Baghdad, 6 June 2016 – The UN and partners are in a race against time to provide life-saving assistance to people fleeing escalating violence in Anbar, particularly around the battle for Fallujah. On 5 June, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Health Organization (WHO) travelled to a series of camps established to receive people escaping the violence. In the past ten days, approximately 10,000 people have come to these camps to seek safety and services. An estimated 50,000 people remain trapped in the city as the military offensive continues. The Government of Iraq had established a number of camps for the 60,000 people already displaced in Anbar, and in anticipation of movement from the Fallujah area. These facilities are overstretched, with little capacity to absorb more people. Residents in Fallujah have been living with extreme levels of violence and humanitarian actors have not been able to reach them for nearly a year. In addition to violence, residents have to cope with acute shortages of food, medicine and other basic services, such as water supplies, with no way to leave the city. The joint UN mission found people sheltering in tents or huddled in whatever shade they could find to escape the searing heat and blowing dust. Most people fled with just their clothes, and many families had been separated from male members who were undergoing screening. One woman approached the mission team members and asked for help, saying: “We came with nothing, we have nothing,” which characterizes the situation of thousands of other people in the camps.

The UN and partners are spear-heading a joint rapid response that provides safe drinking water, food rations, and hygiene and sanitation assistance and access to health care services to families and those affected by the displacement. Safety is also a major concern, given that the front lines are just several kilometres from the camps. The UN expects the conflict to escalate and with that more people to be displaced.

The UN appeals to all parties to the conflict in Iraq to protect families and provide those affected by the violence free and safe access away from the conflict.

As a result of escalating violence in the past two years, more than 3.4 million people are now displaced all over Iraq, more than half are children. Across the country, more than 10 million people need lifesaving humanitarian assistance. UNICEF, WFP, WHO and IOM, along with other partners in Iraq, reiterate the need for urgent additional funding to provide uninterrupted life-saving humanitarian operations.

The Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq has a funding gap of over 550 million US.
Greater assistance needed to help tackle Iraq’s humanitarian crisis

Baghdad, 2 May 2016 - Iraq will continue to need greater humanitarian assistance as the country’s displacement crisis shows no sign of easing, with more than 3.4 million people displaced and ongoing conflict causing thousands more families to leave their homes in search of safety, said Amin Awad, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Bureau for the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, concluding a visit to Erbil and Basra.

During talks in Erbil with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani, and other senior ministers, UNHCR’s MENA Director acknowledged the generosity of the KR-I authorities in providing humanitarian assistance to both Syrian refugees and displaced Iraqis despite facing serious economic challenges. Around 98% of Syrian refugees in Iraq are living in the Kurdistan Region, in addition to more than one million Iraqis displaced due to conflict – a figure accounting for 25% of the population of KR-I.

Mr Awad visited Debaga camp in Makhmour district in KR-I, where more than six thousand newly displaced people have sought shelter and are living in overcrowded conditions. UNHCR is going to provide additional shelter for 550 families at a new tented camp set up by the agency at the football stadium.

New temporary tented site opened in Makhmour district, KR-I

Erbil, 03 May 2016 - A new temporary tented site, built by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) with support from other humanitarian agencies, to host nearly one thousand newly displaced people who’ve fled fighting in Makhmour district, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), has opened this week.

So far, 79 displaced families (376 individuals) have moved onto the site. The camp is located in the grounds of a football stadium in Debaga. The facility will be expanded to shelter around 550 families.

The site was built in response to increasing numbers of newly displaced families at an existing camp in Debaga, which is now hosting around 8000 people. The families had fled villages east of the Tigris river to avoid being caught up in military clashes as the Iraqi Security Forces carried out operations to re-take control of villages held by extremist groups.

As many as 30,000 newly displaced individuals may arrive in Makhmour over the coming weeks as the military offensive continues. “The newly-built facility will help to ease some of the overcrowding that we have seen since the latest fighting began”, said Fred Cussigh, head of UNHCR’s field response unit in Erbil.

“People had been living in difficult conditions, with several families having to share a tent in some cases.”

New arrivals moving to the stadium site received mattresses and kitchen sets from UNHCR as well as kerosene for cooking, drinking water and basic food items from UNHCR’s partner, the Barzani Charity Foundation.

UNHCR plans to carry out more improvements at the site, including creating a communal shaded area as the summer approaches.

Despite the likelihood of increased demands for humanitarian assistance, overall funding for the 2016 plan to help nearly 250,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq (the Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, or 3RP) is just 23% funded, while the UN’s Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq this year is only 22% funded.
Community engagement videos promote awareness for displaced Iraqis

Iraq, 3 May 2016 - IOM in Iraq is producing a series of 15 community engagement videos and radio announcements to raise awareness among displaced Iraqis on safety issues and other important concerns faced daily by vulnerable communities. The effort is funded by European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO).

The videos are part of a wider project, under which ECHO is providing EUR 6 million to IOM Iraq to deliver non-food item kits, emergency shelter support, Camp Coordination and Camp Management services and Communication with Communities activities, to meet the basic needs of internally displaced Iraqis across the country.

To date, IOM has developed videos and radio announcements on the topics of safe use of electricity and kerosene, and fire prevention in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. The first video produced under this project encouraged beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance to contact the Interagency IDP Information Center and provide their feedback on assistance received.

Upcoming videos and radio announcements will cover issues related to health, waste management in IDP camps, water and electricity conservation, as well as protection concerns. The tag line of the videos is: “Live safely, so you can return home safely.” Topics are chosen through feedback received from IDPs, humanitarian organizations and government agencies.

Television, radio and social media were selected as the means of communication for these messages as they are among the most widely accessed forms of media for displaced Iraqis. The videos and radio announcements are aired on main television and radio channels in Iraq including Alsumaria TV, Baghdad TV, Al Iraqia FM and Sumer FM. The videos are also being shared widely on social media, as many displaced Iraqis have access to the internet, especially those living outside camps. They are also used for training purposes by various organizations, including the Global CCCM Cluster, which is incorporating the videos in their standard training curriculum.

The videos and radio announcements are part of IOM Iraq’s Communications with Communities project, based on the principle that information and communications are critical forms of humanitarian assistance.

The spirit of effective two-way communications, to solicit feedback from IDPs and other beneficiaries, IOM Iraq will implement surveys via social media and in community sessions to assess the project’s viewing rates and message impact.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “Displaced Iraqis require a wide range of services, including non-food items, livelihoods support and healthcare – but they also need information – on safety precautions, camp management principles and means to access humanitarian assistance. We look forward to continuing our efforts to share relevant information with displaced Iraqis, in cooperation with the UN Country Team, humanitarian partners and government representatives. We appreciate ECHO’s ongoing support towards IOM’s response to the displacement crisis in Iraq.”

The videos are available on the IOM Iraq Communicating with Communities YouTube page: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmU_MhNVenKAkgEshMNjf_g

Baghdad, 25 May 2016 - Humanitarian agencies on the ground in Iraq are warning that civilians in Fallujah in Iraq are at extreme risk. “We are receiving distressing reports of civilians trapped inside Fallujah who are desperate to escape to safety, but can’t,” said Lise Grande, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. “Parties to the conflict are obliged to uphold international humanitarian law and do everything possible to protect civilians and ensure they receive life-saving assistance.”

Since 22 May, 800 people have reached safety, mostly from outlying areas. Some families report having to walk for hours under harrowing conditions to reach safety. People trapped in the city centre are thought to be most at risk—unable to flee. At least 50,000 people are thought to remain in the city.

The few people who have left Fallujah report that conditions are dire. “Food supplies are limited and tightly controlled. Medicines are exhausted and many families have no choice but to rely on dirty and unsafe water sources,” Ms. Grande said. “We want to tell the people of Fallujah that humanitarians are doing everything we can to provide assistance wherever they are and to advocate for their safety.”

Humanitarian partners have been gearing up for weeks to provide protection, shelter, water, health care and food assistance to people fleeing the city. Iraqi authorities have already established camps in Ameriyat al Falluja, 30 kilometres south of Fallujah, to house people who may displace. “The UN and its partners have humanitarian teams and supplies on the ground. We’ve already begun providing people with food, water and shelter as they arrive and we’ll be there as more people arrive,” said Ms. Grande.

The United Nations estimates that 10 million people in Iraq need some form of humanitarian assistance including 3.4 million people who have been displaced since January 2014. An additional 3 million people are thought to be living under ISIL control. More than 650,000 displaced people have returned to their homes since early 2015, many to areas partially or nearly completely destroyed.

The Iraq humanitarian appeal for 2016 requested US$8861 million; only 30 per cent has been funded to date. “It’s heart-breaking that so many people need help and that we can’t do what’s necessary because we don’t have the minimum funding we require,” said Ms. Grande. Humanitarian partners estimate that $300 million is needed by July to sustain first line emergency response across the country.
UNHCR help for newly displaced families from Falluja

Baghdad, 27 May 2016 - The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, is today (Friday 27) delivering emergency relief supplies to families who managed to escape the besieged Iraqi city of Falluja over the last few days. More than 800 people have fled Falluja, mostly from outlying areas, as the government continues its military offensive to re-take control of the city, around 60 kilometers west of the capital, Baghdad. Falluja was the first city to be taken by extremist groups in January 2014. Since then, more than 3.2 million people have been displaced across Iraq.

Tens of thousands of civilians still remain trapped inside Falluja, prevented from escaping by extremist forces as the city continues to come under heavy bombardment by Iraqi forces. In December, routes out of the city were cut off and civilians prevented from leaving. Since then, food and medicines have been in short supply and families have had to rely on unsafe water sources.

UNHCR and its partner, Muslim Aid, are distributing emergency relief items to families who have escaped Falluja and are sheltering in one camp it has helped to set up in Amiriya al-Falluja, in Anbar governorate. The agency will also open two new camps next week in Habaninah Tourist City, that will able to accommodate 500 newly-displaced families.

"UNHCR and its partners have already built extra shelters ready to assist newly-displaced families and we will distribute emergency supplies to provide them with some essential daily items," said UNHCR’s Assistant Representative in Iraq, Leila Jane Nassif.

"The small number of families who managed to flee Falluja did so putting their lives at grave risk in the attempt," said Ms. Nassif. "They have told us harrowing tales of their escape, travelling on foot for hours at night, moving across fields and hiding in disused irrigation pipes. Others have lost their lives trying to leave the city, including women and children. Other reports say a number of people attempting to depart have been executed or whipped; and one man’s leg was amputated.

“There are reports of a dramatic increase in the number of executions of men and older boys in Falluja refusing to fight on behalf of extremist forces. And many people have been killed or buried alive under the rubble of their homes in the course of ongoing military operations.

“Civilian lives should not be held hostage in this way. It is vital that safe routes are opened, allowing civilians access to safety and live-saving assistance” she added.

Perilous journeys made in search of safety

Qamishli/Damascus, Syria, 27 May 2016 (UNHCR)- Some of the more than 4,000 Iraqi refugees who escaped ISIL-held Mosul and surrounding areas and reached Syria in the past month have described the perilous journeys they were forced to make in search of safety.

Since the beginning of May, a total of 4,266 Iraqi refugees have arrived at the Al-Hol camp, located 14 kilometers from the Iraqi border in Syria’s northeastern Hasakah Governorate. Most reported fleeing the extremists in control of the northern Iraqi city, the impending battle to recapture it, or ongoing clashes in surrounding areas.

As a result, and ahead of a possible further influx of Iraqi refugees, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has organized five planned airlifts of emergency items such as tents and blankets from Jordan to Qamishli, in the far north of Hasakah.

The first delivery of 13,000 blankets arrived on Thursday, and the total amount of aid will be enough to support up to 50,000 Iraqi refugees and Syrians hosting them in local communities.

Many refugees said they had to engage smugglers to make the journey from Mosul, which typically took between two days and a week travelling through ISIL-held territory and dodging frontlines to reach Kurdish-controlled areas of Hasakah.

Hasakah Governorate, which hosts some 90,000 Syrians displaced by the country’s long-running conflict as well as more than 16,000 Iraqi refugees, is currently inaccessible to UN aid deliveries by land from inside Syria and via Turkey to the north due to insecurity. Efforts are also underway to try to establish an air bridge between Damascus and Qamishli for additional deliveries of humanitarian aid by multiple UN agencies, including food and other essential items.

“We stress the importance of granting safe passage to all civilians fleeing war and conflict in search of safety.”

UNHCR is working with local NGO partners to provide humanitarian assistance to the new arrivals, most of whom are without adequate shelter, sanitary facilities and medical care. As well as distributing tents, mattresses and sleeping mats, UNHCR is also coordinating efforts to provide healthcare to refugees, with many suffering from skin diseases and other health conditions due to heat and dust exposure during the long journey.

UNHCR’s Representative in Syria, Sajjad Malik, said the agency was doing everything it could to provide assistance to Iraqis seeking safety in Syria.

“We are very concerned as many people are being forced to flee fighting, risking their lives and going through extreme hardship just to reach safety in remote areas. We stress the importance of granting safe passage to all civilians fleeing war and conflict in search of safety,” he said.
UNFPA providing rapid response to internally displaced women

Baghdad, 29 May 2016 – Amid the ongoing military operations by Iraq Security Forces (ISF) to retake Fallujah city from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) that began on 22 May, more than 260 families have been internally displaced to Ameriyat Al-Fallujah, with a minimum number of 50,000 individuals (8,300 families) are at risk of becoming displaced in the coming period. With in-kind support from the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), UNFPA Rapid Response Mechanism was activated to provide dignity kits to internally displaced women and girls fleeing from the fighting. Since April 2015, 48,500 Dignity Kits have so far been distributed through this rapid response mechanism.

Since the heavy fighting that started on 22 May 2016, around 260 families have been able to leave Fallujah and additional families are expected to arrive during the coming few days due to the heavy shelling, reported in eastern and southern neighbourhoods of Fallujah. Displaced women and children are reportedly being transported by authorities to Ameriyat Al-Fallujah, while men and boys are being transported to Kilo 18 in central Anbar for security screenings. The women and children are being received by local authorities and are being accommodated by relatives in town or by other townpeople. Around 200 families who do not have a local host are sheltering in Al-Iraq camp for internally displaced persons in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah while 228 families are being hosted in the new camp (AF 17) that was established by the Ministry of Displacement and Migration.

In response, UNFPA has distributed more than 200 dignity kits to women and girls in Al-Iraq Camp. An additional 6,000 dignity kits have been pre-positioned in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah and in Al-Wafaa camp. UNFPA supported delivery room is also providing a full range of emergency Reproductive Health services including normal deliveries, gynecological consultations, and pre/postnatal care checkups.

UNFPA supported mobile team is also conducting a Gender Based Violence assessment for the displaced women and girls in Al-Iraq camp, as well as a GBV safety audit of the site. The mobile teams are also providing psychosocial support services to the women and girls in Al-Iraq Camp. UNFPA supported Women Center in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah is also upsaling its interventions and services: Dignity kits distribution, Gender Based Violence prevention and response; awareness raising activities on GBV and reproductive health including recreational activities for women and adolescent girls.

WFP and Qatar Red Crescent join forces to assist displaced Iraqis

Baghdad, 2 June 2016 – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Qatar Red Crescent (QRC) have teamed up to provide much-needed food assistance to 100,000 displaced Iraqis in Anbar governorate and surrounding camps.

Working with WFP to prioritize and reach the most vulnerable people, QRC is providing a food basket to 100,000 people in Anbar governorate. The QRC contribution has allowed WFP to reach more people in need in these areas with vital food assistance.

“We are working closely with the QRC to ensure that necessary food continues to reach the most vulnerable displaced Iraqi families in Iraq’s governorate of Anbar,” said WFP’s Country Director for Iraq Jane Pearce.

“This is a significant collaboration in response to the Iraq crisis to ensure that thousands of families get the support they desperately need as most of them have left their homes with next to nothing and have no means to secure their family food needs,” she added.

The WFP food basket weighs 70 kg and consists of eight food items including flour, rice and oil. The QRC will complement this food with kitchen utensils to enable displaced Iraqis to cook for themselves.

“Since this crisis began, the support WFP has shown the displaced populations of Iraq is remarkable. Now we’re joining efforts to reach more people with the necessary food, and we look forward to further collaboration in the future to help WFP assist more people in need with its life-saving food assistance,” said General Secretary Representative of QRC Issa Mohamed Al-Ishaq.

As the holy month of Ramadan approaches, the QRC is also planning to distribute more than 1,500 food rations to displaced Iraqis in the northern Kurdish region of Iraq (KRI) in coordination with WFP. WFP requires nearly US$73 million to run its emergency operations in Iraq until the end of the year to continue reaching those most in need. Due to this funding shortfall, 1.5 million Iraqis are at risk of losing much-needed food assistance unless WFP receives immediate funding.
Thousands of civilians flee raging battle for Falluja

Baghdad, 31 May 2016 - The number of Iraqis who have escaped the besieged city of Falluja his risen to around 3.700, the UN Refugee Agency said today, noting reports that hundreds of families still trapped in the city are being used by ISIL militants as human shields.

Falluja, which lies around 60 kilometres west of the capital, Baghdad, was the first Iraqi city to be taken by ISIL in a January 2014 offensive. Since then, more than 3.2 million people have been displaced across Iraq.

UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler told a news briefing in Geneva on Tuesday (May 31) that around 3.700 people – 624 families – have fled Falluja since the new offensive by Iraqi forces to retake the city began last week, according to figures provided by authorities.

About 1,300 of those people are staying in al-Iraq camp in the Amiriyat al-Fallujah district in Anbar governorate, where UNHCR is working. Others are scattered in one of several other Government-run camps in the district or are staying with relatives.

Spindler noted that Iraqi forces are helping to transport families escaping the city, and have set up a hotline (195) to provide information to people wanting to leave.

“UNHCR understands approximately 500 men and boys over 12 years old are held for security screening which can take five to seven days. People are being released after this process, and we understand some 27 men were released yesterday (Monday 30 May),” he told reporters at the Palais des Nations.

Between 40,000 and 50,000 civilians still remain trapped inside in Falluja, prevented from escaping by militants as the city continues to come under heavy bombardment by Iraqi forces. In December, routes out of the city were cut off and civilians prevented from leaving.

“There are reports of several hundred families being used as human shields by ISIL in the centre of Falluja.”

“UNHCR has received reports of casualties among civilians in Falluja city centre due to heavy shelling, including seven members of one family on May 28. There are also reports of several hundred families being used as human shields by ISIL in the centre of Falluja,” Spindler said.

Conditions for those trapped in the city are dire. UNHCR previously noted reports of several starvation-related deaths amid food shortages. Families have had to rely on unsafe water sources, including drainage water from irrigation canals. Health facilities and medications are unavailable.

UNHCR and its partner, Muslim Aid, are distributing emergency relief items to families who have escaped the city and are sheltering at Amiriyat al-Falluja. The agency will also open two new camps in coming days in Habbaniyah Tourist City, that will able to accommodate 500 newly-displaced families.

Falluja is one of two remaining strongholds held by ISIL, the other being Mosul, Iraq’s country’s second city. For the past few weeks, there has been intensified fighting around Falluja and air-strikes by coalition forces as the Iraqi Security Forces advanced towards the city.

WHO: Two medical mobile clinics deployed to Al Iraq and AlFallujah IDP camps located in Amiriyat Al Fallujah area

Iraq, 7 June 2016 - The World Health Organization (WHO) has supported the deployment of two medical mobile clinics to Al Iraq and Al Fallujah IDP camps located in Amiriyat Al Fallujah area.

An estimated number of 500 families fleeing the ongoing armed conflict in Falluja were escorted from Falluja outskirts to these camps with 225 families sheltered in Al Iraq IDP camp and 252 families in Al Fallujah IDP camp.

The number of consultations on 29 May alone reached 327 individuals among which were severe cases of respiratory infections and complications of chronic diseases. WHO has also advised the Ministry of Health, DOH Anbar, local health authorities and other partners involved in supporting the newly displaced populations about the urgent need to ensure that all eligible persons are vaccinated against measles, polio and other vaccine preventable diseases, considering the high potential risk of disease outbreaks among displaced populations with low protection immunity.
Baghdad, 8 June 2016 - The United Nations is deeply concerned by the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Fallujah. More than 20,000 people have fled Fallujah and surrounding areas since 22 May. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Lise Grande travelled to Ameriyat al Falluja in eastern Anbar and met with people who have managed to reach safety. “We talked with families who have risked their lives to escape Fallujah. Their stories are heartbreaking. Many have walked for days to reach safety; they have been shot at, people trying to cross the river have drowned and thousands more are still trapped in the centre of the city,” said Ms. Grande.

A massive humanitarian operation is underway to support the people displaced from Fallujah. “Major efforts are being made to help people as soon as they reach the camps established by the Government. Humanitarian agencies are doing their part as well,” said Ms. Grande.

