



United Nations Office for Project Services



PRESS RELEASE

Conference on Human Rights and Civil Society in Iraq

Amman, 22nd November, 2007 – The United Nations Office for Project Services and the European Commission hosted a conference on human rights and civil society in Iraq as the final stage of its project for the “*Promotion of Human Rights Culture in Iraq Through Strengthening Iraqi Civil Society Organisations*”, funded by the European Union through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, and with support from the United Nations Development Program.

The conference entitled “*Nurturing Human Rights - Towards an Effective Human Rights Protection System in Iraq*” brought together representatives from the Government of Iraq, the Iraqi civil society, dignitaries from Jordan, the European Commission, the International Community and the United Nations. Achievements of the project were presented and highlighted the successful and courageous work of Iraqi human rights defenders. The crucial role played by Iraqi civil society in establishing an effective human rights system in Iraq, and the relationship of civil society organisations with the Iraqi Government were debated, and the conference recognised the need for the international community to continue its support, both financially and technically to build on these achievements.

Peter Sorensen, Director of UNOPS IOQC stated “*[CSO’s] direct links with the Iraqi population enhance their effectiveness in defending and promoting the respect of human rights.... Nevertheless, civil society organisations must be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and capacity with which to make an effective impact.*”

The project focused on the rehabilitation of torture victims, on the protection of detainees’ rights and on building capacities of civil society organisations for human rights education in Iraq. It was implemented in partnership with the Arab Institute for Human Rights, the Italian NGO *Un Ponte Per* and the International Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims.

For further information please contact Laetitia Kraus, UNOPS laetitiak@unops.org