and responded to questions from media outlets. ■

The Director of Asia at the Department of Political Affairs, Ms. Lisa Buttenheim Visit Iraq

By Randa Jamal

Lisa Buttenheim, Director of Asia at the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) at the United Nations, says that her mission to Iraq was overdue and she was glad to come in 2008.

Based at UN headquarters in New York City, Ms Buttenheim was last in Iraq in January of 1991 during a period she describes as "a very different time in the history of the UN in Iraq". At that time she accompanied the Secretary-general Perez de Cuellar to meet with the Iraqi leadership in an effort to persuade them to withdraw troops from Kuwait. She described her few encounters with Iraqis with sadness, and said, "The aura of Baghdad was gloomy at the time and the few I spoke to seemed very apprehensive that the war was about to



UN delegation holding a meetings with Chair of Kirkuk Provincial Council, Mr. Rizgar Ali

start. They expressed hope that the UN would find a peaceful solution."

Eighteen years later, Ms. Buttenheim notes, things are different, even in terms of the relationship between Iraq and the UN. She is hopeful about the difference the UN makes and feels that Iraq has everything it takes to stand on its own.

A key objective for her mission is to see how UNAMI interfaces with the Iraqi people. "It is a time of transition in Iraq and UNAMI's mandate will continue until next August", the Director shared, saying that "Iraq is always a priority, given the quarterly reports issued by the Security Council and the complex political and humanitarian situation gripping the country." Ms. Buttenheim observed that the people working at UNAMI are enthusiastic and know the issues. She said, "I am happy to be here to see what people go through and I praise the dedication of both international and national staff. Everything we do on the national level should be done in close consultation with the Iraqi people and government."

Nonetheless, Ms. Buttenheim noted that security constraints, particularly in relation to UN movement, have prevented her from being able to spend as much time as

she would like with the people of Iraq. She noted that the UN is eager to facilitate movement and "be out there to explain our mandate and what the agencies are trying to achieve". This visit will enable Ms. Buttenheim to better represent the position of the mission both vis-à-vis member states and the various UN departments, including Field and Support and Safety and Security. She said she would return to UN HQ with renewed vigor in support of UNAMI and in her capacity as Director of Asia at DPA.

Ms. Buttenheim, who has lived in the Middle East and traveled throughout the region, considers Iraq an integral part of the region. She says, "Both national and regional dialogue and reconciliation will contribute to a stable Iraq and international peace and security." Consequently, she is keen that "Iraq should benefit from all the best the UN could offer whether it's from the UN secretariat (such as DPA, DFS, Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights and OCHA) and its agencies, programmes and funds (UNDP, WHO UNICEF, UNESCO).

Ms Buttenheim also visited Kirkuk with SRSR Staffan de Mistura, with whom she met the governor and various community leaders. ■

Music and Art as Means to Mark the Declaration of Human Rights Day in Baghdad



Audience with Paintings Hung on the Walls of Auditorium

By Randa Jamal

Human rights violations in Iraq have been pervasive, widespread and difficult to ignore. Sources for these violations and violators are many, mainly conducted under the cover of feigned pretexts, and the victims, whether randomly chosen or targeted on the basis of ethnic, religious, gender or political orientation, almost always have no recourse for justice, or holding the victimizer accountable.

The United Nations, the premier global human rights organization, has given holding the world community accountable to internationally acceptable standards top priority. For the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), these values and commitments are aspired to be given special attention and resources.

Iraq's Human Rights plight is steeped in the long history of wars and international sanctions. The situation has become more critical and exacerbated since the 2003 invasion and as a result of the violent strife that has been chronically inflicted upon the country in recent years.

UNAMI's mandate calls for both protection and promotion through monitoring and reporting on human rights violations in the country, and to this end, the Mission issues reports that record and report violations and names its perpetrators, be they committed by the Multi National Force, the government of Iraq or any other group(s), and whether they are committed in MNF-I and Gol detention centers, or by the so-called international contractors, or in the shadowy places that remain hidden from the public eye.

On the occasion of United Nations' 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNAMI organized a cultural event in Baghdad, on 7 December 2008, to mark this important date, signifying UN solidarity with the people of Iraq, on issues of human rights in particular, and on partnerships in general.