The Rapid Response Mechanism, managed by the UN’s Children’s Fund and the World Food Programme in collaboration the UN’s Population Fund and a consortium of NGOs, has distributed thousands of family kits in Fallujah and Abu Ghraib districts with ready-to-eat food rations, bottled water and hygiene kits. The World Health Organization is operating mobile health clinics and has established primary health care centres in camps. The UN High Commission for Refugees has provided thousands of tents and is rapidly building two new camps to relieve overcrowding. The International Organization for Migration is providing household kits and items and is ready to stand-up additional tents for the families expected to arrive from Fallujah in coming days.

Specialized services are being provided. Children who haven’t been vaccinated for years are receiving life-saving vaccines. Social workers and mobile teams are providing psychosocial support to women and girls, including to the victims of gender and sexual-based violence.

“Humanitarians are working around the clock to provide assistance. We want to do more, and need to do more to ensure families have shade, shelter, health care, food, and water,” said Ms. Grande. “People are telling us that there are tens of thousands of civilians still trapped inside Fallujah. We are terribly worried about their safety and call on all the parties to the conflict to do everything possible to protect civilians.”

The United Nations and partners have requested US$861 million for 2016 to provide emergency relief to 7.3 million vulnerable Iraqis. Only 31 per cent, $265 million has been received so far. Ms. Grande said, “We are using all available resources but we are running out of funds. The international community has invested so much militarily to defeat ISIL. We need to do so much more to help the victims. We cannot let these people down.”

15 tons of medical supplies delivered to civilians fleeing from Fallujah

Baghdad, 15 June 2016 - As of 2 June 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) supported Iraq’s Ministry of Health (MoH) and partners with four trucks (15 tonnes) full of medicines, medical supplies and emergency kits to respond to most urgent health needs of civilians fleeing from Fallujah to IDPs camps in Ramadi, Khalidiya, and Ameriyat Al Fallujah areas. These shipments include a wide range of life saving medicines for acute and chronic diseases, Inter-agency Health Emergency Kits (IHEK), trauma kits and surgical supplies needed in minor and major surgical operations. Additional shipments of medicines and various medical supplies and emergency kits are being delivered to MoH warehouses for urgent distribution based on assessed needs.
UNHCR: Thousands more Iraqis displaced due to upsurge in fighting around Mosul

Baghdad, 14 June 2016 - Over 14,000 Iraqis have been displaced from their homes and registered in camps following a renewed offensive by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) against ISIL south-east of Mosul since late March this year. Mosul, the second biggest city in Iraq, has been under ISIL control for nearly two years, since June 10, 2014. South-east of Mosul, populations have been fleeing ISIL-occupied areas on a daily basis as security forces move closer to the city. 800 people arrived in Debaga camp for displaced families in Erbil Governorate on 3 June, after a dangerous journey through minefields. Since the hostilities between ISIL and governments forces resumed on March 24, more than 8,000 people from villages located east of the Tigris river have been registered in the camp. Debaga is now full and an extension site at a nearby stadium and adjacent areas, to house nearly 600 families, is being prepared by UNHCR and partners, in collaboration with the government.

“There are no safe route for IDPs escaping the violence and families use secondary routes, mostly at night, crossing dangerous terrain, and reports that some IDPs are trapped, severely injured or killed in minefields on their way to safety,” said Frédéric Cussigh, Head of Field response unit in Erbil Governorate.

“The level of trauma among IDPs arriving to Debaga is great. UNHCR and partners teams are working to help families gain a sense of normalcy through psycho-social counseling services and emergency support.” An eventual assault on Mosul could result in a massive displacement, up to 10,000-60,000 people. UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies have been drawing up contingency plans to respond.

In addition, there has been an influx of around 6,700 Iraqis who have entered Syria’s north-eastern Hassakeh governorate using local smuggling networks since April. They include families who have managed to escape Mosul and those who have left surrounding areas, anticipating more fighting.

UNHCR teams and partners in Syria are identifying new arrivals, and carrying out regular needs assessments to coordinate assistance. They include some 5,400 who arrived in the past few months and are staying at the newly reactivated Al-Hol camp in Syria. Families have said it was impossible to move from Mosul to Central Iraq and believed it would be easier to access safer areas of Iraq by first entering Syria. However, so far, they have not so far gained permission to cross back into Iraq.

UNHCR has been coordinating a cross-border response with its offices based in KR-Iraq and Qamishli (Syria) in order to counsel displaced Iraqis and follow up on their case individually. In Iraq, protection teams carry out daily visits to the border, speaking with families and the authorities, to get information on cross border movements and trends.

Border monitoring has been carried out by UNHCR since 2012, at the start of the major influx of Syrian refugees entering Iraq in search of safety and asylum.

“The impact of Mosul’s fall two years ago still reverberates in Iraq and across the region”, said Bruno Geddo, UNHCR Representative in Iraq. “Around 10% of the population of Iraq have been displaced due to conflict, much of it resulting from families fleeing violence.”

“We can only hope that 2016 will mark a turning point, so that displaced families can start to return home, rebuild their lives and look forward to a better future.”

IOM: 43,000 Iraqis Recently Displaced from Fallujah

Iraq, 14 June 2016 - IOM is closely monitoring displacement from Fallujah in response to ongoing military operations and around the city, which intensified on 22 May 2016. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Emergency Tracking identified a total of 43,470 internally displaced Iraqis (7,245 families) from Fallujah district between 22 May and 13 June. This includes 10,548 individuals (1,758 families) who fled between 11 and 13 June; the displaced have arrived mainly to Amiriyat Al Fallujah, with a smaller number to Al-Habbaniya sub-district (both in Anbar governorate), as well as to Baghdad governorate.

Since 29 May IOM has been assisting displaced persons from Fallujah, the majority in Amiriyat Al Fallujah, through the distribution of more than 3,600 non-food items kits. These kits include lightweight summer blankets, towels, plastic mats, a cool box, rechargeable fan, rechargeable light, gas cooker and a hygiene kit, first aid kit, and sewing kit. Distributions were conducted in cooperation with local authorities, and funded by the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, and the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and the Government of Germany. Additional distributions are planned to respond to the most urgent needs.

The latest report from IOM’s DTM, published this past week, updated the figure of internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout the country to 3,363,922 individuals (551,197 families) as of 1 January 2014 through 26 May 2016. The majority of the displaced are originally from two governorates: Anbar 42 percent (1,396,788 individuals) and Nineva 35 percent (1,149,492). The entire displaced population is from 8 of Iraq’s 18 governorates. The governorates hosting the largest IDP populations are Anbar 17 percent (578,208), Baghdad 16 percent (535,050) and Duhok 12 percent (397,290).

Amid continuing displacement, many Iraqis have started to return to their location of origin. A total of 726,336 individuals (121,056 families) are reported to have returned as of 26 May 2016, indicating an increase of 11 percent (69,558) since 28 April. Returns are mainly to the governorates of Salah al-Din (303,588) and Nineva (129,198) and Diyala (130,980), thanks to improved security conditions.

Anbar governorate witnessed the highest increase in returns during the April 28 – May 26 period (33,000 individuals). This increase was especially high in the districts of Ramadi and Heet, where local authorities have facilitated return movements to areas declared safe.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “Ongoing and recent displacement, especially from Fallujah, requires immediate attention. IOM is responding but funds and supplies are insufficient to provide adequate assistance to the huge numbers of displaced Iraqis. IOM will continue to cooperate with the UN Humanitarian Country Team, humanitarian partners, government authorities and donors, to assist as many displaced Iraqis as possible to the full extent of our resources.”

Please visit the IOM Iraq DTM portal for details on the methodology, the most recent Datasets, Dashboards, Dynamic Displacement Maps and previous DTM products: http://iraqdtm.iom.int

The DTM is funded by the US State Department’s PRM.
UNHCR joins forces with the Kurdistan Regional Government to support urban communities hosting large displaced populations

Erbil, 15 June 2016 - The findings of the Erbil chapter of a regional profiling exercise for out of camp populations were officially presented by UNHCR along with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and various humanitarian and development partners gathered in Erbil.

The study, “Displacement as Challenge and Opportunity”, addresses the need for an in-depth analysis of urban displacement. Its impact on both displaced and host populations in the Governorate is scrutinized with the objective to guide future long-term responses to the urban challenges created by large-scale displacement.

Local authorities have been involved in the exercise from the inception and welcomed the approach as innovative since few available studies take the host population’s perspective into account and the vast majority focus on camp population.

“We see the profiling exercise as an essential first step,” said Mr Nawzad Hadi, the Governor for Erbil Governorate. “And we look forward to developing a sustainable response alongside humanitarian partners to improve the living standards of all urban population groups living in areas most impacted by the arrival of large numbers of displaced persons in the Governorate.”

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) has seen a 30% population increase since the beginning of the crisis in Syria in 2011, as Syrians started fleeing civil war in their country. This was followed by larger waves in late 2013 and 2014 as Iraqis fled to KR-I, escaping armed conflicts in other governorates such as Anbar and Nineawa.

Today, the KR-I hosts over 1 million displaced persons, putting pressure on the region’s limited resources, particularly with respect to the provision of public services, at a time when the regional government is facing severe economic challenges.

In Erbil Governorate today, 25% of its 2.5 million population is either a refugee or a displaced Iraqi, with an overwhelming 95% of the Governorate’s displaced families living out of camp – 72% in the case of Syrian refugee families. In some areas like Baharka or Shaqlawa, the population has doubled since 2011, drastically changing the fabric of the community: IDPs and refugees now make up almost 50% of the local population, creating obvious challenges for public services to address population needs in those areas, and social tensions.

“Most of the displaced population live in urban areas, along with the local population,” said Jozef Merks, UNHCR Coordinator for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). “It is crucial to have an area-based approach which takes into account the perspective of host communities, and the response capacity of the government, in order to design relevant, comprehensive response plans.”

Exploring creative ways of responding to local population needs, the study covers the impact of recent displacement waves from five angles: urban spaces and social cohesion, employment, households’ financial situation, education and challenges to return home. Recommendations range from easing administrative procedures for displaced populations, to creating bridging programmes for displaced students willing to attend school after a period out of formal education.

“The goal is to bolster living conditions of urban communities heavily impacted by the recent waves of displacement, irrespective of status,” said Bruno Geddo, UNHCR Representative in Iraq. “And this can be done when displaced people are empowered to become productive members of the society.”

Profiling studies are on-going in Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk Governorates, and the respective chapters will be published in the second half of 2016.

UNICEF is working to urgently provide safe water to families who fled from Fallujah

Baghdad, 16 June 2016 - UNICEF is working to urgently provide safe water to families who fled from Fallujah to Ameriyat al Fallujah, Al Khalidiya and Al Habbaniya camps. With generous funding from European Commission - Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection (ECHO), UNICEF recently installed three reverse osmosis (RO) units - two in Ammriate Al Fallujah and one in Al Khalidiya camp - each capable of producing 5,000 litres of fresh water per hour (40,000 liters per day). The three RO units are now providing 12,800 vulnerable displaced people in these camps with sufficient clean water.

In total, UNICEF is installing 15 RO units across Anbar governorate to meet the growing needs of displaced children and families as the summer heat intensifies.
UNHCR and its partners continue to step up their emergency response

Baghdad, 19 June 2016 - UNHCR and its partners continue to step up their emergency response to deal with the needs of thousands of families fleeing the Iraqi city Falluja, which has been held by extremists for the past two and a half years. The agency and its partners have been providing tents, shelters and emergency relief items to families in Amiriyat Al Falluja, Khalidiya and Habbaniyah Tourist City (HTC). In the last few days, hundreds more tents have been erected in newly created camps in order to help ease the overcrowded conditions families are facing. Humanitarian agencies estimate that nearly 14,000 families (up to 84,000 individuals) may have left Falluja and surrounding areas since a government military offensive to retake the city began on 23 May. UNHCR partners on the ground estimate that nearly ten thousand of these families have fled over the last three days (June 16-18).

"UNHCR and its partners are working around the clock to provide assistance to families who have managed to escape Falluja, with just the clothes on their back", said UNHCR's representative in Iraq, Bruno Geddo.

"In many cases, two or three families are having to share tents as there is not enough accommodation, and many new arrivals are having to sleep rough, without hygiene facilities", said Geddo. "Agencies are scrambling to respond to the rapidly evolving situation - and we are bracing ourselves for another large exodus in the next few days as we estimate that thousands more people remain trapped in Falluja."

UNHCR and its partners are building three new camps (in Khalidiya and Habbaniyah Tourist City) and two new camp extensions (in Habbaniyah Tourist City) over the next few days to provide shelter for families and tackle the extremely overcrowded conditions. The facilities are in addition to six new camps that have been completed in Amiriyat Al Falluja since the crisis began, with a capacity of 1380 family shelters.

Humanitarian crisis

IOM distributes NFI kits as displacement continues from Fallujah

Iraq, 17 June 2016 - After months of being unable to leave the city and living under siege, thousands of Iraqi families are currently fleeing the fighting in Fallujah via two main bridges, which were opened yesterday, 16 June. These displaced Iraqis join the more than 68,000 who already fled the city between 22 May and the morning of 16 June.

IOM continues to closely monitor displacement from Fallujah in response to ongoing military operations in and around the city. Through the morning of 16 June, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Emergency Tracking identified 68,286 individuals (11,381 families) who have fled from in and around Fallujah. This includes more than 35,000 people who have fled Fallujah in the past week (since 11 June). Over 56,000 of the displaced have fled to Amiriyat Al Fallujah, within Anbar district. The number of displaced in Amiriyat Al Fallujah exceeds available shelter and humanitarian supplies for the displaced. Urgent needs include tents, water, ice and medical assistance; additional needs include food and non-food item kits. As the daily high temperatures are expected to reach well over 40 degrees Celsius this week in Amiriyat Al Fallujah, the displaced struggle to stay cool in the rising heat.

In cooperation with humanitarian partners and government authorities, IOM has distributed non-food item (NFI) kits to over 4,500 recently displaced families from Fallujah since May 29, the majority in Amiriyat Al Fallujah. This includes the distribution of 500 non-food item kits yesterday, sponsored by the EU’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO). These kits include essential items, include lightweight summer blankets, towels, plastic mats, a cool box, rechargeable fan, rechargeable light, gas cooker and a hygiene kit, first aid kit, and sewing kit. NFI distributions are conducted in cooperation with local authorities; donors include the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), and the Government of Germany. Additional supplies are being transported towards Amiriyat Al Fallujah to facilitate further response.

IOM staff spoke with a female beneficiary who was caring for her two young children, one of whom is disabled, in their temporary shelter in a camp for displaced Iraqis from Fallujah. “When we fled the war zone, crossing the river in a small boat with my daughter Sha- had was one of the most difficult things I have ever done. She was afraid of the water, of gunfire, of strangers... everything around her scared her. Last night was our first night in the camp; although I was really tired, I couldn’t sleep. I kept praying to God for emergency assistance, so that my children would not have to sleep on the ground anymore. Just fulfilling our basic needs here is so difficult. You only gave us the basics, but we are satisfied with this gesture as it comes from the heart,” said Shahad’s mother after receiving a non-food item kit from IOM.

The latest report from IOM Iraq’s DTM, published this past week, updated the figure of internally displaced persons throughout the country to 3,306,822 individuals (551,137 families) from 1 January 2014 through 26 May 2016.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “The scope of this unfolding displacement from Fallujah, which affects tens of thousands of Iraqis, exceeds the supplies and funds we have available to provide the level of care needed for the huge numbers of displaced. Many have endured harrowing journeys in their flight from Falluja. IOM will continue to cooperate with the UN Humanitarian Country Team, humanitarian partners, government authorities and donors, using all available resources to respond.”

Amiriyat Al Fallujah exceeds available resources to respond.
UNFPA upscaling its humanitarian response

Baghdad, 20 June 2016 – With the rapid influx of Internally Displaced Iraqis fleeing Fallujah and its surrounding districts to Ameriyat Al-Fallujah (AAF), Habbaniya (HTC) and Khaldiyyeh cities, UNFPA is upscaling its response during the coming days aiming to support more than 85,000 IDPs, including an estimate of 18,000 internally displaced women and girls. Between the 16th and the 17th of June 2016, the number of displaced families reached more than 2,300 families fleeing Falujah and surrounding districts. During this period UNFPA, supported by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), responded by the distribution of more than 1,500 Dignity kits to women and girls in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah (AAF), Habbaniya (HTC) and Khaldiyyeh cities, raising the total number of dignity kits distributed to around 5,200 kits since the beginning of the Fallujah military operations. During that period also, UNFPA mobile teams, supported by The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), provided emergency psychosocial support services to over 2,500 women and girls including community awareness sessions on available GBV and RH sessions to around 480 women and girls in the three cities through group and individual sessions over the past 2 weeks. In addition, UNFPA, supported by the Government of Japan and the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), was able to optimize the capacity of three of its supported delivery kits to women and girls in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah (AAF), Habbaniya (HTC) and Khaldiyyeh cities, providing reproductive health services to more than 9,500 dignity kits during the coming few days over women and girls aiming to meet the expected daily increase in the number of IDPs fleeing Fallujah and surrounding districts. UNFPA is also currently establishing 3 new tent-based women safe spaces in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah (AAF), a new Women Service Center in Khaldiyyeh camp and another Women Service Center in Habbaniyah camp. UNFPA is also establishing a new Reproductive Health clinic in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah, providing also Primary Health Care services and will be managed by the World Health Organization.

KRG Humanitarian contingency plan presented

Erbil, 22 June 2016 - The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) presented its humanitarian contingency plan looking at the impact of military operations in Ninewa and Mosul on KR-I in presence of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Lise Grande, in Erbil. According to the KRG’s plan, military operations could force 420,000 people to leave their homes and seek safety in areas under Kurdish control and requests US$275 million to ensure covering the minimum lifesaving needs during six months. KRG already hosts over 1 million internally displaced people and refugees.

More help for families displaced from Falluja

Baghdad, 23 June 2016 - UNHCR is continuing to step up its help for displaced families from Falluja and surrounding areas. On Wednesday 22 June a UNHCR team travelled to Al Khalidiya, around 30 kms from Falluja, where many newly-displaced families are sheltering. UNHCR is currently building two new camps there: one funded by the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) and installed by UNHCR partner, RIRP, which will house 255 families. Two Rubb halls – large tent-like structures - are also being constructed. In another nearby site, UNHCR’s partner ISHO is constructing another camp in Al Khalidiya that will house 250 families. In addition to the two new camps, UNHCR has also built six camps in Ameriyat al-Falluja, with another five camps in Habbaniyah Tourist City (3 completed, two under construction). This will make a total of 13 new camps. 12 Rubb halls are going up. Altogether, the sites have a capacity to house 3,165 families or 18,990 people. UNHCR is also planning to install 12 350-kwt generators in 11 locations, to bring electricity to 3,032 families.

“The speed and size of the population displacement from Falluja has been overwhelming but we are providing lifesaving assistance and catching up”, said UNHCR Iraq’s Representative, Bruno Geddo.

“I’ve seen new shelters and tents being put up in camps that we are working on in Al Khalidiya. They are desperately-needed.

“I met families who have walked seven hours or more to safety”, said Geddo.

“People have spent the last few nights sleeping rough with virtually no help. They are very excited to know that soon they will have a roof over their heads tonight and be able to sleep in safety.

“There is a lot that still needs to be done, but we are working flat out to provide much-needed help to the newly-displaced from Falluja”, Geddo added.
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Humanitarian crisis

WFP alarmed at dire conditions for more than 85,000 people who have fled Fallujah

Baghdad, 27 June 2016 – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is very concerned about the extremely dire conditions for more than 85,000 people who have fled the besieged city of Fallujah and its surroundings in Iraq’s Anbar governorate over the last month.

Through its partners, WFP has so far distributed enough immediate response food rations to feed almost 75,000 newly displaced people arriving at camps in Habbaniya Tourism City and Amariyat al-Fallujah. Each ration contains ready-to-eat food to feed a family for three days. However, in the spirit of the Holy Month of Ramadan, other organizations are distributing additional food that complements WFP rations, making it enough to stretch for a full week.

“The people of Fallujah have been suffering under siege for many months without access to food or medical care. Reaching them now with life-saving food and other humanitarian assistance is the absolute top priority,” said Maha Ahmed, WFP Deputy Country Director in Iraq.

“The situation is heart breaking. We met a young mother this week who escaped the violence in Fallujah with her new born baby in her arms – he was only 4-days-old when they fled.”

Since military operations to retake the city from ISIL forces began on 22 May, waves of people have fled Fallujah and its surroundings. People are gathering in dozens of small camps where conditions are very harsh and many families are forced to share already overcrowded tents. Others are stranded in the desert or sheltering at mosques and schools.

“We are working with humanitarian partners to ensure comprehensive and rapid relief is provided for affected families, who have already been through too much,” Ahmed added.

WFP is sending additional immediate response food rations and family food rations from its Baghdad warehouse, an hour’s drive from Fallujah, to provide immediate food relief to the growing number of displaced. In partnership with WFP, the Qatar Red Crescent is preparing to provide cooking utensils and additional family food rations to the families from Fallujah.

More than 3 million Iraqis have been displaced by conflict since mid-June last year. WFP provides food assistance to over 1 million vulnerable displaced across all 18 governorates.

