

On the International Day of Peace, Let Us Continue Our Efforts to Give Life Back to Iraq*

By Dr. Naeema Al-Gasseer **

On 21 September, the world celebrated the International Day of Peace. This day spotlights the global United Nations effort to end the misery of war and conflict, which cast its grim shadow over so many countries and people.

The International Day of Peace also coincides with the holy Muslim festivals of Eid Al-Fitr – which celebrates the importance of tolerance, love and extending a helping hand to the poor and the needy as key tools for peace.

There could be no better occasion to turn our eyes to Iraq, a country devastated by war, where tens of thousands of lives have been lost and too many families torn apart.

Despite the courageous efforts of ordinary Iraqis to pull back from the brink, Iraq still suffers today. Every morning, Iraqis wake to another day of hard work to plant the seeds of permanent peace in their society.

Peace is the best climate for freedom to flourish. Peace for Iraq – as elsewhere - does not mean accepting the unacceptable, but rather working together in a common purpose. It means offering humanitarian lifelines to those in greatest need, and striving for social development as well as for political accords. It means joining the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals that the United Nations is striving to realize.

To establish the values of peace, the UN - together with organisations – is committed to working with Iraq's government and society to bring the dream of safe streets, rule of law, good governance, better schools, jobs and services closer every day. Every Iraqi cherishes this dream for their family and country's future - regardless of social class, sect or religion.

We support Iraq as it seeks to implement its own National Development Plan, based on fundamental respect for human rights and the equality of men and women.

At this critical moment – a potential turning point for every Iraqi - Iraq will need every ounce of positive energy and goodwill available both inside and outside the country to open a new chapter of stability and prosperity. Iraq's neighbours have a particularly important role to play to help promote a nation flourishing through determination, faith, dialogue, self-restraint, tolerance and the triumph of principles over misunderstanding.

Our faith is in the courage and strength of ordinary Iraqis, and their ability to bring change. But they cannot stand alone. Every child, woman, man - every Iraqi - deserves to live in peace.

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