

PRESS RELEASE

Iraq's human rights record examined by the United Nations Human Rights Council

Geneva, 19 February 2010 - Iraq's human rights situation was assessed this week by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism during the seventh session of its working group.

A delegation from the government of Iraq, represented by the Minister of Human Rights, Her Excellency Wijdan Salim, presented Iraq's national report which was considered together with a stakeholder report with contributions from civil society and a separate report prepared by the UN.

Iraq's preparations for the UPR process were supported by a project implemented by the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), funded by the Government of Finland and the European Union through the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund.

Both the government and a group of 25 civil society organisations were provided with capacity building and technical assistance throughout the parallel drafting of the government national report and a contribution to the UPR stakeholder report.

"Iraq's participation in the UPR process is an important step forward in the ongoing process to improve the human rights situation in the country," noted Mr. Saad al-Ibrahem, Director General of the National Institute of Human Rights, Ministry of Human Rights.

The national report contains information on Iraq's efforts to meet its human rights obligations under international law and identifies challenges and improvements to be made. It was drafted by an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Ministry of Human Rights and was shared with civil society through a web based consultation prior to being submitted to the Human Rights Council.

Following the review session in Geneva, the working group of the HRC prepared a country report on Iraq, incorporating Member States' comments, which was adopted in a plenary session on 19th February 2010.

So far, the Iraqi government accepted 77% of the 176 recommendations proposed by the Member States in the country report. Among these, were the following:

- (i) strengthening efforts to bring domestic human rights legislation into line with international human rights law, including constitutional legislation;*
- (ii) issuing a standing invitation to all human rights special procedures;*
- (iii) improving cooperation with United Nations Treaty Bodies by submitting overdue reports;*
- (iv) promptly establishing the Independent Higher Commission for Human Rights;*
- (v) advancing the promotion of gender equality and equity including enacting legislation to combat domestic violence and sexual violence and ban female genital mutilation;*
- (vi) adopting measures to criminalize the recruitment of child soldiers;*
- (vii) considering enacting a specific law to combat trafficking of persons.*

Among the recommendations not supported by the Iraqi government were the moratorium and abolition of the death penalty, the decriminalization of homosexuality and the increase of penal responsibility to the age of 18.

The UN support project will continue to engage in the UPR process by helping the government and civil society to implement a country wide awareness raising campaign and a national conference on the outcome and follow up of the UPR recommendations for Iraq.

*For further information please see the attached fact sheet or
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