WFP is entirely voluntarily funded and relies on support from governments, companies and private individuals to provide food assistance to people in Iraq. To continue to assist displaced families for the next six months, WFP urgently requires a total of US$34 million.

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“IOM tracks returns in Iraq amid continued displacement

Iraq, 28 June 2016 - The IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has identified and confirmed the location of 3,317,394 displaced Iraqis across the country from 1 January 2014 to 8 June 2016.

While new displacements are going on, many Iraqis have started to return to their places of origin in liberated areas. IOM identified 743,910 returnees in Iraq from return movements that began in August 2014.

IOM Iraq’s recent DTM Returnee Location Assessment was conducted by IOM field teams across the country from March to May 2016. A total of 296 locations—corresponding to more than 540,000 individuals—were assessed in the central and northern governorates of Ninewa (100 locations), Salah al-Din (95 locations), Diyala (92 locations), Anbar (6 locations), Erbil (6 locations) and Kirkuk (3 locations.)

The assessment covered 82 per cent of locations across the country where return movements have been reported. In some areas IOM could not conduct the assessments due to security concerns, especially in Anbar governorate, where only 26 per cent of locations could be assessed.

The main reported reasons for return included: newfound possibility to resume economic activities (35 per cent); safe conditions in location of origin (24 per cent); return after checking the conditions of location of residence (16 per cent); encouragement by community/religious leaders (8 per cent) and lack of financial means to stay in previous location (6 per cent).

In addition, 87 per cent reported their intention to stay in their location of return.

Reported first priority needs of returnees included: drinking water (30 per cent), food (19 per cent), health care (17 per cent), access to income (11 per cent), shelter or housing (8 per cent), and security (7 per cent). In the governorates of Salah al-Din, Ninewa, Diyala and Anbar, extensive damage was reported to infrastructure systems including water, electricity, roads, bridges and schools.

Since 2015 IOM has provided 420 tents to assist returnees whose homes were completely destroyed in the governorates of Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk. Through the support of the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), IOM has rehabilitated essential rooms in 400 damaged houses for families who returned to Salah al-Din and Diyala.

Returnee Abo Ahmed said: “My family, and my neighbours and I escaped our neighbourhood in Al-Alam when ISIL invaded Salah al-Din. We went to Kirkuk, where my mother, my wife, our three children and I lived in a single room; we never had any privacy. We had difficulty finding a source of income. After we heard that our area in Salah al-Din had been liberated, we returned home in April 2015. Our house had been damaged and burned; we couldn’t afford to fix it so we had to rent. We were about to lose hope, when IOM came and rehabilitated our house and built a new room for us, freeing us from paying rent.”

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “Hundreds of thousands of displaced Iraqis have taken the step to return to their location of origin. Despite damage to their homes and potential insecurity, returnees are determined to rebuild their homes and communities. IOM Iraq, in cooperation with the UN Humanitarian Country Team, humanitarian partners, government authorities and donors, looks forward to continuing to support these Iraqis, as they undertake the difficult process of resuming their lives.”

In an effort to assist and prepare for further returns, IOM is chairing the Returns Working Group, established under the UN Humanitarian Country Team, to develop recommendations for Iraqi governorates affected by returns, and provide technical advice to partners, government and civil society to support the implementation of returns according to international standards.
Despite booby traps, Iraqis risk all on return to Ramadi

Iraq's third-largest city has not been declared cleared by the government and dozens of returnees have been killed by IEDs.

Baghdad, 29 April 2016 - Iraqi father-of-two Khairallah Farhan fled his home in Ramadi when it was overrun by extremists in 2015. But despite the fact that it was retaken by Iraqi forces at the end of last year, he is in no rush to go home.

Not only was his house severely damaged, but two close relatives who hurried home to rebuild their lives were killed by exploding booby-trap devices left behind by militants. “I’m very cautious about returning. I will not rush back yet,” says the 30-year-old, who is among 1,200 displaced Iraqis living at the sprawling Al Salam camp in the capital, Baghdad.

He is among thousands of people from Ramadi weighing the risks of returning home. The Iraqi government announced at the start of the year that it had re-taken the city from extremist forces, although it has not yet declared the city, Iraq’s third largest, “clear” for return.

UN assessment teams found “staggering” destruction in the city. Thousands of buildings in Ramadi and its outskirts had been damaged, and the city was also littered with improvised explosive devices.

According to estimates, several dozen people have been killed in recent weeks since they returned to the city, which sprawls along the banks of the Euphrates River west of Baghdad. Having lost relatives to blasts, Farhad is looking for greater assurance before going home. “If the government can declare the city safe and offer us help, we will return,” he says.

The upsurge in casualties has prompted the Iraqi authorities to issue a temporary directive, telling civilians not to return for the time being - and to wait until the deadly booby traps and explosives in the city can be cleared.

Some 3.4 million Iraqis are internally displaced by the conflict. Despite the lingering hazards, many families are risking all to head home. Hikmat Jasim, manager at Al Salam camp, shows photographs taken days earlier on his cell phone of farewell ceremonies for families in the camp as they prepared to set off on the uncertain journey to the once-bustling city of nearly half a million residents.

“Around 200 families have left here to go back to Ramadi,” he says. “We do not encourage them to go, but we do not prevent them from going either.”

In fact, many departing families had been allowed to take their tents with them, if their homes had been damaged, and were given food parcels by well wishers. The photos showed trucks lined up, laden with blankets and other basic necessities for the families, with people crying and being hugged on departure.

Amer, a father of 10, from Ramadi’s Al Jamhuria neighbourhood, is among those who have returned to the city. “We celebrated leaving the camp,” he said when UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, contacted him in the city by phone. “Everyone was very excited to return home. We were crying at the prospect of going back, we were so happy.”

He returned to a house that was habitable, although the second story had been destroyed, leaving 16 family members to live crammed into two rooms. Amer has also reopened the small hardware shop that he ran. And, in a city that needs extensive rebuilding, he said business is brisk.

“My work is very good; better than before because every family wants cables for electricity, motors for fridges and other building materials.”

While there was no power, leaving families to rely on generators, he said most services were functioning in his neighbourhood and schools were opening again. He has no regrets about returning.

By Caroline Gluck (UNHCR) in Baghdad.

Germany contributes an additional $3.9 million to help stabilize newly liberated areas in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 May 2016—Germany has contributed an additional US$3.9 million to UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS), which finances fast-track initiatives in areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This contribution brings Germany’s total financing of the Facility to $16 million.

Based on priorities identified by local authorities, UNDP helps to quickly repair public infrastructure, provides grants to small businesses, boosts capacities of local government, promotes civil engagement and community reconciliation, and provides short-term employment through public works schemes.

UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande thanked Germany for its continuing generosity. “We are extremely grateful to the Government of Germany for the leading role it is playing to support stabilization. FFIS is currently working in nine liberated areas. This generous contribution will allow UNDP to rapidly expand activities in cities and districts as soon as ISIL is expelled. Quick action after liberation sends a powerful signal that things are returning to normal and that displaced families can come home to start rebuilding their lives.”

Established in June 2015, FFIS is currently working in nine newly liberated areas in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Ninewah and Diyala Governorates. FFIS has most recently started work in Ramadi, where widespread destruction and contamination by booby-traps have slowed stabilization efforts.
Canada and UNOPS support increased safety and security for camp residents in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 04 May 2016 - A ceremony marking the new project was held today in Erbil between representatives from Global Affairs Canada and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

“Increasing the Safety and Security of Vulnerable Camp Residents in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq” will focus on two Syrian refugee camps, Kawergosk and Quishtapa, and Baharka and Harsham internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Erbil Governorate, as well as Chamishku and Rwanga community IDP camps, based in nearby Dohuk Governorate.

The project will help to improve camp infrastructure, including the construction of safety operations centres, and the installation of surveillance cameras, fencing and installation of 205 solar street lights, all in an effort to provide camp residents with improved safety and security.

Ms. Susan Brazier, Country Program Manager, Global Affairs Canada expressed: “The work we are here to mark today is part of our stabilisation efforts, which aim to build the conditions necessary for all Iraqis to be able return to their homes safely. Canada is therefore very pleased to have worked with UNOPS on this initiative.” She further emphasized that “Canada remains fully committed to supporting the governments of Iraq and the Iraqi people on their road to a stable and secure country.”

Representing the Governorate of Erbil, Mrs. Vian Rasheed, a representative of the Erbil Refugee Council (ERC), conveyed his sincere appreciation from the Governor of Erbil, Mr. Nawzad Hadi, for: “the kind support from Canada in assisting Kawergosk and Quishtapa refugee camps with important infrastructure to increase the security of the camp and the protection of Syrian refugees.”

Laudation of the Community Development Centre and Park in Kurani Ainkawa, Erbil - another step towards regularized and upgraded informal settlements

Erbil, 9 May 2016 - To mark the closure of a comprehensive informal settlement upgrading intervention in Erbil, a community development centre and a neighbourhood park were opened today in Kurani Ainkawa. The Improving Housing Delivery System in Erbil - Upgrading of Kurani Ainkawa Informal Settlement project is funded by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), and implemented by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

UN-Habitat’s Deputy Executive Director, Kurdistan Minister of Planning and the Governor of Erbil attended the ceremony. Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat and UN Assistant Secretary-General, Dr. Aisa Kirabo Kacyira underscored the importance of such urban interventions working together closely with the government counterparts as well as members of communities to achieve better future for those who reside in slums.

KRG’s Minister of Planning, H.E. Dr. Ali Sindi, noted: “The project successfully addressed informal tenure status in Kurani Ainkawa, facilitating the formalization of tenure through negotiations with land owners and illegal residents. It further demonstrates one of the best examples of successful partnership of the United Nations, Kurdistan Regional Government, private sector, and the community for improving people’s lives in the Kurdistan Region.”

Governor of Erbil, H.E. Mr. Nawzad Hadi, expressed his appreciation to the United Nations “for providing support to upgrade informal settlements in Kurani Ainkawa, resulting in a substantial improvement of the housing structure in the area as well as wide range of infrastructure and public services installed to enhance the living conditions in the neighbourhood.”

UNDP has been supporting Kurani Ainkawa community for socio-economic development within the neighbourhood, mobilizing the local community to effectively participate in housing improvement processes and enhance livelihood of the settlers. “Such community mobilization efforts led to the establishment of local specialized nongovernmental organization to sustain the achievements accomplished to date,” stated the local community representative, Ms. Gazang Saeed.

In line with the National Programme for Regularization and Rehabilitation of Informal Settlements and IDP Areas executed, this pilot project is implemented by UN-Habitat to provide vulnerable people in these areas with increased access to affordable housing with security of tenure and basic services. It is also supported by the global campaign Up for Slum Dwellers – Transforming a Billion Lives – launched by UN-Habitat this April to improve and transform the lives of one billion slum dwellers around the world, and UNDP Iraq’s Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP).
UNHCR Iraq: New homes going up

Najaf, 10 May 2016 - Building work is underway with UNHCR partner, the Canadian Aid Organization, CAOFISR, for 100 new sturdy shelter units for families who face eviction from their homes in the Iraqi city of Najaf. The families were forced to leave their own homes in Mosul, nearly two years ago due to conflict. Many have been staying in privately rented buildings in Najaf but have exhausted their savings and are now threatened with eviction. The families should be able to move into their new homes in May 2016.

Inauguration of new IDP shelter site in Darkar Ajam, Dohuk Governorate, to accommodate more than 4,800 IDPs

Dohuk, 9 May 2016 - Today, a new shelter site for internally displaced persons (IDPs) established in Darkar Ajam, Zakho District, Dohuk Governorate, was inaugurated. With generous contributions from the Government of Japan, the IDP shelter site was established by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) providing prefabricated shelter units to accommodate more than 4,800 vulnerable IDPs, basic infrastructure, and public facilities such as a reproductive health clinic, a women’s social center and a security building.

With the continuing terror and violence inflicted by the so-called State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the figures of IDPs in Iraq had reached 3.4 million as of April 2016. One of the governorates that have been receiving large numbers of displaced persons is Dohuk Governorate. While the governorate has stepped forward to support the IDPs, the severe budget crisis along with the protracted nature of the conflict have caused significant distress to both IDPs and host communities in Dohuk. Shedding light on this, H.E. Mr. Farhad Atrushi, Governor of Dohuk, expressed his appreciation to UN-Habitat and the Government of Japan for supporting the governorate in helping the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict.

The new World Urban Agenda necessitates embracing urbanization at all levels of human settlements across physical space. The inclusion of humanitarian situations in this agenda is essential in order to assist governments in addressing future challenges. In similar circumstances of long-term displacement, provisional shelter interventions often turn into slums. Inadequate and insecure shelter conditions also endanger women and girls, exposing them to higher risks of sexual and gender-based violence. Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat and UN Assistant Secretary-General Dr. Aisa Kirabo Kacyira underscored that the new durable shelter site will offer vulnerable IDPs, who have been suffering from severe weather conditions and lack of security, the ability to maintain dignified lives.

H.E. Mr. Fumio Iwai, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, stated that the Government of Japan has already provided more than USD 220 million to Iraq since 2014 to support its humanitarian efforts, and will proudly continue to support returns of displaced persons to their homes and stabilization of liberated areas through reconstruction of housing and infrastructure.

UN-Habitat and ACTED holds capacity building training for IDP camp managers in Dohuk

Dohuk, 15 May 2016 - From 14 to 15 May 2016, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) held a two-day capacity building workshop for managers of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Dohuk, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The workshop aimed to enhance knowledge on camp management and coordination for IDP camp managers of Board of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs (BRHA), Dohuk Governorate. In collaboration with ACTED, an NGO working in the region, the capacity building training was organized under UN-Habitat’s project titled “Humanitarian Support to IDPs in Iraq including Kurdistan Region through Provision of Durable Shelter”, funded by the Government of Japan. The training is expected to contribute to management of UN-Habitat’s newly established IDP shelter site in Dakar Ajam, Dohuk, as well as other IDP camps in the governorate.

With continuing terror and violence inflicted by the so-called State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the figures of IDPs in Iraq had reached 3.4 million as of April 2016. Dohuk Governorate received more than 397,000 IDPs to date. This training programme organized by UN-Habitat and ACTED will help IDP camp managers to ensure effective camp coordination and camp management as well as timely and accurate management of information on IDP sites and their population. The training programmes are thereby expected to improve the quality of service delivered by the local authority, and lead to more targeted support to assist IDPs residing in camps.
Finland contributes funding to accelerate stabilization in newly liberated areas

Baghdad, 16 May 2016 – The Republic of Finland is providing US$1.13 million (€1 million) to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support stabilization in areas newly liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The Finnish contribution will be allocated to UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS) which channels fast-track support to liberated areas to help rehabilitate civic infrastructure, kick-start local economies, boost government capacity and promote community reconciliation.

UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande, said: “Helping to stabilize areas newly liberated from ISIL is one of Iraq’s highest priorities. Finland’s generous contribution comes at just the right time. Tens of thousands of displaced people have already returned to Ramadi and tens of thousands more want to come home in safety and dignity so that they can start to rebuild their lives.”

In turn, Finland’s Minister for International Trade and Development, Ms. Lenita Toivakka, said: “It is not only houses and roads that have been torn apart on the land liberated from ISIL – it is also the social fabric. Finland emphasizes the need to ensure non-discrimination and support the most vulnerable groups, including women, in targeting the interventions of the FFIS.”

Established in June 2015, FFIS is currently working in nine newly liberated areas in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Nineveh and Diyala Governorates. FFIS has started work in Ramadi where widespread destruction and contamination of booby-traps have slowed stabilization and the return of displaced families.

UNFPA upscaling its interventions in response to acute emergency in Iraq: opening of two Reproductive Health Clinics in Amryiat Al Fallujah, Central Iraq

Baghdad, 16 May 2016 – The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in cooperation with its national partner, United Iraqi Medical Society for relief and development and funded by the Japanese Government, opened two new reproductive health clinics at kilo 18 and kilo 50 camps, in Al Wafaa sub district. The two new reproductive health clinics will be serving more than 1,100 families in both camps which will upscale the total Reproductive Health services provided by UNFPA reaching more than 90,000 families, both IDPs and host communities, through three delivery rooms in Amryiat Al Fallujah, Habbaniyeh and Khalidiya, in the Anbar Governorate.

On April 11, 2016 a massive wave of displacement of families to kilo 50 camp took place, where around 1,500 family were evacuated from Heet district to Al-Wafaa sub District adding to the 3,500 IDPs that were one month earlier relocated to the camp coming from Al-Rutha, Al-Qaem and Heet districts. In response to this acute emergency situation, UNFPA established two Reproductive Health clinics providing the gynecological and obstetrical consultations regularly to the women, and coordinating with Anbar Directorate of Health for referral of the emergency cases and birth cases to UNFPA-supported delivery room in Al-Khalidiya and Al-Khalidiya hospital by providing ambulance support.

Through the new Reproductive Health clinics in kilo 18 and kilo 50, UNFPA has been providing pre and postnatal care consultations, gynecological consultations, family planning services, referral to safe delivery services. During the first three weeks of operations of the new Reproductive Health clinics, more than 420 women benefited from gynecological consultations services, around 80 pre and postnatal care checkups were also provided, as well as the provision of family planning services to around 30 families.

UNFPA Iraq established its first Reproductive Health clinic in Anbar Governorate in June 2015. By the end of April 2016, UNFPA has succeeded in providing Reproductive Health services to more than 25,000 female IDPs, including 1100 safe deliveries, in Amryiat Al-Fallujah as well as Al-Habbaniya and Al-Khalidiya districts in Anbar governorate. The services provided by the three UNFPA supported Reproductive Health clinics in Anbar includes, gynecological consultations as well as postnatal care and family planning services to Internally Displaced families.
**Duhok launches its 2-year Provincial Development Strategy supported by the EU and UNDP**

**Duhok, 29 May 2016** – The Governorate of Duhok launched its Provincial Development Strategy 2016-2018 in a ceremony organized in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union (EU), and NOREL non-governmental organization. Conceptualized with the support of UNDP’s EU funded Local Area Development Programme (LADP), the Strategy seeks progress in six areas: Multi-sector economy, geographical location, governmental services, investment environment, administrative and financial efficiency, and human resources.

Introducing the Strategy, Governor of Duhok, Mr. Farhad Amin Atroshi, underscored: “Citizens of Duhok deserve the highest social and economic welfare levels and a governance system that invests resources efficiently. We are strongly committed to achieve this through the Provincial Development Strategy that was tailored to address the needs and aspirations of Duhok and its people.”

The Head of the EU Liaison Office in Erbil, Mr. Patrick Gysen, noted: “The EU is investing in development of the Kurdistan Region which has suffered for more than three decades of instability, sanctions, invasions and conflict. Promoting good governance, we have no doubt that the Provincial Strategy will be a success in Duhok.”

The Provincial Strategy launch was marked with a two-day exhibition, Made in Duhok, that featured the richness of the region through traditional crafts, arts works and variety of hand made products, produced by Syrian refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and host communities.

Special guests were participants in Exile Voices: Camp Reporters, an initiative by Reza Visual Academy that expressed life in Kawergosk Syrian Refugee Camp through photos by young refugees. Fifty large photos were on display, many from a 370-meter long gigantic photo exhibition along the River Seine in Paris.

37 innovation projects presented at the exhibition were evaluated by a jury on the basis of special criteria; the top 3 were awarded - on military tracking software, hearing aid device and smart learning through paperless education.

LADP Programme Manager, Ms. Isabel Uribe, said: “The UN was established by the people for the people. Today we take another step towards the realization of the development goals that echoed the voices of local communities. Through enhanced public service delivery, the impact of development progress will be reflected in the daily lives of people.”

Duhok is the third governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, after Sulaimaniyah and Erbil, to officially launch its Provincial Development Strategy. Through its pioneering Local Area Development Programme, UNDP is providing direct support to twelve Governorates to improve sector-wide planning and implementation, strengthen budget execution and service delivery, improve coordination between central and governorate levels and increase the participation of communities in local development.

**Erbil, 30 May 2016** - “I’m so happy to do this work because it helps my people and the camp,” says Naif. Naif is one of nearly 140 volunteers who have been trained in Bajet Kandala displacement camp to help maintain water quality standards.

Bajet Kandala, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, houses Yazidi people who fled violence in and around Sinjar. On a sunny morning in late spring, Naif and his fellow volunteers set off on their regular rounds.

They encounter Kina, who is at a water stand with two of her four children cleaning a plastic rug. In the dusty, arid conditions of the camp, it’s a constant struggle to maintain a clean home.

“There’s enough water, if we economize,” Kina says as her daughter diligently scrubs the rug. “But we wish there was more.”

Using a small plastic monitoring device, Naif and his colleagues test the tap water for chlorine content and alkalinity. The tap stand passes both tests.

The programme is supported by a generous contribution from the American people through the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. Pairs of volunteers work together—one conducts the water tests and the other records the results in a notebook. Each pair visits six to eight tap stands to test and record the results of their findings. When they get back to the office the results are logged in an electronic database.

“For six months we haven’t had any problems with water quality,” says Sipan, who works with UNICEF partner NRC to train the volunteers on water testing and hygiene promotion.