The event was attended by the Iraqi Human Rights Minister Mrs. Wijdan Salem and officials from her ministry, thirty human rights NGO representatives, students from fine arts academies and institutes, students, teachers and deans and other representatives from the international community, and UNAMI staff.

The highlight of the event was a student art competition. This was co-organized by UNAMI and Baghdad's fine arts academies and institutes on the theme of "What Human Rights mean to you?" In total, thirty paintings were exhibited on the sidewalls of UNAMI's HQ Auditorium, depicting the meaning of human rights violations for Iraq's youth. Using abstract and figurative means, the artwork portrayed themes of injustice, inequality, fear and coercion.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, echoed the focus of the students' artwork and noted in his opening remarks that, "there is much that remains to be done," despite some achievements of the Government of Iraq in the promotion of human rights.

Following the SRSR's remarks, Ms. Salem listed human rights gains in Iraq, emphasizing the establishment of an Independent Human Rights Commission, and growth in the field of human rights capacity building and train-



INSO String Quartet Performing "Song Without Borders"

ing in the country.

Another memorable feature of the event was a performance by the *Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra (INSO) String Quartet* of a song entitled *Song Without Borders*. Steve Heitzeg composed this piece in honor of the United Nations, after the bombing of its Head Quarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad. The first movement of *Song Without Borders* is entitled *Universal Declaration*.

In concluding the event, all students received certificates for their artwork contribution towards the competition. In addition, a jury comprised of Mr. de Mistura, Ms. Salem, Dr. Salam Jabbar, Head of Plastic Arts at the Fine Arts College, Mr. Imad Al Safi, Director of Fine Arts Institute for Boys and Mr. Kamel Hussein, Head of the Plastic Art Department at the Fine Arts Institute for Girls, selected the top three paintings and announced the names of the artists. First prize winning painting will be



Painting: First Prize

used to create a UNAMI poster promoting the theme of human rights.

The winning painting clearly depicted international silence over grave violations of Human Rights that gripped the country. It illustrated the suffocation of an entire population particularly emphasizing the plight of women as being hostage to the overwhelming international silence.



Painting: Second Prize

As for the painting in second place, it illustrates the lack of opportunities and grim future children, both boys and girls, face. Two children locked behind bars looking outward to the world with sadness and lack of hope.

The third is also telling of poverty that stuck one of the richest oil countries in the world in general and to the right to food in particular. It clearly highlights everyone's right to food.

The artistic talent was visible not only among the three winning paintings, but among all the art work exhibited on the walls of the Auditorium. Portraying the situation in Iraq through the lens of Iraqi students, who are aspiring to be artists, was capturing in relaying the difficulties they endure, as Iraq's young generation, along with the rest of the population.

To view all competing paintings, please visit:

<http://www.uniraq.org/gallery/HumanRightsDay2008.asp>



Painting: Third Prize

Iraqi Expatriate Professionals Back in Iraq for the First Conference on Iraq's Capacities and Expertise

By Randa Jamal

Under the banner of the Iraqi capacities and expertise, the Iraqi Government held a two day conference, 22-23 December 2008, at Al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad. The Conference, titled *the First Global Conference for Iraqi Expatriate Capacities and Expertise*, aimed at reversing the Iraqi brain-drain phenomena that has chronically risen in Iraq during the many years of war and sanctions, and spiked dramatically as a result of the 2003 invasion and the subsequent violence. Holding this conference sought to explore the means and ways to remedy this situation, establish a relevant database making the return of expatriates to their homeland easier, and to retain Iraq's rich pool of experts in the rebuilding and reconstruction of the country.

The conference, the first of its kind, was held under the auspices of the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR) and chaired by the First Deputy of the Council of Representatives, and President of the High Committee for the Conference Sheikh Khalid Al-Atiya.

According to Dr. Abdul Satter Aboud, head of the Scientific Committee for the conference, 240 Iraqi expatriates covering a wide range of specialized fields were invited, and approximately 200 people attended the conference. This represents a turnout of 83%, a figure that surprised the organizers and underscored the eagerness of those Iraqis who have been forced to flee their homes to return in large numbers to help repair the severely damaged infrastructure, and contribute to the urgent need for the rebuilding and reconstruction of their country.

