

UNICEF Concludes Child Protection Mission to Kirkuk

Baghdad, 11 May 2010 - UNICEF recently conducted a three-day technical mission to Kirkuk to discuss child protection issues in the governorate and explore prospects of creating a protective environment for children in Kirkuk. The mission included UNICEF Iraq's Deputy Representative, Mr. Osama Makkawi, the Chief of North Zonal Office, Mrs. Joyce Gachiri, as well as UNICEF's Protection Specialist and Communications Specialist.

During the visit, the delegation met with the Governor of Kirkuk, Mr. Abdul Rahman 'Mustafa Fattah, and the Chairman of Kirkuk's Provincial Council, Mr. Rizgar Ali. In the meetings the UNICEF delegation reiterated its support to make Kirkuk a Child-friendly City that could become a model to be replicated in cities throughout the country, thereby contributing to the building of an Iraq Fit for Children.

In an effort to get a first hand understanding of issues and grave children rights violations and identify specific child protection measures, the mission held in depth discussions with Kirkuk Provincial Council's Women and Children Initiatives Committee (WCIC), Civil Society Organizations working on children and youth issues as well as lawyers from Kirkuk's Bar Association.

The mission, coordinated by the Human Rights Office of the United Nation's Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) and joined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), focused on issues children are currently facing such as children who are in conflict with the law, child labor, orphans, street children, violence against women and girls and the use of children by armed groups.

In all meetings, UNICEF underlined its readiness to provide technical support for the provincial government and other influential stakeholders who could influence policy and, recognizing children as the future of the governorate, help bring children to the center of Kirkuk's present development agenda. UNICEF also informed the provincial government of its plan to establish an office in Kirkuk to follow-up on all programme interventions in the governorate and strengthen partnership with the provincial government to increase investments in children to better protect their rights.

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