The programme also helps to maintain morale in the camp, where there is often little for young people to do. It provides a sense of purpose and helps to contribute to community spirit.

“I’m happy to help my community and my people in the camp, and I’ve learned things that I didn’t know before,” says Salam.

By Chris Niles, Consultant with UNICEF Iraq.
Support to improve government services continues through training to re-engineer work systems and delivery models

Amman, 2 June 2016 - As part of its support to the Government of Iraq to facilitate effective and efficient access to quality and responsive government services for citizens, UNDP Iraq's Public Sector Modernization (I-PSM) Programme conducted a 5-day workshop on Simplification of Work Systems, Procedures and Service Delivery Models at National and Sub-national Levels. Organized in Amman, this second round in a series of capacity development workshops was built on results achieved in workshops held in October 2015.

In addition to enabling participants to acquire an advanced knowledge and develop professional skills in systems re-engineering, the workshop aimed at simplifying essential services related to day-to-day needs of the people of Iraq. Five services were selected for simplification: Property registration, construction permits, academic certification, housing loans, and inheritance. Targeted were five teams totaling 27 in number from Karbala Governorate, and Ministries of Justice and Housing.

I-PSM Programme Manager, Mr. Hisham El Azzouni, emphasized the importance of this initiative in building the capacity of targeted public sector institutions. "The commitment, active participation and significant views and comments of participants throughout the workshop have vehemently enriched the magnitude and quality of outcomes attained; and if sustained, will lead to improved public confidence in government institutions and address much-needed reforms in Iraq."

UNDP’s Institutional Development Consultant, Mr. Ahmed Ali, highlighted the outcomes stemmed from the implementation of the first round of capacity development programme. The early signs of impact of the simplified services in both Basra and Missan are promising, and now it is time to continue what we have started."

With technical assistance from UNDP, the five teams will further enhance the outcomes reached by the end of the workshop. The necessary measures for delivering simplified services will thereafter be researched and advocated for at the respective institutions.

"We have been equipped with a scientific methodology that, once adopted, will enable us to meet the expectations of the people of Iraq to receive timely and quality services, and will further support moving towards the electronic government," said Ms. Intyz Najf of Karbala University.

This initiative comes within UNDP’s support to the Government of Iraq to oversee the implementation of the Government Programme 2014-2018, and attain its predefined objectives. It also aims to develop, implement and institutionalize schemes, tools and methodologies for improved government services in public sector institutions, as stated in the Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2014-2018.

Italy provides additional funding to stabilization activities in liberated areas

Baghdad, 5 June 2016 - The Italian Republic is contributing an additional US$4.91 million (€4.5 million) to UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS), which finances fast-track initiatives in areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This follows a contribution of $2.72 million (€2.5 million) in December 2015, and brings the total funds channeled through the Italian Agency for International Cooperation (AICS) to $7.63 million (€7 million).

Based on priorities identified by the Government of Iraq and local authorities, FFIS helps to quickly repair public infrastructure, provides grants to small businesses, boosts the capacity of local government, promotes civil engagement and community reconciliation, and provides short-term employment through public works schemes.

UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande, said: “We are enormously grateful to the Government of Italy for their continuing support. More and more areas are being liberated in Iraq. Families want to return home but to ensure they can do so voluntarily and with dignity, these newly liberated areas need to be stabilized. Italy’s generous contribution will help us to support the Government in the places where support is needed the most.”

“The very effective cooperation between the FFIS, the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi local Authorities has led to the identification of numerous areas where the Funding Facility is required to intervene,” said Mr. Marco Carnelos, the Italian Ambassador to Iraq. “Italy’s commitment towards Iraq in the stabilization framework is already substantial due to the Iraqi policemen training programme performed by the Carabinieri, and will now increase in accordance with the FFIS’ growing needs. A strong stabilization process remains crucial in paving the way for a safe return of internally displaced Iraqis to their homes and will therefore prevent Iraqi people from becoming potential refugees.”

Established in June 2015, FFIS is currently working in newly liberated areas in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Ninewah and Diyala Governorates. In total, FFIS has been authorized to work in seventeen areas. Most recently, the Facility has started work in Ramadi, where widespread destruction and contamination by booby-traps have slowed stabilization efforts.
Amman, 16 June 2016 – As part of its efforts to advance the development agenda and support the Government of Iraq (GoI) to oversee the implementation of the Government Program (2014 – 2018), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized a workshop on Results-Based Management and Budgeting on 16-18 June in Amman. Held under the patronage of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the workshop targeted more than 25 deputy ministers and aimed at enhancing the national capacity in preparation for the upcoming National Development Plan (2018 – 2022). The opening session was presided over by the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers Secretariat, H.E. Mr. Mahdi al-Alaq, and UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande. Participants addressed the challenges facing the implementation of the National Development Plan (2013 – 2017), and proposed corrective and remedial actions for improved performance. They discussed the technical and operational arrangements for the Government’s official adoption of a results-based management approach for national development planning.

UNHCR helps displaced Anbar farming communities to return home

Baghdad, 27 June 2016 - A UNHCR quick impact project to help an Iraqi farming community which had been displaced by violence in Anbar Governorate to get back on their feet has been officially completed.

The project to rehabilitate an irrigation canal in Al-Khairat, Al-Garma district, north-east of Falluja in Anbar Governorate, began two months ago. The work, implemented by UNHCR’s partner, RIRP (Rebuild Iraq Recruitment Program), will help local families to be able to cultivate more than 6,500 hectares of land.

The irrigation canal was damaged during the occupation of the area by extremist groups from December 2013 and subsequent military operations by the government to retake control of the area at the end of 2015.

“This project will have a positive impact on the ability of families to rebuild their lives and start agricultural production again”, said UNHCR Iraq’s Representative, Bruno Geddo. “Our field staff said they could see the satisfaction of families who had returned to their once devastated community when this useful project was completed”, he added.

The project aims to involve the community with the goal of reviving agriculture production in Al-Khairat and will benefit more than 500 families. More than 2000 families (around 12,000 people) have now returned to Al-Khairat – which had a pre-conflict population around four times that size. UNHCR is currently helping to rehabilitate 250 houses damaged in military operations in the area so more families can return.

Families have already started planting new crops including corn and sunflowers. They will also prepare the fields for growing wheat, barley and carrots. Two reverse osmosis units have also been installed in Al-Khairat, which will give the community access to safe drinking water.

The project is one of several undertaken by UNHCR to assist conflict-affected communities in Iraq and to help displaced families to return and resume their normal lives.
New York, 6 May 2016 – The United Nations Security Council at its 7689th meeting held in New York today deliberated the situation in Iraq. The Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233(2015), as well as the Tenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013) on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, and property were presented.

Here is the text of the Briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Jan Kubiš to the Security Council (AS PREPARED):

Mr. President,

I have the honour to present the third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233(2015), as well as the tenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013) on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, and property.

Mr. President,

Since my last briefing to the Council, a profound political crisis has engulfed Baghdad and the country, brought paralysis and deadlock in the work of the Government and the Council of Representatives and added a new layer of complications to the already complex set of military, security, humanitarian, economic and human rights challenges the country is facing.

Failure of Iraq’s government and political class to agree on and carry out genuine reforms that would improve governance and accountability and include equal justice for all, jobs and services while curbing corruption demanded by the Iraqi people notably in Baghdad and southern Shiite provinces since last August prompted the demonstrators to request reform of the whole government and political process, abandoning the ethnic and sectarian quota approach that is in the fundament of the Iraq political system since 2003.

In February, an increasingly frustrated mix of the civil society protestors was joined by masses of supporters of Sayyed Muqtada al-Sadr. Spurred by this pressure, Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi attempted to accelerate the delivery on his reform program and to replace the cabinet created on the basis of party affiliation or ethnic or sectarian identity by a “technocratic” cabinet requested by Sayyed Muqtada al-Sadr. For the majority of Iraqi protestors, such cabinet is needed to enact genuine reforms, get rid of a powerful patronage system and achieve success in fighting corruption. However, majority of Iraqi political blocs reject such fundamental overhaul of the political process. They view such attempts as efforts to delegitimize not only the government, or the Council of Representatives but the whole political system. They also view notably, Sadr’s action as an attempt to take over the power on the back of the Shiite street.

Following months of controversies and weeks of political paralysis and split of the Council of Representatives, the promise of a solution to the political deadlock came with some new ministerial appointments at the parliamentary session of 26 April. Yet, this hope suffered a significant setback on April 2016.

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dialogue that will not only resolve the political impasse but give a clear perspective of better future to the people regardless of their ethnicity or religion, which will unite them and their leaders in one Iraq. Maintaining focus and unity of efforts in fighting the so called ISIL remains a critical priority, followed by mobilizing international assistance to help alleviate a deep economic and fiscal as well as humanitarian crisis, and promote stabilization and the return of IDPs. A business as usual approach simply will not be enough for the people. They want genuine change that will improve their lives.

It is imperative to resume soon the work of the Council of Representatives and to confirm the government that will be able and willing to promote genuine reforms. Political crisis and chaos only serve the interest of the enemies of Iraq, first and foremost the terrorist ISIL. They are the ones who stand to benefit from political instability and lack of reforms. Iraq's political groups must find together a political solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy that will respond to the needs of the people, put an end to the split and paralysis in Parliament, and enable the rapid enactment of the necessary reforms and anti-corruption measures, strengthening of law and order and the smooth functioning of State institutions without threat or intimidation. I also call on the Government to take specific steps to promote women's participation in politics as a part of the reforms process.

Mr. President,

Despite the notable and consistent progress on the ground against ISIL, it remains a formidable and determined enemy that constantly adjusts its tactics and attack patterns, taking into account also developments in Syria. As the Secretary-General has advised the Council on numerous occasions, ISIL cannot be defeated by military means alone. Without addressing the root causes of violent extremism and the underlying ideology, efforts will not be sustainable and lasting. Military victories need to be complemented by support for the people who are displaced and increased stabilisation and rehabilitation efforts that prioritise rule of law and good governance, and allow for the safe and voluntary return of IDPs to their places of origin. Simultaneously, Iraqis must prioritise political and constitutional reconciliation.

The stability, security and unity of Iraq hinge on an effective and inclusive political system, and equality in decision-making at the federal and local levels, tangible solutions to prevent political and sectarian exclusion.

Mr. President,
The recent resumption of contacts and dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil should be turned into a genuine partnership of mutually-beneficial cooperation. Reconciling differences and working together on the necessary reforms will create conditions for enhanced financial and technical support by the international community to Iraq, including the Kurdistan region. It is imperative that both Baghdad and Erbil remain committed to reaching an understanding on oil exports and revenue-sharing, on Peshmerga salaries and on other outstanding issues including those that concern situation in the liberated and disputed areas.

At the same time, I call on political parties in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to redouble their efforts, through inclusive dialogue on the basis of democratic and legal principles, to resolve the lingering political stalemate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq which has been paralysing the normal functioning of the Kurdistan Regional parliament since October last year.

Mr. President,
The visit of the Secretary-General to Iraq on 26 March, accompanied by Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group, and Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al-Madani, President of the Islamic Development Bank, is an illustration of the seriousness of the international community in its support for Iraq. The world must recognise that Iraq requires more not less international support at this critical juncture as it faces a growing military, security, economic and humanitarian burden and struggles to break from past legacies of poor governance and corruption. While the international community is ready to offer more support, Iraqis themselves must implement reforms that will put their country on the road to recovery.

I welcome the progress achieved during Iraq's negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank that should be finalised during another round of negotiations in Amman in mid-May, positive results will be needed also for promoting the case of Iraq at the forthcoming G7 Summit in Japan.

Aimed at improving regional relations during a round of telephone calls by Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi in mid-April, the leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council countries, having given assurances of their support for the stability and unity of Iraq, pledged their support to Iraq in the fight against ISIL and commended the success of the Iraqi security forces. Similarly, Prime Minister Abadi reiterated the need for good relations with neighbouring countries and requested continued assistance in the fight against ISIL.

Mr. President,
Governments control over Anbar province is progressively expanding, with Ramadi being consolidated and Heet being retaken from ISIL on 14 April, paving the way for further progress in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Nineawa provinces like in Basra these days, including preparations towards retaking the city of Mosul. Coordination and cooperation of the Iraqi security forces, Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga, and local and tribal forces, with the increased support of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, remain key to this and future progress as is a speedy resolution of the current political inertia and crisis. Continuous deadlock and unrest coupled with economic and fiscal crisis is undermining a key ally in fighting ISIL. At the same time, all support provided to Iraq must be given in full compliance with the UN Charter and in full respect of Iraq's sovereignty.

Mr. President,
Stabilization and rehabilitation of newly-liberated areas remains a priority, and is and is key for laying the groundwork for future reconciliation. The problems are immense, as shown in the example of Ramadi with the huge challenges posed by the vast level of destruction and unprecedented contamination by explosive devices. Despite the Government's warning of the threat of IEDs, thousands of desperate families have already returned to the city and surrounding areas. We are very concerned about reports of dozens of civilian casualties from booby-trap IEDs placed by ISIL as well as remnants of explosive devices. In close collaboration with and under the guidance of the national and provincial authorities on mine action, the UNMAS has played a role in helping to mobilize international capacities to address explosive remnants of war, including IEDs, at the local level.

Mr. President,
I am concerned by the reports of ISIL's use of weaponized chemicals in its attacks on civilians and security force personnel like these days in Basra. One of the most worrying such incidents was a rocket attack in Taza district, Kirkuk governorate, on 8 March, after which two young girls died from complications believed to stem from the
United Nations Security Council deliberates situation in Iraq (continued)

attack, and a number of people were admitted to hospital. The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsequently transmitted letters to the Security Council on the incident, and also informed that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). A team from the OPCW visited Iraq in April at the request of the Iraqi Government to assist the Iraqi authorities with their investigation into this and other similar reported attacks by ISIL. I strongly condemn any attempt by ISIL to use chemical agents as weapons, the use of which is prohibited and considered a violation of international law. I call on the international community to support the ongoing investigation into these incidents and to ensure accountability of anyone found to be involved in the use of weaponised chemicals or in facilitating that.

Mr. President,
I also condemn in the strongest possible terms the continued killings, kidnapping, rape and torture of Iraqis by ISIL, which may constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes and even genocide. I call on the international community to take steps to ensure the accountability of members of ISIL for the atrocious crimes they have perpetrated. As territory is retaken from the criminal and terrorist gangs of Daesh, evidence of the heinous crimes they have committed continues to be uncovered. More than 50 mass graves have been discovered so far in several areas of Iraq. Most recently, on 19 April, three graves were found in the football ground area of central Ramadi, with indications that the remains of as many as 40 people may have been discovered. ISIL also continues to commit violations against women and children. Information continues to be received that ISIL forcibly recruits hundreds of Yazidi children in Ninewa and for use as combatants in Syria and Iraq. In addition, the whereabouts and fate of thousands of Yazidi women and girls held in captivity by ISIL remain unknown. Limited but notable efforts undertaken by the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, together with tribal leaders, have successfully led to the release of some of these women and girls, but much more needs to be done.

Terrorist attacks directly targeting civilians also continue to take place on a daily basis throughout the country, predominantly in Baghdad. Just two of the latest such tragedies include a suspected suicide truck bomb targeting pilgrims and shoppers in a market in the Nahrawan area of Baghdad on 30 April that killed an estimated 24 people and wounded 48, as well as twin suicide car bombings in Samawa, Muthanna province, on 1 May that killed an estimated 38 people and wounded 86. I strongly condemn these cowardly acts, which attempt to stoke sectarian tensions and to weaken the national unity of Iraq and its people. Daesh terrorists feed on division and disputes among Iraqis. The answer to such crimes is for Iraqis of all affiliations and backgrounds starting with their political leaders and Members of Parliament to redouble their efforts to work towards unity and reconciliation.

Mr. President,
On 29 April, I, together with my Deputy participated in the Security Council Informal Experts Group (IEG) meeting co-chaired by the Permanent Missions of Spain and the United Kingdom to discuss the context of Iraq with regard to women, peace and security. Discussions highlighted the deteriorating situation of women’s rights due to the armed conflict against ISIL, as well as the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. A number of recommendations were made, including specific steps by the GoI to promote women’s participation in politics and public life, the need to sustain high-level political engagement in support of advancing the women, peace and security agenda, including in reconciliation, counter-terrorism efforts and stabilization, support for advocacy efforts to explore funding options for the advancement of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325 and establishment a government entity to coordinate women’s affairs. In collaboration with the Office of the SRSG for Sexual Violence in Conflict, UNAMI is currently seeking to strengthen the capacity of the UN in Iraq to address conflict-related sexual violence through the deployment of a Senior Women’s Protection Advisor.

Mr. President,
Renewed clashes beginning in late April between the Peshmerga and the Popular Mobilization Forces in Tuz Khurmatu, near Kirkuk, which have caused at least 131 casualties among those fighting and civilians, highlight the urgent need to make progress in intercommunity relations and swiftly restore state and local authority, rule of law, good governance, justice and the provision of services to newly-liberated areas, and exert firm control over all fighters and weapons. Security sector reform that will address the issue of uncontrolled armed groups and their presence in cities, notably in liberated areas, is becoming the country’s priority.

Mr. President,
The humanitarian crisis in Iraq remains one of the world’s worst. In the last year, the number of Iraqis in need has doubled. Nearly a third of the population – over ten million people – now require some form of humanitarian assistance. The military campaign, depending on its scope and intensity will almost certainly lead to mass displacement in the months ahead. In a worst case scenario, more than 2 million more Iraqis may be newly displaced by the end of the year. The UN is deeply worried about humanitarian conditions in Fallujah in particular, which remains under ISIL control and effectively under siege. Food prices are increasingly exponen- tially and staple food and fuel have supplies are running out, according to WFP remote food security monitoring. At the request of the UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator and my deputy, the Government is extracting families which manage to reach mustering points, bringing them to safety. The
humanitarian community is mobilized to provide life-saving support to these families and to people trapped in Fallujah. The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan requests US$861 million to provide life-saving assistance to seven million Iraqis. Disappointingly, only a quarter of this amount has been secured thus far. Unless USD 300 million is received by June, tens of front-line lives-saving programmes will be cut-back or closed. With needs far outstripping national capacities, international action and engagement is essential. The highly prioritized humanitarian plan for this year is intended to cover existing needs in country - it does not include the additional needs included in the continuity plan for Mosul. The amount required to help the people who will be impacted by the military operation in Mosul will depend directly on the type of military operation. If destruction is widespread and there is mass displacement for a long period, the cost of supporting these populations will be enormous. There is also a need to step-up human and funding resources to address the immense needs of displaced women and girls, including the provision of specialized psychosocial care and education.

Mr. President,

Allow me to turn now to the tenth report of the Secretary-General on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

Iraq’s Ministry of Defence has officially taken over the technical overview of the missing Kuwaiti persons file, resuming work and undertaking a number of activities since the transition. This is an encouraging and welcome step, which I hope will add impetus to the Government of Iraq’s efforts. In April the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs again called on citizens of Iraq who have information about supposed graves of missing persons to inform them. Unfortunately, stalemate still persists with respect to the missing Kuwaiti property.

In follow-up to the visit to Iraq, the Secretary-General and I visited Kuwait at the end of March, encouraging the Iraqi leadership to take every possible step to achieve tangible progress concerning the issue of both missing persons and property. To more actively contribute to the file, UNAMI will be reaching out to different stakeholders to seek their assistance in various aspects that will push the process forward.

However, I would like to underline that the main responsibility in ensuring advancement lies with the Government of Iraq. While we remain cognisant of the sheer volume of challenges that the Iraq is currently facing, its international obligations have to be fulfilled and this issue cannot fall by the wayside.

Thank you, Mr. President.

UN Envoy says Iraqi political forces must work together to resolve the current political crisis based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy

Baghdad, 9 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, discussed on Friday, 6 May with the Security Council the situation in Iraq.

In his statement, the SRSG outlined the current political, military, security, humanitarian and human rights situations in the country. He strongly urged “the Government, constitutional and political leaders and civil society to work together in constructive dialogue that will not only resolve the political impasse but give a clear perspective of better future to the people, which will unite them and their leaders in one Iraq”.

While steady advances had been made in the fight against ISIL, with a focus on consolidating control over liberated areas and preparing to retake land still under that group’s control, such as Mosul, a rise in ISIL terrorist violence had resulted in high civilian casualties from attacks that included shelling, suicide bombings and the use of weaponized chemical agents, he indicated.

SRSG also stressed that “maintaining focus and unity of efforts in fighting the so called ISIL remains a critical priority, followed by mobilizing international assistance to help alleviate a deep economic and fiscal as well as humanitarian crisis, and promote stabilization and the return of IDPs”.

The international community must remain engaged, he said, emphasizing that only one quarter of the requested $861 million for life-saving assistance had been secured. “There is a need to step up human and funding resources to address the immense needs of displaced women and girls”, he added.

He also stressed that resuming the work of the Council of Representatives and confirming a government that will be able and willing to promote genuine reforms was imperative. “Political crisis and chaos only serve the interest of the enemies of Iraq, first and foremost the terrorist ISIL”, he said.