In his remarks, the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki emphasized to the participants the importance

of their participation is the reconstruction and rebuilding of Iraq saying "we have created the environment and the opportunity for you to participate in this important endeavor and in all honesty we will not be able to build the country without you". He added, "We will provide all that is needed to facilitate your return and for you to contribute to the reconstruction and rebuilding of your country."

Moved by this was Fazel, an Electrical Engineer, who has been away from his country for the past 26 years. He said, "I now live in Karraj, Iran and own a factory that specializes in electronics and I hope to return". He will assess the situation and the opportunities at hand emphasizing that "we must contribute to the rebuilding and the reconstruction of this country".

Similarly, Iman who is currently living in Abu Dhabi and is a civil engineer, and who left Iraq more than 15 years ago, said that Iraqis are tired of living in exile and being away from their country. "Iraq needs us and our expertise and now I am beginning to seriously consider the option of returning to take part in the reconstruction of Iraq", she said.

Additionally, she said that "particularly for Iraqis, the burden of the global financial crises made us feel like strangers outside of Iraq and thus created a stronger urge for returning to our home."

Dr. Abboud said that 106 Iraqis came from North America and Europe; another 45 from the United Arab Emirates; 42 from Jordan; and 12 from the Lebanon in addition to others who also attended. The largest group of participants were medical doctors (22%) followed by engineers, scientists (chemists, physicists, and computer experts) then a number of others with expertise in other fields.

Although he is more optimistic about the long term, Dr. Abboud doubts that a large number of experts will return in the short run explaining that they all have com-

Recommendations:

As a result of the two day conference, several recommendations were made and articulated through the workshops and joint discussions. Some of the recommendations are:

- In light of the strategy presented on the first day of the conference, creating a commission, purely under the auspices of the Ministers' Council, that will reform the legal aspect that deals with capacities and expertise through legislature that will provide incentives and conditions to facilitate retaining Iraqi expertise back into the country;
- Amongst the most important incentives and conditions for facilitating retaining Iraqi capacities and expertise are security, safety, proper housing, grants for relocating costs and furniture, certifying the years of work experience outside and returning to jobs regardless of age;
- The Government of Iraq will also specify the capacities and expertise needed for Iraq and will also create a fund for developing capacities in addition to putting forth a strategy that aims at protecting professionals and ensuring that the state will provide them with employment opportunities once they return;
- For those who choose to remain outside of Iraq, the government will encourage them to remain connected to their country by investing in their capacities and expertise through projects and programmes that will facilitate the reconstruction of the country;
- Creating an academic and scientific research center that will identify the capacities needed including creating an electronic website for registering Iraqis, their specializations, capacities and expertise outside Iraq and connecting them to the inside.

mitments and contractual obligations in their current places of residence and that the CoR only began planning for the conference in September-October of 2008. He is particularly enthusiastic about the return of medical doctors, the largest segment of participants in the conference, especially in light of the current critical health concerns in Iraq, noting the need for implementing the proper legislations to facilitate their return, including security, residential and compensatory incentives.

Giving special attention to medical doctors represented a strategic move by the CoR organizing committee given that 8,000 physicians have abandoned their government jobs at health centers since the US led invasion in 2003 as Karen Laub of the Associated Press indicates in her article *Health Chiefs Battle to Bring Back Iraqi Doctors*, published on 7 September 2008. In quoting a health Official, Laub says

that Iraq needs 100,000 physicians and only has 15,500. In comparison to oil rich Iraq, Egypt and Jordan have four times as many doctors: 24 per 10,000 residents to 6 per 10,000 residents in Iraq.

On a unifying note, Dr. Abdul Sattar reiterated that one of the main criteria for the conference is not to mention politics or political affiliations. "This conference is dedicated to Iraqi expertise and Capacities towards the rebuilding and reconstruction of this country", he noted.