“Iraq’s political groups must find together a political solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy that will respond to the needs of the people, put an end to the split and paralysis in Parliament, and enable the rapid enactment of the necessary reforms and anti-corruption measures, and the smooth functioning of State institutions without threat or intimidation”, SRSG said.

“There was also an urgent need to make progress in intercommunity relations, including between Baghdad and Erbil”. Mr. Kubiš also called on the Government to take specific steps to promote women’s participation in politics as a part of the reforms process.
UN AMI training course in Sulaimaniya to strengthen human rights monitoring and documentation skills

Sulaimaniya, 22 May 2016 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office conducted on 17-19 May 2016 a training course in Sulaimaniya for staff members of the Kurdistan Independent Commission of Human Rights (ICHHR), and representatives of civil society. The training course, entitled “Strengthening Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation Skills”, was part of a series of activities that the Human Rights Office is providing in order to support regional institutions and civil society actors in protecting, promoting, and fulfilling human rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The training course focused on deepening participants’ understanding of key principles and legal frameworks, such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as well as on sharpening core skills, including fact-finding missions, interviewing, and report-writing skills. Sessions were provided by United Nations human rights professionals, as well as one member of ICHR and two civil society activists who had benefited from earlier training of trainers provided by Human Rights Office. Head of ICHR Office in Sulaimaniya, Mr. Nawshwerwan Kake stated that the staff of ICHR in Sulaimaniya Office and the other offices in the area have benefited from the training through raising the knowledge of the Staff in the relevant area. ICHR Staff Member, Ms. Midya Abdullah, stated that the training was “very important because our knowledge was limited and we were not fully aware about the international standards in human rights monitoring and documentation - now our skills have been improved and consequently our efficiency and the quality of reports will be improved as well”.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urges the Iraqi Government to immediately conduct an investigation into the use of force by security forces against protestors outside the Green Zone in Baghdad

Geneva, 24 May 2016 - Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Rupert Colville presented today the following briefing note on Iraq: “We urge the Iraqi Government to immediately conduct an independent, transparent and effective investigation into the use of force by security forces against protestors outside the Green Zone in Baghdad last Friday. Four protestors were killed and up to 200 injured after security forces used tear gas canisters, rubber bullets and some live ammunition against the demonstrators for close to two hours. It has been reported that up to 200 people were subsequently arrested in connection with the protest, including a group of university students. According to information we have gathered, the hundreds of protestors, including women and children, hailed mainly from different areas of Baghdad which have suffered terrorist attacks, such as Sadr city, and were calling on the Government to take immediate action to ensure greater accountability for these attacks and to protect their communities. The protestors were reportedly unarmed. The Government has since accused Ba’athists and pro-ISIL elements of being behind the protests, and some media have referred to the protests as riots. This has, naturally, exacerbated tensions – as many eye-witnesses claimed that the protestors were waving Iraqi flags, seeking security for themselves and their families and accountability for killings of members of their communities due to acts of terrorism. Rather than placing blame on the protestors, we appeal to the Government to promptly announce an independent investigation to establish whether unnecessary or excessive force was used and to hold accountable by law any security officers who may have acted in violation of the strict standards required concerning the use of force by law enforcement officials.* Additionally, we urge the Government to ensure that the protection of civilians is paramount in its military operations to retake Fallujah. We call on all parties to the conflict to adhere strictly to international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities, and to ensure that civilians are permitted to leave areas where fighting may be taking place in dignity and safety, and that they can access humanitarian assistance. On a separate matter, we are concerned at the announcement by the Ministry of Justice that 22 people have been executed in the past month. The statement did not provide any details as to the identities of those executed or for what crimes they had been convicted, nor where the executions were carried out. We have long called on the Iraqi Government to impose a moratorium on all death sentences and executions, particularly given the weaknesses of the Iraqi criminal justice system and the risk of non-compliance with international standards of fair trial and due process.
Workshop on plans to improve respect for and protection of Iraqi components

Erbil, 28 May 2016 - UNAMI’s Office of Political Affairs, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and the UNAMI Human Rights Office convened a gathering of leaders of Iraq’s religious and ethnic groups from across the country on 27 and 28 May 2016 in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The group gathered to discuss specific plans to improve respect for and protection of Iraqi components. William Spencer, Executive Director of the Institute for International Law and Human Rights, led a discussion of various specific actions that can be taken, from building new institutions to reforming Iraq’s educational curricula, as well as mechanisms to ensure the return of families to liberated areas.

Ultimately, participants chose to pursue legislative initiatives focusing on combating discrimination, drawing as a source on the many provisions of Iraq’s Constitution that can better protect these and other marginalised groups.

The United Nations will continue to facilitate this practical, specific discussion as needed, and signaled its investment in developing a national culture of tolerance and respect of Iraq’s diversity.

‘Human rights education in schools’, a UNAMI Project to help protect children, instill hope for future generation

Erbil, 2 June 2016 – Human rights education for children and youth in post-conflict environment will help protect them and create strong basis for stability and hope for the future. For this, the United Nations is launching a project entitled “Human Rights Education in Schools” in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for the coming two academic years.

The UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) in Kurdistan Region of Iraq is leading the project, in cooperation with the KR-I Ministry of Education and with funding from the Government of the region of Flanders in Belgium. It will run during the academic years of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

The project aims at reviewing national educational policies and curriculum for selected school grades and training teachers on technical and substantive issues pertaining to human rights principles and fundamental freedoms.

Education for children and youth as part of post-conflict reconstruction is crucial. Developed educational systems may offer immediate protection for children. Solid human rights principles will protect children from exploitation and violence, promote the rights and responsibilities of children, especially participation and active citizenship, and can provide long-term benefits for society. Human rights education in particular will provide for new opportunities to mitigate ethnic, religious and political discord. It would also create strong basis for stability, structure, and hope for the future.

“The UNAMI HRO has invested efforts in assisting Iraq to address the human rights aspects of the root causes of human rights violations and abuses”, said the head of UNAMI HRO and Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq, Mr. Francesco Motta. “Addressing these root causes is fundamental to achieve the overriding objective of developing into a peaceful, democratic and inclusive state built on the rule of law and respect for human rights in which all its citizens fully and equally participate without discrimination”, he added.

The “Human Rights Education in Schools” project aims at reviewing teaching and learning material, textbooks and guides, and determine whether it needs to be developed or reviewed to conform with key human rights principles and learning objectives, while being adapted to the country’s specific social, cultural and historical context.

UNAMI HRO will seek to develop an education strategy that focuses on the central role of teachers. Human rights experts will provide training to teachers to channel and mainstream the curriculum and the values it conveys. UNAMI HRO will start with a pilot project in training the public school teachers of Halabja Governorate with a view to training at a later stage all teachers of tackled grades in other governorates of KR-I.
Political consultations

Iraq, May– June 2016 - During May and June the leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) engaged in a very dynamic process of political consultations with major stakeholders in Baghdad and Erbil.

Baghdad, 3 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives (CoR), H.E. Salim al-Jubouri. They discussed the political situation in the country and ways to resolve the crisis. Speaker al-Jubouri briefed on the proposed plans to commence the functioning of the CoR. SRSG Kubiš welcomed efforts to restore political stability, urging settlement of disputes by peaceful means and through constructive dialogue that includes leaders of civil society and representatives of the demonstrators.

Baghdad, 03 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met with H.E. Mr. Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq. Discussions focused on the political situation and the way forward. The President briefed on his plans to find solutions to the current impasse that would restore stability. SRSG Kubiš appreciated the efforts made by the President to resolve the crisis.

Erbil, 4 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, brought his message of dialogue to Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), visiting Erbil today, to consult with KRG leaders and other national officials on ways out of the current political crisis engulfing Iraq. He discussed with KR-I Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani the overall political situation in Iraq, the Peshmerga’s fight against Daesh and the Kurdish region’s economic conditions. He also met with Iraq’s Finance Minister Hoshyar Zebari for an overview of the political situation in Baghdad and the country’s economic woes. The SRSG stressed in Erbil, as in his discussions with interlocutors in Baghdad, that dialogue is key to resolving the political crisis.

Baghdad, 3 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with representatives of the coordination committee of the demonstrators representing the Sadrist Trend. The delegation discussed with the SRSG the demands of the protesters as well as the recent demonstrations.

SRSG Kubiš noted with appreciation that since the beginning of last summer the demonstration for reforms, delivery of services, and against corruption - which are legitimate expressions of the demands and needs of the people - have been conducted peacefully and in a well-organised manner. He encouraged the committee to maintain such peaceful character of their activities.

Baghdad, 03 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today a group of members of the Council of Representatives with whom he discussed the current political situation as well as the recent demonstrations.

Baghdad, 04 May 2016 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq and UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande, met today with Mr. Sohaib Alrawi, Governor of Anbar. Discussions focused on the ongoing stabilization operations in Ramadi, rehabilitation of infrastructure, and plans for boosting economic activities in Anbar Province. Ms. Grande and Governor Alrawi also discussed clearance of booby-traps in areas liberated from ISIL.

Photo: Courtesy of the Office of the Governor of Anbar
Baghdad, 5 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met on today with Abu Mahdi Al-Mohandis, Deputy Chairman of the Popular Mobilisation Commission to discuss the current political situation in the country and the way forward. The security situation in and around Baghdad and the operations against ISIS was also discussed.

Baghdad, 05 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Faleh al-Fayyad, National Security Advisor, to discuss the current political situation in the country and the way forward. The security situation in and around Baghdad and the operations against ISIS was also discussed.

Erbil, 7 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with His Excellency Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country and the way forward, and the fight against ISIL.

Erbil, 07 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Muhamed Faraj, Secretary General of Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU). They discussed the current political situation in the country and the way forward.

Erbil, 7 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Mala Bakhtyar, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Politburo Member. They discussed the current political situation in Baghdad and Kurdistan, and the way forward for the political crisis in Baghdad.

Erbil, 8 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Qubad Talabani, Head of the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG). They discussed the current political situation in the country and the way forward.

Erbil, 07 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Qubad Talabani, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country and the way forward, and the fight against ISIL.

Erbil, 8 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Nawsherwan Mustafa, Head of Gorran Movement Political Party. They discussed the current political situation in Baghdad and Kurdistan, and the way forward for the political crisis in Baghdad.
Erbil, 08 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Ms. Hero Talabani, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Politburo Member. They discussed the current political situation in Baghdad and Kurdistan, and the way forward for the political crisis in Baghdad.

Baghdad, 9 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with former Vice President and leader of Wataniya Coalition, Dr. Ayad Allawi, with whom he discussed the current political situation in Iraq. The SRSG also briefed on the Security Council session on Iraq, as well as his recent trip to Erbil.

Baghdad, 10 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Qais Khazali, the Secretary-General of Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH). They discussed the security situation and the progress in the fight against Daesh. SRSG urged Iraq’s political forces must find together a political solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy.

Baghdad, 10 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Dr. Dhiyaa Al-Asadi, Head of the Ahrar Bloc. SRSG urged Iraq’s political forces must find together a political solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy.

Baghdad, 10 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Nouri al-Maliki, Head of the State of Law Coalition. SRSG urged Iraq’s political forces must find together a political solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy.
Baghdad, 10 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with H.E. Salim Al-Jubouri, Speaker of the Council of Representatives. SRSG urged Iraq's political forces must find together a political solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy.

BAGHDAD, 10 MAY 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with H.E. Salim Al-Jubouri, Speaker of the Council of Representatives. SRSG urged Iraq’s political forces must find together a political solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy.

Photo: Courtesy of the Office of the Speaker of Parliament

Baghdad, 11 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with His Excellency Dr. Haider Al-Abadi, Prime Minister of Iraq. They discussed the current political crisis in the country and the way forward, including the steps taken by the Prime Minister to resolve the crisis.

BAGHDAD, 11 MAY 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with His Excellency Dr. Haider Al-Abadi, Prime Minister of Iraq. They discussed the current political crisis in the country and the way forward, including the steps taken by the Prime Minister to resolve the crisis.

Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Prime Minister

Najaf, 12 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammed Saeed Al-Hakim.

BAGHDAD, 12 MAY 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with H.E. Mr. Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq, in Baghdad. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation and the way forward. The President briefed on his plans to find solutions to the current impasse that would restore stability. SRSG Kubiš appreciated the efforts made by the President to resolve the crisis.

Najaf, 12 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammed Saeed Al-Hakim.

BAGHDAD, 22 MAY 2016 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. György Busztin, met today with H.E. Mr. Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq, in Baghdad. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation and the way forward. The President briefed on his plans to find solutions to the current impasse that would restore stability. SRSG Kubiš appreciated the efforts made by the President to resolve the crisis.

Najaf, 12 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yaacoubi.

Najaf, 12 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yaacoubi.

Baghdad, 15 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with H.E. Mr. Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq, in Baghdad. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation and the way forward. The President briefed on his plans to find solutions to the current impasse that would restore stability. SRSG Kubiš appreciated the efforts made by the President to resolve the crisis.

Baghdad, 22 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG) for Political and Electoral Affairs, Mr. György Busztin, met today with H.E. Salim Al-Jubouri, Speaker of the Council of Representatives. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation in the country and the way forward.

Baghdad, 22 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG) for Political and Electoral Affairs, Mr. György Busztin, met today with H.E. Salim Al-Jubouri, Speaker of the Council of Representatives. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation in the country and the way forward.
Baghdad, 23 May 2016 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG) for Political and Electoral Affairs, Mr. György Busztin, met today with Mr. Safa’a al-Sheikh, Deputy National Security Advisor. Discussions focused on the current political and security developments in the country.

Baghdad, 24 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Ali Al-Allaq, parliament member from the State of Law Bloc. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation.

Baghdad, 24 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Adel Abdul Mahdi, Minister of Oil.

Baghdad, 25 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Hisham al-Sheih, leading member of the Reform Front and Head of the COR National Reconciliation Committee and his accompanying delegation. Discussions focused on their position with regard to impasse in the parliament.

Baghdad, 25 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Ali Al-Allaq, parliament member from the State of Law Bloc.
Baghdad, 26 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, continues his consultations with Iraq’s political and civil society leaders on ways to overcome the political crisis. SRSG Kubiš met today with H.E. Salim Al-Jubouri, Speaker of the Council of Representatives. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation.

Najaf, 30 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, was received today by His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani in Najaf. After the meeting, Mr. Kubiš spoke to media representatives. Following is a transcript of his comments:

“Al-Salam Aleykum,

First of all, I was very much honoured indeed that I was given once again an opportunity to be received by His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani. It is a great honour for all of us, for me, personally, for the United Nations.

Of course, I briefed His Eminence about the activities of the United Nations as regards our work to assist the country in resolving the current political crisis, in addressing the humanitarian needs, development needs of the country, in supporting reforms, and of course in supporting all the activities that are focused on fighting Daesh.

And from this meeting, perhaps, I took several very important points as a guidance for our activities as to the United Nations.

It is obvious that His Eminence regrets the current situation and hopes that the current situation will improve, and that the political forces of the country will shed their differences – will drop them – and will start working in concert, listening to the needs of the people, listening to the requirements for reform, and working for this.

As for the second very important point – all of us are encouraged to see the progress of the Iraqi Security Forces, of the Iraqi people, in fighting the terrorist Daesh. And His Eminence expressed very strong support for this fight against Daesh, appreciation of the Iraq Security Forces and all those forces that are supporting Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces in fighting against terrorist Daesh. The fight against Daesh must unite the country, and the people of the country, and this is the second very important message that I heard from His Eminence. This is important for the future of the country.

The third very important message was: take care of civilians. Both, when fighting Daesh, the civilians should not suffer from any excesses. But it’s the same as regards to support for the internally displaced people. Here, His Eminence requested the country, the authorities, the Government, but also the international community to increase assistance to the civilians, notably to the internally displaced people. And I informed about many activities, including mobilisation of funding for the Government and for the UN system that should be eventually in the hands of the Government to provide assistance to the IDPs but also generally to the civilian population.

All in all, I was encouraged to hear that His Eminence and the Marjaiya are following the situation and developments in the country very carefully, that they are concerned about, and regret the developments, and when it will be necessary to express themselves, they will express themselves. And it was again coming very strongly from the meeting and from the discussion with His Eminence that indeed the Marjaiya is following very, very carefully what is happening and will intervene whenever that is necessary.

Once again, I was very much honoured by being received by His Eminence. And you know, this is the third time that I was given this honour and I confirmed to His Eminence and, through His Eminence, to the people of Iraq, that the United Nations will do everything possible in all the areas outlined by His Eminence, in all the areas that are needed for improving the lives of the people, in encouraging all the people working together notably against Daesh, and in preserving the unity and sovereignty of Iraq.

I would like to thank you for your attention”.

Question: Do you have a report at the end of June for the United Nations? Did you brief His Eminence about this report?

SRSG Kubiš: I briefed about my report to the Security Council. His Eminence encouraged me to very openly speak about the issues; bring them to the attention of the Security Council and to the international community. But then, back to receive these messages from the Security Council and the international community and in full openness to transmit them to the authorities and the political forces here in Iraq.
Baghdad, 29 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today in Baghdad with a group of members of the Kurdish Bloc in the Council of Representatives. Discussions focused on resolution to the current political impasse, reforms and Baghdad-Erbil relations. This is part of consultations the SRSG has been having with Iraq’s political and civil society leaders on ways to overcome the political crisis.

Baghdad, 31 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Hashem al-Hashemi, Fadhila’s Secretary-General, and Dr. Ammar Tohmeh, Head of Fadhila Bloc, with whom he discussed the current political crisis, underlining the importance of resuming the work of the CoR in view of the emerging security and economic challenges that Iraq is facing. Both interlocutors underscored the need for political blocs to enter into compromise "but not sacrifice" regarding their stances in order to facilitate reaching a political resolution. Reference was also made to the demonstrations, and the need to maintain law and order while respecting the right of freedom of assembly.

Baghdad, 2 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with the Head of al-Wataniya Coalition, Iyad Alawi, with whom he discussed the security situation in Iraq and particularly the ongoing operations against ISIL. The current political crisis was also discussed, and the two stressed the need to restart the work on the National Reconciliation file, underlining the importance of reaching a historic compromise.

Baghdad, 31 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with the Governor of the Governorate of Baghdad, Mr. Ali Tamimi, with whom he exchanged views on the security and economic situation, the situation of IDPs, as well as the challenges that Baghdad is facing in the provision of basic services such as electricity and water, particularly in view of the coming hot summer period. They also discussed the political crisis and the recent demonstrations that took place in Baghdad’s International Zone. While recognizing the right of people for assembly to express in a peaceful manner their needs and expectations and a hope that political forces will take their requests into serious consideration, the SRSG underlined the need to maintain law and order, respect the State institutions and refrain from violence. After the meeting with the Governor, Mr. Kubiš and Mr. Tamimi addressed the media at a news conference.

Baghdad, 1 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with the Head of the Turkmen Front, Mr. Arshad al-Salehi, with whom he discussed the political situation, underlining the importance of resuming the work of the Parliament and resolving the current political crisis. The preparations for the fight against ISIL in Fallujah and the question of administration mechanisms of communities in disputed areas once additional ISIL-occupied areas are liberated, were also discussed from the perspective of ensuring the rights and representation of the Turkmen component of Iraq. After the meeting, Mr. Kubiš and Mr. Al-Salehi addressed the media at a news conference.

Erbil, 6 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Dr. Fuad Hussein, Chief of Staff to the Kurdistan Region Presidency. They discussed Erbil-Baghdad relations and the Kurdistan Region’s share in the international assistance pledged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Group of Seven (G7) countries.
Erbil 6 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Qubad Talabani, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. They discussed Erbil-Baghdad relations and Kurdistan Region’s share in the international assistance pledged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Group of Seven (G7) countries.

Erbil, 6 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with His Excellency Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. They discussed Erbil-Baghdad relations and the Kurdistan Region’s share in the international assistance pledged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Group of Seven (G7) countries.

Kuwait City, 26 June 2016 - The Secretary-General held a telephone call today with the Prime Minister of Iraq, R.E. Mr. Haider al-Abadi.

The Secretary-General welcomed the progress made by Iraq’s security forces in retaking areas from ISIL. He noted that the UN is working to support the Iraqi government in addressing the severe humanitarian needs of civilians in Fallujah.

The Secretary-General expressed concerns over reports of serious human rights abuses against civilians displaced from Fallujah and welcomed the Prime Minister’s decision to establish an investigative committee to look into all alleged abuses.

The Secretary-General and Prime Minister al-Abadi also discussed the pressing humanitarian needs in many parts of Iraq. In this regard, the Secretary-General stressed the urgent need to increase funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq, which is currently only 33 per cent funded.

Baghdad, 26 June 2016 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG) for Political and Electoral Affairs, Mr. György Busztin, met today with a joint PUK-Gorran delegation headed by Ms. Ala Talabani and Mr. Hoshyar Abdalla. Discussions focused on the current political developments.

Baghdad, 27 June 2016 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Saleh al-Mutlaq, Head of the Arabiya Coalition, and discussed the current security and humanitarian situation in Fallujah as well as issues related to protection of civilians.

Baghdad, 28 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Ahmed al-Maari, Head of the Iraqi Forces Coalition. They discussed the security, protection of civilians and humanitarian conditions relating to Fallujah after its liberation as well as the political situation, including the resumption of the work of the Council of Representatives.

Baghdad, 28 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Salih al-Jubouri, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives (CoR). They discussed the current political situation, including the resumption of the work of the CoR and completing the re-organisation of the Government, as well as the ramifications of the Fallujah liberation operations.
Baghdad, 28 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Iraqi Defence Minister Khaled al-Obeidi. SRSG congratulated Mr. al-Obeidi on the liberation of Fallujah and they discussed ways to meet the challenges of preventing violations of human rights and providing humanitarian assistance. SRSG encouraged a quick and transparent investigation of any human rights violations. Mr. Kubiš and Mr. al-Obeidi also discussed upcoming operations for the liberation of areas remaining under Daesh control.

Baghdad, 28 June 2016 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. György Busztin, met today with Mr. Dhia al-Asadi, Head of Ahrar bloc in the Council of Representatives. They discussed the political situation in Iraq and efforts to end the current political crisis.

Baghdad, 29 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Hadi Al-Amiri, Head of the Badr Organization. They discussed Fallujah operations and the current political situation in the country.

Baghdad, 30 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Mr. Nouri Al-Maliki, Head of the State of Law Coalition. They discussed the Iraqi security forces’ victory against Daesh in Fallujah and the current political developments which could result in the resumption of the work of a unified parliament and the smooth functioning of the Government, as well as the need for supporting the huge task of Iraq’s reconstruction.

Baghdad, 29 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with a delegation of Yazidi community representatives led by Director-General of Endowment for Yazidi, Christians and Saban Mandesna, Mr. Sharwan Ismail. The delegation underscored the plight of Yazidi held by ISIL and sought UN and international support for their call for the speedy release of women and children in ISIL captivity, in addition to addressing issues related to the ordeal of Yazidi. SRSG assured them of continuing UN advocacy in support of addressing their grievances.

Baghdad, 30 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Minister of Planning Salman Ali Al-Jumaili and discussed the liberation of Fallujah, the humanitarian situation and protection of civilians as well as the long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq. They also discussed the political developments in Anbar and Baghdad.
UNAMI urges Government, political leaders to work together to restore security and to engage in dialogue

Baghdad, 30 April 2016 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is gravely concerned by today's developments in Baghdad, including the storming of the Council of Representatives premises by demonstrators after they entered the International Zone. The Mission condemns the use of violence, including against elected officials, and urges calm, restraint and respect for Iraq's constitutional institutions at this crucial juncture. UNAMI calls on the Government, all political leaders and civil society to work together to immediately restore security and engage in dialogue that will ensure the implementation of the reforms necessary to draw Iraq out of its political, economic and security crisis.

The United Nations continues to operate from its headquarters in Baghdad's International Zone and is in constant contact with parties to facilitate a solution that meets the demands of the people for reform.

SRSG Kubiš condemns double bombings targeting civilians in Al-Samawa as outrageous, evil act

Baghdad, 1 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, expresses outrage at the deliberate targeting of civilians in two car bombings in the city of Al-Samawah in southern Iraq today.

The SRSG offers condolences to the families of the victims and wishes the injured speedy recovery.

"One of the explosions took place near a bus station, cutting down innocent passengers", Mr. Kubiš said. "Targeting civilians in a peaceful city with such intent to kill and injure as many as possible is nothing short of a diabolical act committed by terrorists bent on achieving their sinister agenda regardless of the human cost".

The SRSG reiterates his call on Iraqis to remain united in the face of such terrorist attacks and on the authorities to pursue and bring the perpetrators to justice.

SRSG Kubiš on Saydiyah Bombing: Iraqis should in one loud voice condemn targeting of civilians, particularly pilgrims

Baghdad, 3 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the terrorist car bombing in Baghdad's Saydiyah neighbourhood on Monday 02 May 2016 which targeted civilians, including pilgrims on their way to commemorate the death anniversary of Imam Musa Al-Kadhim.

The SRSG offers condolences to the families of the victims and wishes the injured speedy recovery.

"Daesh’s criminality knows no limits, and now it is aiming the full wrath of its cruelty at pilgrims on their way to perform their religious duty", Mr. Kubiš said. "Expressions of support and grief for the victims are no longer enough. All segments of Iraqi society as well as political, civil society and religious leaders together should, in one loud voice, condemn and call for an end these atrocities, particularly against pilgrims as we have seen in the past few days".

The SRSG is confident that such attacks will not be able to break the Iraqi people’s will, urging them to remain united and calling on the authorities to exercise extra vigilance in order to scuttle the terrorists’ plans of sowing sedition in the country.

UN Envoy calls for restraint in Diyala

Baghdad, 6 May 2016 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, expressed concern at reports of political and security tensions in Diyala.

"I urge political leaders in Diyala to exercise calm and restraint, particularly at this delicate juncture for Iraq," Mr. Kubiš said. The SRSG called on political blocs and security forces in Diyala to respect due process, and to bear in mind that their decisions and actions have implications for intercommunal relations throughout the country.

UN Envoy condemns bomb attacks in Sadr City and Baquba; calls them cowardly

Baghdad, 11 May 2016 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, strongly condemned the car bomb attack which occurred today in a busy market in Sadr City claiming many lives and leaving scores injured. This latest attack comes after a car bomb was detonated near a restaurant in Baquba on 9 May which also left large numbers of casualties.

"These are cowardly terrorist attacks on civilians who have done nothing but going about their normal daily lives", Mr. Kubiš said. "Such acts of terrorist violence are certainly against all the principles of decency and humanity, and as such must be strongly condemned", Mr. Kubiš added.

“I call on the authorities to do their utmost to quickly bring the perpetrators to justice, and express my deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and wish the injured a speedy recovery”, SRSG Kubiš further added.
Security Council Press statement on terrorist attacks in Baghdad

New York, 12 May 2016 - The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the three terrorist attacks on 11 May in Baghdad, which resulted in the deaths of at least 93 people, as well as many more injured persons, for which ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant), also known as Da'esh, has claimed responsibility. The members of the Security Council lamented that these latest victims are a sad addition to the thousands of Iraqis killed this year. The members of the Security Council expressed their deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of Iraq. They wished the injured a speedy recovery.

The members of the Security Council condemned all attacks perpetrated by ISIL (Da'esh) against the people of Iraq in an attempt to destabilize the country and region. They reiterated their commitment to Iraq's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity, as well as to its security.

The members of the Security Council welcomed the efforts of the Government of Iraq and its partners to counter ISIL (Da'esh) and return stability to the country.

The members of the Security Council underlined the need to bring the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice, and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Iraqi authorities in this regard.

The members of the Security Council stressed the need to take measures to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism, terrorist organizations and individual terrorists in accordance with resolutions 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015).

The members of the Security Council reiterated that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of its motivation and wherever, whenever and by whomsoever it is committed, and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed the need for all States to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

UN Envoy expresses outrage at recent deadly terror attacks in meetings with the Marja’iyya in Najaf

Najaf, 12 May 2016 – Following the horrendous triple bombing yesterday in Baghdad that targeted predominantly Shiite neighbourhoods that killed over 90 people and wounded many more, preceded by a similar terrorist attack in Diyala, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, expressed outrage and condolences while meeting Their Eminences, Grand Ayatollahs Sayyed Mohammed Saeed Al-Hakim, Sheikh Basheer Al-Najafi and Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yacoubi in Najaf.

“Such barbaric attacks while demonstrating the inhumane nature of the Takfiri ideology of the so-called ISIL are at the same time attempts to stoke retaliatory acts. I call upon all Iraqi people to resist such attempts at manipulation, to avoid falling into the trap of the terrorists of Daesh”, said Mr. Kubiš. “Acts of terror against civilians affect all Iraqi people and humanity as a whole”.

He urged the Government to take immediate and more effective measures to prevent such acts of terror and to protect the Iraqi people. “Providing and guaranteeing law and order and security to all citizens of Iraq is a top priority of the respective State organs and institutions and must remain their prerogative”, said Mr. Kubiš.

“It is high time that Iraq’s political and constitutional leaders respond to the continuous martyrdom of countless civilian victims of terror and violence and hear the cries of their families”, said Mr. Kubiš. “If not resolved soon, the current protracted political crisis that is weakening the State and its institutions will only provide space and new opportunities for terrorists and criminals to exploit it for their inhumane acts that work against the unity of Iraq and its people and ultimately promote the violent extremism of Daesh”.

Mr. Kubiš also calls on the international community to work in unity to make the fight against Daesh more effective and end its days as soon as possible.

SRSG Kubiš strongly condemns Baghdad bombings: Terrorists are targeting innocent civilians

Baghdad, 17 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns a series of terrorist suicide bombings today that targeted busy markets in Baghdad’s northeastern Shaab neighbourhood, Sadr City and the southern neighbourhood of Al-Rasheed, killing or wounding many civilians, including women and children. More terrorist attacks were reportedly foiled by security forces.

The SRSG offers condolences to the families of the victims and wishes the injured speedy recovery.

“The terrorists have struck again, adding to their long violent history of death and destruction and once again aiming to kill and maim as many innocent people as possible,” Mr. Kubiš said.
UN calls for calm, political solution, after Baghdad confrontations

Baghdad, 21 May 2016 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) expresses deep concern about the escalation of confrontation during yesterday’s demonstrations that once again targeted Baghdad’s International Zone.

“What happened on Friday shows how events could take a different turn and escalate, causing casualties,” said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš. “Restoring calm is key for Iraq to be able to move forward in finding a political solution based on inclusive consultations to resume the work of the united parliament to confirm without delay a reformed government that is able and willing to proceed with the reforms that will address the priorities and challenges the country and the people face, first of all fighting Daesh in Fallujah, praises assuring statements

SRSG Kubiš calls on parties to protect civilians in operations to liberate Fallujah, assuring statements

Baghdad, 25 May 2016 - As operations are underway to liberate Fallujah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly urges all parties to undertake every effort to protect the lives of civilians and preserve the city’s infrastructure in accordance with the relevant principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. He calls on all parties to the conflict to adhere strictly to international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities, and to ensure that civilians are permitted to leave areas where fighting may be taking place in dignity and safety. The SRSG expresses his appreciation for recent directives of the Commander-in-Chief Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, the Ministry of Defence and the Popular Mobilization Commission, and in particular for the statement of His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani as well as the statement of the Fikh Council of Iraqi Scholars, which outline the parameters of the conduct of military operations and which emphasise the need to undertake all actions necessary to ensure the protection of the civilian inhabitants from the effects of armed conflict and violence.

“I welcome the issuance of these key directives and messages as the operations commence to liberate Fallujah from its occupation by the terrorist organization which underlines the need to undertake all actions necessary to ensure the protection of the civilian inhabitants from the effects of armed conflict and violence.”

But the will of the Iraqi people, despite all the carnage, remains unshaken and this gives hope for the future. Joining the people of Iraq, in particular the residents of Baghdad where a number of attacks took place, I urge the Government to make every effort to prevent the occurrence of such outrages”, Mr. Kubiš said.

UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of May 2016

Baghdad, 1 June 2016 – A total of 867 Iraqis were killed and another 1,459 were injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in May 2016*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The number of civilians killed in May was 468 (including 19 federal police, Sahwa civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, fire department), and the number of civilians injured was 1,041 (including 96 federal police, Sahwa civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, fire department).

A total of 399 members of the Iraqi Security Forces (including Peshmerga, SWAT and militias fighting alongside the Iraqi Army but excluding Anbar Operations) were killed and 418 were injured. The overall casualty figures have risen over the previous month of April, where a total of 741 were killed and 1,374 were injured.

The figures for May are likely to increase because they do not include the casualties from Anbar Governorate, scene of heavy combat in recent days and where the ongoing conflict has made any kind of verification extremely difficult.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, lamented the continuing loss of life, particularly among the peaceful civilians, as a result of terrorist attacks, and praised the population’s resilience. He urged the Government of Iraq to take the necessary and more effective measures to protect civilians from such terrorist attacks.

“Iraqi civilians going about their daily life have been the target of terrorist suicide bombers and car bombs. In some of these attacks, pilgrims have been singled out. Residential neighbourhoods have sustained heavy damage. Armed clashes have spared no one. But the will of the Iraqi people, despite all the carnage, remains unshaken and this gives hope for the future. Joining the people of Iraq, in particular the residents of Baghdad where a number of attacks took place, I urge the Government to make every effort to prevent the occurrence of such outrages”. Mr. Kubiš noted the increase in the number of civilian casualties over the previous month and the likelihood of more civilian casualties owing to the ongoing fighting in Anbar Governorate, particularly in the city of Fallujah. The SRSG reiterated his call on the parties to undertake every effort to protect the lives of civilians and preserve Fallujah’s infrastructure in accordance with the relevant principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. “Innocent civilians should not pay the price for the crimes of Daesh”, he said.

According to the casualties recorded for May, Baghdad was the worst affected Governorate with 1,007 civilian casualties (267 killed and 740 injured. Ninewa 56 killed, Diyala 49 killed and 93 injured, Muthana 41 killed and 75 injured, Salahadin 35 killed and 55 injured, while Kirkuk had 7 killed and 62 injured.

* CAVEATS: In general, UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in conflict areas. In some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. UNAMI has also received, without being able to verify, reports of large numbers of casualties along with unknown numbers of persons who have died from secondary effects of violence after having fled their homes due to exposure to the elements, lack of water, food, medicines and health care. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum.
SRSG Kubiš welcomes H.E. Al-Sistani’s call for protection of Fallujah civilians, expresses concern about human rights violations, calls for political unity

Baghdad, 05 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, welcomes the call by His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani for the protection of civilians and their property during the ongoing military operations to liberate Fallujah.

The SRSG reiterates his call on all parties to the conflict to do their utmost to protect civilians and to adhere strictly to international humanitarian law, and ensure that they have unhindered access to medical facilities and humanitarian assistance, and are able to leave areas affected by violence safely and with dignity.

Mr. Kubiš expresses concern about the reports of human rights violations against civilians fleeing the fighting and urges the Government of Iraq to thoroughly investigate the reports, do its utmost to prevent such incidents from occurring, hold to account those found involved in such acts in a transparent manner. He appreciates the instructions of H.E. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to this extent.

He calls on the Iraqi authorities screening civilians leaving the combat zone to ensure the process is conducted as expeditiously as possible and in full conformity with humanitarian principles under a centralized government structure that guarantees transparency, reliable tracking of those being detained and accountability of their figures and whereabouts to prevent abuses and assure their worried relatives.

“The people of Fallujah have suffered immensely under Daesh. Many of them are on the move, further risking their lives to escape the terrorist group and the fighting, and are desperately in need of safe shelter. They should not be subjected to further suffering and intimidation,” Mr. Kubiš said.

He added: “The battle of Fallujah is the battle of all Iraqis who want to see their future with all others in Iraq free of Daesh. This noble cause of ridding Fallujah of Daesh terrorists should not be allowed to be tarnished by violations of human rights and dignity of people, notably on sectarian grounds.”

The SRSG urges Iraqi political leaders and commanders of all military and security forces to assume responsibility and stand united behind the liberation of Fallujah and deny Daesh the opportunity to use transgressions, notably on sectarian basis, for its own objectives.

“Igniting sedition and sectarian tensions have always been the aims of the terrorist group. The Fallujah operations should unite the political forces against those forces fanning the flames of sectarianism, and prompt them to work together towards the much-needed national reconciliation to reach a historic compromise based on inclusiveness, equality and justice for all that will create a sustainable ground for the unity of Iraq and its people,” Mr. Kubiš said.

SRSG Kubiš condemns terrorist bombing in Karbala: Iraqis deserve to live in peace, especially during Ramadan

Baghdad, 07 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the car bombing today in the holy city of Karbala in southern Iraq in which a number of civilians were killed or wounded.

He expresses his condolences to the families of those killed and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

“It is a sad start of the holy month of Ramadan, with civilians targeted by this cowardly attack. Iraqis deserve to live in peace and they deserve it more during this holy month,” Mr. Kubiš said.

SRSG Kubiš denounces terrorist bombings in Baghdad and Taji: Cowardly acts that all Iraqis should condemn

Baghdad, 09 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the terroror bombings today in the Baghdad al-Jadida district of the Iraqi capital and in the Taji area north of the city in which many people were killed or wounded.

The SRSG expresses his condolences to the families of those killed and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

“These horrific bombings, coming particularly during the holy month of Ramadan, not only aim at inflicting a heavy toll on the civilian population, but also seek to weaken the country’s unity and destroy its social fabric. The Daesh terrorists should not be allowed to succeed. It is imperative that all Iraqis of different affiliations and backgrounds join in condemning these cowardly acts”, Mr. Kubiš said.
UN Envoy congratulates Iraqi Government and people on the victories in Fallujah; says unity helps defeat the terrorists

Baghdad, 20 June 2016 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Mr. Ján Kubiš, congratulated on Saturday 18 June the Iraqi Government and people on resounding victories in the campaign for securing the liberation of the city of Fallujah.

“I congratulate all Iraqis on resounding victories of the Iraqi security forces, popular mobilization forces and sons of the local tribes and clans as the city of Fallujah gets liberated from the ISIL terrorists. Every day that passes witnesses the demise of this evil organization within Iraq and elsewhere. The return of Fallujah to the embrace of the country signals that the days of terrorist Daesh in Iraq are counted. With unity, resolve and determination Daesh in Iraq could and will be completely defeated,” SRSG Kubiš said.

“The next step would be to transfer the responsibility for security of the city to the hands of local police and authorities and to prepare it for the safe return of displaced population. We at the United Nations stand ready to provide all the assistance within our means,” he added.

‘Liberation of Fallujah by united efforts and while respecting the rights and dignity of civilians paves the way to success in the remaining parts of Iraq still under the yoke of Daesh. It opens the door to the next chapter of the shared future for all people, all components and minorities in Iraq under the conditions of unity, cooperation, tolerance and equal rights and justice for all’ said the SRSG.

SRSG Kubis, at the same time reiterated that the government and all forces and individuals taking part in the liberation operations, undertake every effort to protect the lives and dignity of civilians and prevent abuses. “Any report of violations and abuses against civilians must be immediately investigated and if proven right, the perpetrators must be punished in full transparency. The people must be assured that the good intentions and instructions of the government and leadership of forces engaged against Daesh are meticulously followed in practice and that accountability and justice is fully achieved” said SRSG Kubis.

The SRSG also underscored an urgent need to increase humanitarian assistance to the tens of thousands of civilians that have fled the city. ‘The government assisted by the national and international humanitarian community, including the UN, spares no effort here, but it is obviously overwhelmed and needs support. I appeal to all Iraqis and to the international community, notably the friendly Arab countries in the region to help their bothers that are facing additional hardship after suffering for many months from hunger, lack of medical care and trauma of terror and war’.

UNAMI condemns explosion targeting Rudaw Media Network offices

Baghdad, 25 June 2016 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) deplores the grenade attack that targeted the offices of Rudaw Media Network in Erbil during the night of Friday 24 June 2016. The Mission wishes those injured in this attack a speedy recovery.

UNAMI expresses solidarity with Rudaw and all media in Iraq who are performing their work under difficult circumstances. The Mission urges the authorities to ensure that freedom of expression is safeguarded.

Readout of the Secretary-General’s phone call with H.E. Mr. Haider al-Abadi, Prime Minister of Iraq

Kuwait City, 26 June 2016 - The Secretary-General held a telephone call today with the Prime Minister of Iraq, H.E. Mr. Haider al-Abadi.

The Secretary-General welcomed the progress made by Iraq’s security forces in retaking areas from ISIL. He noted that the UN is working to support the Iraqi government in addressing the severe humanitarian needs of civilians in Fallujah.

The Secretary-General expressed concerns over reports of serious human rights abuses against civilians displaced from Fallujah and welcomed the Prime Minister’s decision to establish an investigative committee to look into all alleged abuses.

The Secretary-General and Prime Minister al-Abadi also discussed the pressing humanitarian needs in many parts of Iraq. In this regard, the Secretary-General stressed the urgent need to increase funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq, which is currently only 33 per cent funded.
SRSG Kubiš condemns bombing of mosque in Abu Ghraib: Shows terrorists’ total disdain for Islam

Baghdad, 28 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the terrorist suicide bombing at a mosque in Abu Ghraib west of Baghdad on Monday 27 June 2016 in which a number of civilians were killed or wounded. He expresses his condolences to the families of those killed and wishes the injured a speedy recovery. “This cowardly attack, happening during the holy month of Ramadan and as worshippers were gathered for evening prayers, shows the terrorists’ total disdain for Islam and rejection of its values,” Mr. Kubiš said.

SRSG Kubiš decries continuing violence in Iraq

Baghdad, 30 June 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, decries the continuing violence during the holy month of Ramadan and the Eid El Fitr period next week to ensure that the people mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan and the holiday period in peace and safety.

UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of June 2016

Baghdad, 01 July 2016 – A total of 662 Iraqis were killed and another 1,457 were injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in June 2016*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The number of civilians killed in June was 382 (including 28 federal police, Sahwa civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, fire department), and the number of civilians injured was 1,145 (including 23 federal police, Sahwa civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, fire department).

A total of 280 members of the Iraqi Security Forces (including Peshmerga, SWAT and militias fighting alongside the Iraqi Army but excluding Anbar Operations) were killed and 312 were injured.

According to the casualties recorded for June, Baghdad was the worst affected Governorate with 978 civilian casualties (236 killed and 742 injured). Nineawa 56 killed, Salahadin 24 killed and 21 injured, Kirkuk 20 killed and 11 injured, while Diyala had 21 killed and 8 injured, and Karbala 8 killed and 18 injured.

According to information obtained by UNAMI from the Health Directorate in Anbar, the Governorate suffered a total of 357 Civilian casualties (15 killed and 342 injured).

The overall casualty figures have dropped over the previous month of May, where a total of 867 were killed and 1,459 were injured. But the casualty figures for June are likely to increase due to the combat to liberate Fallujah in Anbar Governorate.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, regretted that the violence and the casualties among civilians continued during the holy month of Ramadan.

“We had hoped for a period of calm during holy Ramadan, a month of peace and compassion, but unfortunately the violence continued to take its toll on civilians. The terrorists did not spare an occasion to strike at markets, mosques and areas where people gathered in order to exact maximum casualties among civilians, despite the religious occasion and in total disregard of the values of Islam. In addition, tens of thousands of civilians also were forced to flee their homes in Fallujah as a result of the fighting there,” Mr. Kubiš said.

The SRSG reiterated his call on the parties to undertake every effort to protect the lives of civilians.

* CAVEATS: In general, UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in conflict areas. Figures for casualties from Anbar Governorate are provided by the Health Directorate and are noted. Casualty figures obtained from the Anbar Health Directorate might not fully reflect the real number of casualties in those areas due to the increased volatility of the situation on the ground and the disruption of services. In some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. UNAMI has also received, without being able to verify, reports of large numbers of casualties along with unknown numbers of persons who have died from secondary effects of violence after having fled their homes due to exposure to the elements, lack of water, food, medicines and health care. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum.
Women Minorities Forum established to promote rights, inclusiveness and participation in community reconciliation

Amman, 01 May 2016 - The role of women in promoting the protection of minority rights and participation in public policies and community reconciliation in Iraq was the theme of a three-day workshop organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) over the period of 28-30 April in Amman, Jordan. Funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Government of Denmark, UNDP’s Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance Programme (SPAG) gathered 24 members of Iraq’s Council of Representatives (CoR), Heads of six Provincial Councils (PCs) and Women Committee members, and women minority activists to examine best practices, international and national legislative frameworks to promote inclusive participation and building strategic partnerships between minorities, CSOs, PCs and the CoR.

UNDP Gender Specialist, Ms. Sundus Abbas, said: “An agreement has been reached to establish a voluntary Women Minorities Forum with three focal points in Basra, Sinjar and Karbala. This will help advance the institutionalization of partnerships and ensure inclusivity and institutional sustainability.” UNDP will provide technical advisory support to establish a coordination mechanism and create linkages with the CoR and PCs.

“We are grateful for UNDP’s remarkable role in supporting the empowerment of women, specifically from minorities, to enable their active participation in community reconciliation,” said Chairperson of Nineveh Provincial Council, Mr. Bashar Kiki. The workshop participants were briefed on Iraq’s international commitments and legal instruments to promote minority rights, gender equality and peace building. Thorough discussions followed on the participation of women in democratic processes and the legislative debate in Iraq.

Aiming to serve more than 1,500 internally displaced women and girls: UNFPA establishes women safe space in Debaga Camp, Northern Iraq

Erbil, 3 May 2016 – The United Nations Population Fund in cooperation with its national partner Al-Masala and funded by the United States Department of State (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM)) and the United States Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), established the first women centre in the Debaga camp in Makhmour district in Kurdistan Region, North of Iraq. The Debaga women’s centre aims to serve the Iraqi women and girls internally displaced at the Debaga camp through providing a wide range of services including: Dignity kits distribution, Gender Based Violence prevention and response; awareness raising activities on GBV and reproductive health including recreational activities for women and adolescent girls. UNFPA also conducted a needs assessment exercise to identify the adolescent girls' needs and design an awareness raising campaign and needs package tailored to serve the needs of adolescent girls in the Debega Camp and combat any form of Gender Based Violence they could be subjected to.

With the current ongoing armed clashes in the region resulting in the constant inflow of Internally Displaced Population to the Debaga camp, the IDP arrivals reached a total of around 3,800, including more than 1,500 women and girls till end of April 2016. The UNFPA supported Women’s Centre is becoming a core intervention in the Debaga IDP camp. The Masala Women’s Centre started operating on the 17th of April 2016 in the Debaga camp, and during the first three weeks of the centre operations, the centre provided various services to more than 160 women and young girl and handled the distribution of more than 1762 dignity kits to females at reproductive age especially among new arrivals. Among the services provided by the Al-Masala Women’s centre to the women and girls were the psychosocial support services provided to 46 women through professional counsellors. UNFPA teams also initiated targeted awareness raising visits to women and girls in the camp through conducting more than 180 tent-to-tent visit to raise the awareness on available GBV and sexual and reproductive health services as well as the different activities being implemented within the women centre. In addition, a tent was setup to expand the Women space area, which will soon start accommodating the adolescent girls’ activities.

UNFPA is currently planning to upscale its support to women and girls benefiting from Al-Masala Women Centre in the Debaga Camp through; increasing the numbers of Dignity kits to be distributed to women in the camp, initiation of recreational activities to respond to the specific needs of women and girls.
IOM reports on gender-based needs of displaced Iraqis

Iraq, 17 May 2016 - IOM Iraq’s recently released report “A Gendered Perspective: Safety, Dignity and Privacy of Camp and Camp-like Settings in Iraq,” which provides insight into the situation of displaced Iraqis and the differentiated impact of displacement on women, girls, men and boys.

The report highlights gender considerations for humanitarian actors and identifies actions to address needs and improve living conditions of internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially with regard to security and privacy. The report is based on an assessment conducted with internally displaced men and women in camps and camp-like settings across all 18 governorates of Iraq; the assessment included a questionnaire and focus group discussions. According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), the ongoing conflict has displaced more than 3.3 million Iraqis within the country; approximately 17 percent (more than 550,000 individuals) are living in inadequate shelter arrangements, including informal settlements, religious buildings, schools and unfinished or abandoned buildings. These arrangements pose several safety, dignity and privacy concerns, including a lack of segregated latrines, an absence of doors on homes and locks for showers and latrines. Due to safety concerns, female IDPs often face restrictions on their movement and ability to independently access public spaces, services and goods. Recommendations identified include bringing distributions closer to IDP communities and increasing female representation in IDP camp committees; this report found that more than 90 percent of the assessed camp committees lacked female representation.

A displaced Iraqi woman living in Wasit Governorate said: “Fear for my well-being and lack of privacy here affects me psychologically. Everybody needs privacy, but we do not have any. We are all living together, and this makes me feel anxious and also creates tensions between my husband and me.”

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “Forced to flee their homes and leave their belongings and livelihoods behind, displaced Iraqis are exposed to many vulnerabilities. To enable a more targeted and meaningful humanitarian response, it is vital to understand their gender-specific needs. IOM will continue to tailor its humanitarian response to assist the most vulnerable, in coordination with the UN Humanitarian Country Team, humanitarian partners, government authorities and donors.”

Under IOM Iraq’s Community Revitalization Programme, funded by the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), and with support from the DTM, this report intends to contribute to a more holistic understanding of protection needs in displacement sites. The report, “A Gendered Perspective: Safety, Dignity and Privacy of Camp and Camp-like Settings in Iraq” is available on the IOM Iraq website at: http://iomiraq.net/reports/gendered-perspective-safety-dignity-and-priva...

Reaching out to meet the needs of women in a complex situation: With support from Norway, UNFPA provides gender based violence response services in Alwand Camp in Diyala Governorate

Erbil, 19 May 2016 – The humanitarian situation in Iraq continues to worsen due to the intensification of military campaigns. In Diyala Governorate, approximately 15,600 Internally Displaced Persons are residing in camps where access to basic services is limited. The on-going insecurity and limited services underscore the criticality of improving services for protection of women and girls. In January 2015, the United Nations Population Fund in cooperation with its national partner, Civil Development Organization established Al-Salam Women Service Centre at Alwand 1 camp in Khanaqin District in Diyala Governorate.

Al-Wand 1 camp hosts more than 930 internally displaced families and around 6,400 individuals. Majority of the IDPs are coming from the surrounding districts of Mikdaya (50%), Saadiya (30%) and Jalawla (20%) which are all neighbouring Khanaqin district. During the last four months and since the establishment of the Al-Salam Women Service Centre, more than 850 women and girls have visited the centre while around 300 sessions have been conducted focusing on activities to enhance preserving dignity and protection of women and girls. More than 100 women have been provided with psychosocial support services and around 200 women and girls have attended recreational activities as an entry point to information on available GBV and reproductive health services. The Al-Salam Women Service Centre in Alwand 1 camp is the second women centre established by UNFPA in Diyala. A similar centre was established in Earabba.

This UNFPA intervention comes as part of the “Provision of protection and response services to meet the needs of women and girls in Iraq” joint programme between UNFPA and UNICEF in Iraq, funded by the Norwegian Government, that was initiated in December 2015. The programme consists of three main pillars; direct GBV service delivery; community outreach and awareness raising; and adolescent girls programming. The programme is implemented in Nineveh and Diyala with UNFPA providing support in both locations and UNICEF providing support in Diyala.
UN Women launches ‘We are here’ online campaign

Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 24 May 2016 - UN Women Iraq Country Office announced the launch of an online awareness-building and mobilization campaign called “We Are Here”. “We Are Here” aims to inspire women activists from the region to share their stories with the world and document their roles in building their countries. The social media campaign seeks inspirational stories in the form of tweets, captions, photos and videos of women from across the region as they participate in building and furthering the political and social fabric of their nations. “We Are Here” will be promoted by UN Women through its social media pages on Facebook and Twitter, as well as through an established network of Pan-Arab media and partner non-governmental organizations.

“There needs to be a concentrated effort from every woman if she wants change”, said Iraqi activist, Tania Gill Khailany, who recently appeared in a documentary series supported by UN Women.

The announcement comes as UN Women, together with a network of women’s empowerment groups in Iraq hold a press conference in support of the work of women in conflict and post-conflict zones. The event will conclude with a panel discussion looking at the role of women beyond the building of national strategies and negotiations.

The “We Are Here” social media campaign follows a four-year UN Women programme entitled: “Citizenship, Leadership and Participation: New pathways for Arab Women” and the release of a series of documentaries filmed in Iraq, Libya, Syria, Palestine and Yemen, where women spoke of their involvement in projects aimed at enhancing their abilities to participate in civil work, political negotiations, parliamentary elections and proceedings, as well as peace-building initiatives. The programme was generously supported by the ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Amid ongoing military operations in Fallujah: UNFPA providing rapid response to internally displaced women in Central Iraq

Baghdad, 29 May 2016 – Amid the ongoing military operations by Iraq Security Forces (ISF) to retake Fallujah city from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) that began on 22 May, more than 260 families have been internally displaced to Ameriyat Al-Fallujah, with a minimum number of 50,000 individuals (8,300 families) are at risk of becoming displaced in the coming period. With in-kind support from the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), UNFPA Rapid Response Mechanism was activated to provide dignity kits to internally displaced women and girls fleeing from the fighting. Since April 2015, 48,500 Dignity Kits have so far been distributed through this rapid response mechanism.

Since the heavy fighting that started on 22 May 2016, around 260 families have been able to leave Fallujah and additional families are expected to arrive during the coming few days due to the heavy shelling, reported in eastern and southern neighbourhoods of Fallujah. Displaced women and children are reportedly being transported by authorities to Ameriyat Al-Fallujah, while men and boys are being transported to Kilo 18 in central Anbar for security screenings. The women and children are being received by local authorities and are being accommodated by relatives in town or by other townpeople. Around 200 families who do not have a local host are sheltering in Al-Iraq camp for internally displaced persons in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah while 228 families are being hosted in in the new camp (AF 17) that was established by the Ministry of Displacement and Migration.

In response, UNFPA has distributed more than 200 dignity kits to women and girls in Al-Iraq Camp. An additional 6,000 dignity kits have been repositioned in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah and in Al-Wafa camp. UNFPA supported delivery room is also providing a full range of emergency Reproductive Health services including normal delivery, gynecological consultations, and pre/postnatal care checkups.

UNFPA supported mobile team is also conducting a Gender Based Violence assessment for the displaced women and girls in Al-Iraq camp, as well as a GBV safety audit of the site. The mobile teams are also providing psychosocial support services to the women and girls in Al-Iraq Camp. UNFPA supported Women Center in Ameriyat Al-Fallujah is also upscaling its interventions and services including; Dignity kits distribution, Gender Based Violence prevention and response; awareness raising activities on GBV and reproductive health including recreational activities for women and adolescent girls.
UNFPA providing Reproductive health services and Gender Based Violence response to women and girls in one of the biggest sub-districts in Iraq, Sununi

Erbil, 6 June 2016 – The United Nations Population Fund has successfully initiated its Reproductive health services as well as its Gender Based Violence response services to support more than 5,000 returning families to Sununi sub-district in North Iraq. UNFPA has supported the existing maternity centre with equipment including delivery beds and key drugs. UNFPA will be further upsizing this support starting July. The UNFPA implemented women’s centre, supported by the Norwegian government, remains a key rallying point for women and adolescent girls from Sununi and nearby village collectives to access GBV response interventions. Sununi is a sub-district of Sinjar district, is one of the biggest sub-districts in Iraq, in Nineve Governorate, North of Iraq. Prior to the current Iraq crisis, Sununi was a home for over 120,000 individuals, who were displaced after the armed conflicts started. Following the liberation of this area, over 5,000 families, including more than 17,500 woman and girl, have returned to Sununi, their home. During the recent visit of the UNFPA Representative in Iraq, Mr. Ramanathan Balakrishnan to Sununi, he highlighted that UNFPA will continue to work hand in hand with the local community providing the needed support to women and girls through the newly opened Sununi Women Center. The Center will be providing a wide range of services including Dignity kits distribution, Gender Based Violence response, awareness raising activities on GBV and reproductive health as well as engaging the women and girls in recreational activities. During its first 3 weeks, more than 150 woman and girl benefited from the services provided in the Sununi Women Center, through which more than 165 awareness sessions were conducted on issues including the consequences of the early marriage, GBV & Hygiene promotion as well as on the different services provided in the women center and the Reproductive health clinic. Sununi currently hosts more than 4350 women in reproductive age among whom around 1200 are currently pregnant. The newly opened reproductive health clinic and delivery room operated by WAHA and supported by UNFPA through equipment and drugs, will be providing services including, 24 hours operational delivery room during weekdays; as well as, pre and postnatal care consultations, gynecological consultations, and family planning services. During the first three weeks of its operation, the clinic and delivery room team has successfully operated on 19 safe deliveries at an average of 6 deliveries per week, and has conducted several awareness raising visits to the local community on the services provided in the clinic as well as the availability of the delivery room. The UNFPA implemented Women’s centre is a key node for RH awareness activities in Sununi.

SRSG Kubiš and SRSG Bangura commemorate the first International Day for the elimination of sexual violence in conflict

Baghdad, 19 June 2016 – On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, jointly with the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura express their solidarity with the victims of conflict-related sexual violence and their families, who have been targeted by the so called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

“While we acknowledge the devastating impact of terrorism on all Iraqis, we recognize, in particular, the tragic effect of conflict related sexual violence on individuals and communities,” Mr. Kubiš said.

“The Government of Iraq has the primary responsibility to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence against its citizens, but the United Nations stands ready to assist national authorities in the face of unprecedented challenges of such crimes being committed on a massive scale and with destructive intent.”

Together, the United Nations and the Government of Iraq will ensure justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence through mechanisms that recognize the grave and serious threat it poses not only to the people of Iraq but to international peace and security,” SRSG Kubiš added.

“We must also acknowledge on this day the strength and resilience of survivors of sexual violence and urge the Government of Iraq to designate a National Day to end Sexual Violence in Conflict as recommended in the National Conference on Empowering Women to address the Impact of Terrorism held in August 2015,” stated Mr. Kubiš. Special Representative Bangura emphasized that, “as we celebrate the first International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, we confront a new reality, where sexual violence is used not only as a tactic of war, but also as a tactic of terrorism. When we think of terrorism, we think of destruction of property, killing, bombing or hostage-taking. But we cannot desplore the public violence of terrorism, while ignoring the violence terrorists inflict on women and girls in private, behind closed doors.”

“The sexual violence committed by ISIL in Iraq not only inflicted terror,” she added, “but was pursued systematically, with the intent to destroy.”

“To the victims and perpetrators of these crimes alike, I would send a simple but unequivocal message on this Day: that justice may be delayed, but it will not be denied. The United Nations is steadfast and committed to live up to its sacred duty to prevent conflict-related sexual violence and provide care for the survivors”, said SRSG Bangura.
Promoting peace among young Iraqis

Dohuk, 30 April 2016 - On a perfect spring day in the Kurdistan region of Iraq several hundred excited children have gathered in the middle of waving fields of wheat, determined to have a good time.

The children were displaced from their homes by conflict and now live in Kabarto 1 and 2 camps near the city of Dohuk. They’ve come by bus to a remote but picturesque stadium for the finals of a camp-wide football tournament.

Some have climbed up onto the roof of a nearby pavilion for a better view, while others are gathered at the edge of pitch. The children are shouting and chanting and enjoying the novelty of a change of scenery. Many wear shirts with the names of their sporting heroes — Messi, Muller, Ronaldo, Ozil.

Organized by UNICEF partner War Child, the tournament involves 200 children and 17 teams and is part of a larger peacebuilding programme which aims to give children of different ethnic and religious backgrounds the skills to live harmoniously together and to resolve conflict. The programme also includes a volleyball tournament for girls and a marathon. Supported by a generous contribution from the people of Japan, the programme has benefitted more than 3,000 children and young adults.

Dalgash, 23, from Sinjar, is particularly proud of the role he’s played in helping to organize the tournament and his participation in the peacebuilding programme. He fled violence in Sinjar two years ago, and like many displaced young people living in the camps, has found the lack of opportunities and activities discouraging.

Being involved in the youth committee has not only given him a sense of purpose, but also a greater understanding of his fellow Iraqis who don’t share his faith or traditions.

“I’ve learned that people from different religious backgrounds can live together,” he says. “I’ve learned tolerance and forgiveness and peaceful ways of living.”

The football teams are separated by age but not religion - each team has a mixture of Yazidi, Muslim and Christian players. The final matches are fiercely fought but conducted with good sportsmanship.

“The object is to make people closer. We learned that we are all human and there is no difference between us,” he says. “I hope because of this peace programme the next generation will be more forgiving to each other.”

By Chris Niles, Consultant with UNICEF Iraq.

UNDP-Shell partnership rehabilitates primary school in Basra to improve educational outcomes

Basra, 31 May 2016 – The long conflict in Iraq has gravely affected the education sector, imposing numerous challenges on accessibility, delivery, sustainability and quality of this vital public service. Over time, specifically the poor quality of facilities available to students can be a demotivating factor that limits learning opportunities.

Rehabilitation work included the addition of one floor to create six new classrooms, a laboratory, and teachers’ room, and the installation of a reverse osmosis water unit and coolers.

“Their efforts will enable us to deliver better education to our students and community,” said school Headmaster on the support of UNDP and Shell Iraq.

To support the provision of quality education in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in consultation with Al Dayr Local Council, UNDP and Shell Iraq joined efforts to rehabilitate Al Jawadain Primary School located in the north of Basra Governorate. Funding was obtained through the Majnoon Oil Field Welfare Fund portfolio.

UNDP Partnership Manager, Mr. Tha’ir Shraideh, explained: “The rehabilitation of the Al Jawadain Primary School is the third successful education project delivered through our partnership with Shell Iraq. Two other schools, Al Ma’arifa Primary School and Ala Al Deen Primary School, were restored in

Al Nashwa, Basra in 2013. We work with national stakeholders and consult with local communities to identify projects that meet people’s needs. This project not only improves educational facilities in Al Dayr, but also demonstrates how we can collectively make a difference for Iraqis.”

The rehabilitation work was undertaken over a ten-month period during February to December 2015.

The school Headmaster, Mr. Najeed Majeed Buni, highlighted the value of the project, saying: “We are grateful to UNDP, Shell Iraq and all of the partners who contributed to make this project a reality. Their efforts will enable us to deliver better education to our students and community.”