In responding to a question about the objectives of the conference, Sheikh Al-Atiya, said that the conference is for holding constructive discussions and for soliciting and retaining Iraqi expertise. "Iraq needs experts in various areas for economic development", he said. He also said that recommendations will include creating a data base that identify Iraqi experts in exile and coming up with specific recommen-

dations on incentives for retaining Iraqi experts back into Iraq. These recommendations will be presented before the parliament for approval and ultimately implementation.

Although many hurdles are in the way of returning Iraqi expertise from abroad, many of them are intent on returning to take part in the reconstruction of their country. In the meantime, Iraqis longing to return will wait to see if the parliament's promises of safety and security, including incentives for return, will be realized. ■

Iraq's Children Present their Peace Flag

On December 3, 2008, the Mid-Term Review meeting of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Government of Iraq's Program of Cooperation 2007-2010 was a distinguished occasion for Iraq's children to present their Peace Flag and to ensure that their voice is heard by audiences around the world and amongst their own communities.

The Peace Flag initiative is part of UNICEF's Child media project which was established to empower Iraqi



Iraq Children's Peace Flag

children to capture their current realities and visions for the future, through diaries, drawings, photography, creative writing and news reporting.

In July and August 2008, more than 200 talented Iraqi children aged 8-15, chosen from all 18 governorates, were asked to create their very own image of peace by painting their visions on canvas. They were selected from schools, orphanages and internally displaced persons' camps.

The 18 individual canvas were eventually assembled to create a 5.5 x 3 meters flag, reflecting Iraq Children's combined hopes and dreams of peace in the country.

The colorful masterpiece was formally unveiled by Iraq's Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr. Hoshiyar Zebari at the opening session of the plenary mid-term review meeting, which was attended by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Mr. Staffan de Mistura, government representatives, members of parliament, representatives of the international community and UN agencies. The unveiling ceremony was preceded by the presentation of the Children's Appeal by two Iraqi Youth, asking for the fulfillment of children's rights. A Song for Peace performed by the Iraqi Children Choir closed the brief ceremony launching the Iraq Children's Peace Flag.

Children are "at the very heart of peace building and recovery in Iraq, while promoting national and international solidarity to deliver for them", said Ambassador Ilkka Uusitalo, head of the European Commission delegation to Iraq, who supported UNICEF and its implementing partners on realizing the Peace Flag initiative. ■

Description of the Conference:

On 22 December, the conference started off with opening remarks by the Head of the Conference, Sheikh Khaled Al-Atiya, the President of the Council Mr. Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani (resigned on the second day of conference), the Prime Minister Nouri Maliki, the Representative of Higher Education for the Kurdistan region Mr. Barween Muslih, on behalf of Expatriates Mr. Farhan Baqir and on the inside competencies Mr. Abdul Majeed Hamza.

Several invited speakers presented on the following topics:

- Strategy for Encompassing Iraqi Capacities and Competencies;
- The reality of the Iraqi community in Britain and Europe;
- Database for Iraqi expertise;
- Research study on the economic and social infrastructure for expatriates;
- Research study on possibility of retaining Iraqi brains;
- Research study on the legal modalities for the law on investing in Iraqi capacities;
- Research study on the Return of Capacities;
- Research study Investing in or Loosing Iraqi Capacities/brains;
- Research study on developing local products and connecting with Iraqi capacities outside of Iraq.

On the second and last day, of the conference, the following topics were entertained:

- The situation of health in Iraq;
- Oil in Iraq;
- Services in Iraq;
- Higher Education in Iraq.

The following workshops were held:

- Creating and building a database network for Iraqi capacities and expertise;
- Finding mechanisms for soliciting Iraqi capacities and expertise in exile;
- Finding mechanism for direct contact with Iraqi capacities and expertise abroad.

Iraqi Prominent Scholar Currently with the United Nations Tells his Story



Dr. Hindawi Tells his Story to the UNAMI Focus

By Randa Jamal

The meaning of being back in Iraq

In 2004, Dr. Hussain Hindawi was selected to join the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) as Chairman of the Commission, a position that he held for three years. In 2005, under the chairmanship of Dr. Hindawi, the IECI oversaw the National elections for the Council of Representative, the Constitutional Referendum and election of the Kurdistan Parliament, and Governorate councils in all 18 Iraqi provinces.

Early on, it became apparent that there were complexities germane to elections in Kirkuk, requiring unique remedy to handle such a particularity according to Dr. Hindawi. He explains, "these special needs were clearly reflected in Article 23 of the Governorates Electoral Law."

Article 23 pertains to elections in Kirkuk only and provides for postponement and for the formation of a parliamentary committee of seven people (2 Arabs, 2 Kurds, 2 Turkomans and one Christian) to make recommendations, before 31 March 2009, on how to conduct elections in Kirkuk. In addition to the seven members, elected through the Kirkuk governorate's

list, seven experts will be selected by the various parliamentary blocks (based on the same ethnic and religious criteria). The four areas that this committee will focus on are: 1) defining the map of Kirkuk and mechanisms for power sharing; 2) determining violations against public and private property within the governorate of Kirkuk before and after 9 April 2003, with the Government of Iraq guaranteeing the correction of these violations in accordance with Iraqi laws; 3) reviewing and examining all demographic data and records, including the voter registry, and submitting its binding recommendations to the IHEC; and 4) presenting its report no later than 31 March 2009. The Council of Representatives will follow up and guarantee the implementation of the committee's report.

Where he comes from

Dr. Hindawi, is an extraordinary, well-versed and well-traveled figure. Born in 1947, in the town of Al Hindiya, that has produced many prominent musicians, artists, poets, and politicians, including the current Iraqi Prime Minister, Mr. Nuri Al Maliki. Dr. Hindawi possesses a global experience. Although he now spends most of his time in Iraq, he has traveled from Iraq's

Northern Mountains, to Syrian, Lebanese and European cities, as well as to Haiti. Hindawi described his town, which is now part of the Karbala Governorate, as secular with diverse ethnic groups, including Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans and others.

Moving to the Iraqi Capital

A graduate of Baghdad University, Dr. Hindawi began working in the print houses of various newspapers and magazines at the age of 14. This distinguished him from other scholars and exposed him to prominent literary scholars. One of these scholars has impacted Hindawi's life is Palestinian painter and novelist Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, at the time, editor in chief of *Al Amiloon fe Al Nift*, or *Petroleum Magazine*. Dr. Hindawi describes his relationship with Jabra as one encompassing mentorship, friendship, support and exposure to global literature. "Jabra mentored younger aspirants, taking them under his wing." He says, "My cultural creativity, particularly in poems and literary criticism, sprung out during those years and later I started to publish my work in major Iraqi magazines and newspapers."

To the North and then to a longer Journey

Dr. Hindawi scaled up from being a young worker in print shops to being a proofreader. Later, he traveled to and explored several countries and became part of the left movement, which opposed the oppression of minorities in Iraq. Al Hindawi says, "From 1971 to 1974, I was in the Kurdish mountains of Northern Iraq, which exposed me to the majority of Kurdish leaders". And, he said, "As an Arab, I fully believed in a democratic Iraq and self determination for the Kurds."

Near the end of 1974 Dr. Hindawi undertook a long, unforgettable journey, walking on foot for 15 days, from the Iranian border, *Gal-lalla*, to *Zakho* close to the Syrian Iraqi border. He spent four months

in Syria then he moved to Beirut where he started working for *Al Hadaf Magazine*, which was started by the late Ghassan Kanafani, another prominent Palestinian Novelist and Activist. He also wrote for the Lebanese newspapers *Al Nahar* and *Al Safir*, before moving to France to attend Poitiers University, where he received his MA and a PHD in Philosophy. Poitiers University later hired Dr. Hindawi to

teach Arabic literature and Islamic Civilization.

Published Work

Dr. Hindawi is widely published in French and Arabic. In addition to several articles and scholarly papers, his books include *Hegel and Islam*, *Oriental Despotism or Despotism in the Orient*, and *Babylonian Philosophy* are all in French. In Arabic his books include *History and the State between Ibn*

Khaldoun and Hagel and *On the verge of Philosophy* are widely considered a fundamental addition to the Arab Library of Philosophy.

He takes much pride in his Iraqi identity and his work with the United Nations, which he sees as a key element for achieving national reconciliation, enhancing the electoral process and helping people in general and Iraqis in particular. ■

UNAMI Focus

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