The addition of six new classrooms means that more students can receive education. In the coming academic year, an additional 200 students will be able to study at the school, almost doubling the current student population. General Manager of Majnoon Oil Field, Mr. Ahmad Atallah, commented: “Our work in and around the communities in which we operate is an important element of our contribution to Iraq. It is rewarding to see the completion of a school rehabilitation project in Al Dayr to create an environment where Iraqi children can continue their studies, while providing more space for additional students.”

Now in its fourth year, the UNDP-Shell partnership consists of two components. First, it focuses on delivering development initiatives in communities surrounding the Majnoon Oil Field, which is operated by Shell Iraq. In addition to the rehabilitation of schools, initiatives include the construction of playgrounds for children and support to new and existing small businesses. As part of this work stream, UNDP also supports the local authorities to ensure that the concerns and priorities of targeted communities are reflected in the government planning processes and the delivery of basic services.

The second component of the partnership is focused on the development of workforce capacity in the oil and gas sector in Basra. Activities include capacity development of oil and gas contractors, and the design and assessment of technical and vocational training programmes.
To support displaced youth from Fallujah temporary premises of Fallujah University (dorms and classrooms) were inaugurated in Abu Ghraib, Baghdad

Baghdad, 23 June 2016 - On 23 June 2016, the temporary premises of Fallujah University, located inside the Veterinary College, Baghdad University in Abu Ghraib, were inaugurated. With the generous contribution from the Government of Japan, the temporary premises of Fallujah University were established by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) providing 25 classrooms and 128 residential units that can accommodate 512 students, in addition to basic site infrastructure and an administration building. The project aimed at supporting displaced youth who bear enormous and long-lasting human, social and economic costs.

His Excellency Mr. Sohaib Al-Rawi, Governor of Anbar, who attended the event, commented that while the Anbar Governorate has been supporting institutions displaced by violence outside and within Anbar, including Fallujah University, the ongoing financial crisis has affected all aspects of people’s lives and limited the government’s capacity to support. The Governor acknowledged the efforts of UN agencies and the ongoing support of UN-Habitat on housing self-repair and shelter projects within Ramadi. He expressed his gratitude to all those who stand with people of Iraq, and specifically of Fallujah, in the midst of the hardship they face.

On UN-Habitat’s side, Dr. Erfan Ali, Head of Iraq Programme, pointed out that lack of access to education among youth is one of the key factors that fuel a cycle of poverty, hopelessness and frustration. He expressed his hope that these new premises of Fallujah University will enable young women and men from Fallujah to continue their education and play an active role as agents of positive and constructive change.

Mr. Hirofumi Miyake, Chargé d’Affaires ad interim, Embassy of Japan in Iraq, stated that Japan also has its own internally displaced persons, resulting from disasters of tsunamis, earthquakes, debris, and the latest nuclear accident, and therefore the people of Japan understand very well the importance of support to displaced persons in Iraq. He further emphasized that Japan will continue to sustain the efforts of UN-Habitat to improve the living conditions of the displaced persons in Iraq.

Dr. Ibraheem Abdulkareem, Deputy President of Fallujah University, stated that the completion of the new premises of Fallujah University has provided a glimpse of hope in the heart of displaced students, and he recognized that the inauguration is concomitant to the liberation of Fallujah.

On his part, Mr. Sattar Nawroz Khan, General Director of Migration at the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, praised the joint cooperation and partnership between multiple actors, including the Governments of Iraq and Japan, Anbar Governorate, Fallujah University, and UN-Habitat, that enabled the positive results of the overall project. This project was implemented within the framework of larger programme titled “Humanitarian Support to Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq through Provision of Durable Shelter,” funded by the Government of Japan, aiming to improve the living conditions of internally displaced persons in Iraq through the provision of prefabricated durable shelters, and thereby to support and strengthen their self-reliance.
UNHCR launches “Refugees Got Talent!” competition in Sulaymaniyah

Sulaymaniyah, 31 May 2016 - The end of the school year is approaching but the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, is on the look-out for talented young school-aged refugees. As part of its plans to mark World Refugee Day, on June 20, UNHCR's Sulaymaniyah office decided to launch a competition to showcase the skills and talents of young high school and university-aged refugees in Sulaymaniyah. The governorate hosts around 32,000 refugees, 32% of which live in camps.

Education is a major challenge facing refugees in Sulaymaniyah. There are over 7,800 Syrian refugee children and youth living in Sulaymaniyah and most do not attend school, often because their families to not have enough money to pay for school fees and supplies or transportation. A shortage of spaces in schools also means many children are unable to pursue an education and are forced to stay at home. While some primary education is provided for children up to the ninth grade, it is very hard for youngsters to get places in secondary schools and universities – mostly due to financial constraints. "They are excited to learn, but the difficulties they face are huge. This requires international support and funding," said Hawar Juma, Education Assistant from Qandil, UNHCR partner of an education project that targets primary and secondary school students across the governorate.

In Sulaymaniyah, both in and out of camps, UNHCR staff had noticed some special talents amongst young refugees – painters, dancers, singers and breakdancers. “Children should be children; they should be able to play, sing, and act," said Fern Tilakamonkul, UNHCR field officer. "We are having this activity as a way to allow them to express themselves, have a little sense of normalcy, when they face huge challenges in their everyday lives." "I'm really excited for this activity as it has never been done in Iraq and we will give refugees across Sulaymaniyah the chance to show off their talents", said Anne Dolan, UNHCR head of field office for Sulaymaniyah. "Maybe one of them will become the next star!"

"And the winner is ..." UNHCR marks World Refugee day in Sulaymaniyah with “Refugees Got Talent!” competition

Sulaymaniyah, 22 June 2016 - After weeks of anticipation, auditions and excitement, the “Refugees Got Talent!” contest organized by UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, culminated in its grand finale on World Refugee Day (WRD), 20 June, at Arbat Refugee Camp, Sulaymaniyah. The event was one of dozens of events organized by UNHCR in Iraq to mark WRD 2016, the global theme of which was “Hopes and Dreams.”

UNHCR launched the “Refugees Got Talent!” competition on May 31 in several locations across Sulaymaniyah province hosting large numbers of refugees. Auditions took place in Sulaymaniyah centre, Chamcharal, Bazian, Rania and Arbat Refugee Camp, with a jury of local celebrities presiding over the decisions.

Out of 66 performers who entered the first audition, ten finalists took to the stage for the final to battle it out for top prize. In the end, the event was won by Mzgin Ahmad, 19, a refugee from Kobane in Syria who lives in Arbat refugee camp. During the auditions, Mzgin had wowed the judges with his delicate Oud playing but he left the instrument aside for the final, choosing instead to sing a popular traditional Kurdish song “Kurdistan Azad,” demonstrating the depth of his talent to the judges.

“When Neshan called my name I felt surprised and could not believe I was the winner - I was so happy” said Mzgin. Speaking the day after his victory, he went on to describe the impact that it has had on him “All my neighbors, friends and family are so happy for me. Everyone in the camp is recognizing me and congratulating me. I am now famous in the camp!”

“Show your talent – don’t be afraid. Don’t let being a refugee hold you back.” When asked about encouraging other artists, he said “Show your talent - don’t be afraid. Don’t let being a refugee hold you back.” He also thanked all the refugees who attended the show and who encouraged him to win.

In keeping with the WRD theme of “Hopes and Dreams,” and focusing on youth and education, UNHCR targeted high school and university-aged refugees for the contest. Sulaymaniyah governorate hosts around 32,000 refugees, 22% of whom live in camps and education is a major challenge. There are over 7,800 Syrian refugee children and youth living in Sulaymaniyah and many do not attend school, often because their families do not have enough money to pay for school fees and supplies or transportation. As well, the language barrier has led to a high dropout rate. A shortage of spaces in schools also means many children are unable to pursue an education and are forced to stay at home.

While some primary education is provided for children up to the ninth grade, it is very hard for youngsters to get places in secondary schools and universities – mostly due to financial constraints. “They are excited to learn, but the difficulties they face are huge. International support and funding are very much needed,” said Hawar Juma, Education Assistant from Qandil, UNHCR partner of an education project that targets primary and secondary school students across the governorate.

Speaking about the value of encouraging creativity and enterprise among refugees, UNHCR Country representative in Iraq Bruno Geddo remarked: "The more refugees can be empowered to contribute, the more the communities they live in will welcome them as productive members of society rather than passive recipients of aid."

"We saw at the finals the tremendous talent and energy of young Syrian refugees; we want to help them unleash their potential" added Geddo.

UNHCR would like give special thanks to sponsors who supported the event and donated the winners' prizes as well as our partners for their assistance in organising the event; the judges who gave up their time for the show; and volunteers who assisted on the day; Lebanese celebrity Neshan Der Haroutiounian, who presented the show; and, last but certainly not least to all of the talented participants who took part from the very first audition and their families for nurturing their talents.
Iraq Crisis: 3.6 million children now at risk from increasing violence

UNICEF's report documents the scale and complexity of the humanitarian crisis in a country reeling from nearly four decades of conflict, insecurity and neglect, and where the impact on children worsens every day.

UNICEF is calling for urgent action to protect children's rights in Iraq. There are five concrete steps that need to be taken immediately:

End the killing, maiming, abduction, torture, detention, sexual violence and recruitment of children. Stop attacks on schools, medical facilities and personnel.

Provide unhindered and unconditional humanitarian access to all children wherever they are in the country, including areas not under control of the government. In areas with ongoing conflict, civilians wishing to leave must be given safe passage and receive the services they need.

Expand and improve education for out of school children through catch up classes. Increase access to learning and equip teachers and children with educational materials and training. These are the children who will rebuild Iraq and contribute to a more peaceful and stable future.

Provide psychological and recreation programmes to help children heal and to reconnect with their childhoods.

Increase funding, as resources are running short, already leading to cut backs in life-saving support for children. UNICEF is seeking US$ 100 million for its response in Iraq for 2016.
Life-saving initiatives: Government of Japan supports WHO

Baghdad, 19 May 2016 - The Government of Japan has generously provided US$ 3 million to support the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq. This contribution directly supports life-saving primary and secondary health care services in Duhok and the plains of Ninewa, where more than 600,000 people live, as well as the prevention, early detection and containment of outbreaks in 11 governorates. “This timely contribution from the Government of Japan will further enable WHO to focus on mitigating the impact of the ongoing conflict on the burdened public health system in Iraq”, said Altaf Musani, WHO Representative in Iraq. “The health system in Iraq is facing capacity gaps and infrastructural constraints due to years of instability and emergencies,” said H.E. Mr Fumio Iwai, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq. “We are working with WHO to respond to escalating health needs and preventing potential disease outbreaks”. More than 10 million Iraqis require some form of relief assistance as a result of displacement, migration, and insecurity. The delivery of health care services in both conflict-affected and areas hosting internally displaced persons has been impacted since the beginning of the crisis in June 2014. The conflict in Iraq has had a major impact on the health system; health facilities have been destroyed, while those that remain functional are overwhelmed due to increased demand for health services. The lack of investment in environmental health measures, coupled with gaps in the national routine immunization system, has recently led to outbreaks of measles and cholera in many areas. With support from donors such as the Government of Japan, WHO and partners are actively working with the Ministry of Health and directorates of health to respond to the health needs of all Iraqis.

World No Tobacco Day marked in Iraq

Baghdad, 31 May 2016 – Every year, on 31 May, the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners mark World No Tobacco Day to highlight the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocate for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing around 6 million people a year. More than 5 million of these deaths are the result of direct tobacco use while more than 600,000 are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. For World No Tobacco Day 2016 WHO and partners are calling on countries to implement plain packaging of tobacco products.

Plain packaging is one of the measures of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control that restricts or prohibits the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style. In Iraq, World No Tobacco Day is being celebrated in both Erbil and Baghdad governorates with two symposiums highlighting tobacco use as one of the four main risk factors for non-communicable diseases. According to the latest surveys, Iraq has a high prevalence of tobacco use among the population with around 20% of the population using tobacco products. In addition, about 11% of youth are current smokers according to the latest Global Youth Tobacco Survey recently conducted in Iraq.

Campaign goals World No Tobacco Day 2016 aims to:
• reduce the attractiveness of tobacco products;
• eliminate the effects of tobacco packaging as a form of advertising and promotion;
• address package design techniques that may suggest that some products are less harmful than others; and
• increase the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings.

WHO Representative for Iraq Altaf Musani noted that tobacco-related illness was one of the biggest public health threats the world had ever faced. Approximately one person dies from a tobacco-related disease every six seconds, equivalent to almost six million people a year. That number is predicted to rise to more than eight million people a year by 2030, with more than 80% of these preventable deaths occurring among people living in low- and middle-income countries. WHO is committed to fighting the global tobacco epidemic. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which entered into force in February 2005, has become one of the most widely embraced treaties in the history of the United Nations with 180 State Parties as signatories, covering 90% of the world's population.
WHO expresses concern over disease outbreaks in its response to Fallujah crisis

Baghdad, 16 June 2016 - WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Ala Alwan arrived in Baghdad today to review firsthand WHO’s response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Fallujah city, where more than 42 000 Iraqis have been displaced since the beginning of the military operations in the city in May 2016. Tens of thousands of besieged and displaced men, women, children and older people face major health risks as they lack adequate access to health services.

“The health situation inside and around Fallujah is deeply worrying,” said Dr Alwan. “We are concerned about the low immunity status of children as no immunization services have been possible for the past 2 years. The low level of immunity coupled with poor hygiene conditions raises the risk of disease outbreaks, such as measles. Additionally, it is estimated that hundreds of pregnant women are trapped in Fallujah and are in urgent need of reproductive health services,” Dr Alwan added.

The Regional Director met with high-level Iraqi officials to discuss the health needs of displaced persons, as well as those who remain trapped inside Fallujah, 60 km west of Baghdad. “The situation is extremely difficult and complex. Additional resources are required to provide urgent health assistance to thousands of families. WHO is disappointed by the inadequate levels of funding for the health sector, which is a major impediment to the response,” Dr Alwan concluded. Residents of Fallujah have been facing acute shortages of food, medicine and other basic needs as the city has been inaccessible to humanitarian actors.

WHO has established a new primary health care centre with a local partner in Amiriyat Al Fallujah to serve the internally displaced population, including the recently arrived families estimated at nearly 3250 families (19 500 persons) living in 5 camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 5 informal settlements around the Bzibiz area. 4 additional camps of 250 tents capacity each are currently under construction in the Region to host more families from Al-Fallujah. WHO has also supported the Ministry of Health and partners with 15 tonnes of medicines, medical supplies and emergency kits to respond to most urgent health needs of civilians moving out of Fallujah to IDP camps in Ramadi, Khalidiya, and Amiriyat Al Fallujah areas. These shipments include a wide range of life-saving medicines for acute and chronic diseases, trauma kits and surgical supplies.

8 WHO mobile medical clinics continue to provide urgently needed health services in Al-Anbar governorate; 3 of which were deployed to provide these services in Al Fallujah IDP camps located in the Amiriyat Al Fallujah area. To detect and respond to any potential disease outbreaks, WHO is operating 13 disease early warning sites in Al-Anbar governorate and has provided health care providers with training on disease reporting and tablets to document and report possible outbreaks. Despite the projected increase in humanitarian health needs in and around Fallujah, WHO, in coordination with other humanitarian organizations and health cluster partners, will do its utmost to coordinate and support humanitarian health response efforts. “The challenge is immense and we must be ready to stand together in responding to people’s health needs,” noted Dr Alwan.
Baghdad, 16 June 2016 – Beginning of Ramadan. In the dry heat of the morning, the streets are deserted except in front of Qushtapa refugee camp primary health centre. Several people are sitting on benches in front of the facility, some are staring blankly. A doctor appears at the doorway of the centre and gesticulates to patients whose faces light up at the knowledge that here they will be treated well and receive the care that they need.

Some 6050 people live in this camp, all of them are Syrian refugees who came to Iraq in 2013. Preventive and curative health care services provided by WHO in this camp and in surrounding communities serving refugees living outside the camp are made possible thanks to the generous financial contribution from the Government of Kuwait. About 100 people receive care at the centre every day – from routine health care like treatment for diarrhoea, respiratory infections, skin and chronic diseases to even more complex consequences on health of having to leave your country as a result of conflict such as mental health related diseases and trauma.

The centre’s staff manage these consequences well and every day prepare themselves to receive and treat new patients and offer advice to all patients seen at the center on how to manage and prevent diseases that may arise.

Good health is essential to good quality of life and this health care centre is significantly improving the health of refugees. It is providing timely vaccination for all residents of the camp, decreasing maternal and child mortality rates, providing primary preventive and curative health care services, as well as enabling access for refugees to secondary and tertiary medical care.

30-year-old Farhad has allergies and his son has anaemia, both are undergoing treatment at the health centre. “I feel safe here and they take care of my family,” he said.

The centre keeps a record card of all families in the camp which provides information on health and documents the history of family consultations. It also enables referral for people complicated cases and patients with chronic diseases who receive a separate card to obtain their daily needed medications.

Health educational sessions

The primary health care centre provides educational sessions for its employees. During our visit, employees attended a session on the importance of a healthy diet and the first signs of malnutrition in patients.

IOM awareness campaign on human trafficking launched in Basra

Basra, 02 May 2016 - IOM launched today an awareness raising campaign in Basra on human trafficking and how to combat it. The campaign aims at providing the general population with a comprehensive understanding of dangers of trafficking in persons, especially in the context of the current migration crisis. It also addressed the vulnerable populations, in particular internally displaced persons and potential victims of trafficking.
SRSG Kubiš visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, visited the Islamic Republic of Iran between 30 April and 2 May 2016 to consult with Iranian high-level officials on the situation in Iraq.

SRSG Kubiš met in Tehran with the Chair of the Expediency Council, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Advisor to the Supreme Leader, Ali Velayati, and the Deputy Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Saeid Iravani. Discussions focused on the current political situation in Iraq, the fight against ISIL and the humanitarian situation.


Photos: Courtesy of the Government of Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Sulaymaniyah, 5 May 2016 - IOM in cooperation with the American University of Iraq, Sulaymaniyah (AUIS) is organizing a tour of the AUIS women’s basketball team to promote gender awareness, social cohesion, volunteerism, and youth empowerment through education and sport. The audiences are youths, especially girls, at schools and camps for refugees and displaced Iraqis in northern Iraq.

During the presentations, AUIS basketball team members and IOM national staff share messages on social cohesion and athletes’ personal experiences of growth through sport. The tour began on May 4 in a classroom in a Syrian refugee camp in Erbil and on May 5 at a high school in Dohuk. The locations were chosen to bring these communities together with the host community. The AUIS team played a basketball game with the students and taught correct basketball techniques for passing, shooting and dribbling. The young students were enthusiastic to learn basketball skills and listened intently to hear from the team about their experience in sport.

The students also shared their hobbies, including drawing, and their aspirations for the future. “I want to be an ambassador, so I can contribute to peace and build friendly relations with other nations,” said a Syrian refugee girl with a determined smile.
UNICEF connects children of the world

Erbil, 7 May 2016 - We are thrilled to have been able to directly connect two inspiring children in Iraq with 400 participants at the UNICEF USA Annual Meeting in New York yesterday. Rami, 17, and Myrna, 10, spoke from a camp in Erbil about the experience of being uprooted by conflict, and how they maintain hope despite the difficulties. Thanks to Rami and Myrna for participating, to Shared Studios for helping us set up the #ErbilPortal, and Terre des hommes Italia for your support in the camp and for the impressive live poetry translation!

UNAMI staff participated at the 43rd UN Inter-Agency Games

Malaga, 11 May 2016 – Staff members of United Nations in Iraq, representing the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and UN Iraq Country Team, participated for the first time at the United Nations Inter-Agency Games that were held this year for the 43rd time in Malaga, Spain. Small UNIraq team was competing in basketball, football and chess. The history of the United Nations Inter-Agency Games goes back to 1968 when the “Commission des Sports de l’Association du Personnel de l’UNESCO” organized an omnisports meeting in Paris against a team from UN Geneva. Both organizations continued organizing omnisports meetings in 1969 and 1970. In 1971, UN Geneva organised the first multi-institutional sports competition in Champéry, Switzerland. Ten organizations of the UN System with offices in Europe participated. Thus the United Nations Inter-Agency Games were initiated and the principle of alternating the venue and the responsibility for the organization of the Games among the UN organizations in Geneva, Rome, Vienna and Paris were adopted. General Rules for the Games were adopted and a Control Commission established to assure their adherence. Over the years, the Games have developed from 5 disciplines and some 350 participants to 13 disciplines and more than 1000 participants. At the outset the purpose of the Games was modestly defined as "to enable the staff members of the Agencies and organizations of the United Nations family to know each other through sports meetings and thereby to improve mutual understanding and working relations" (Article 1 of the General Rules). Bringing together both participants and supporters from numerous agencies, the Games present a unique reminder that we are all part of the United Nations family. The 44th edition of the Games will be held in Austria, in 2017.
Doha, 23 May 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, participated in a panel discussion on security at the 16th Doha Forum on Sunday, 22 May 2016.

The session brought together a number of United Nations officials along with Foreign and Defence ministers, and discussed the regional situation and means to meet the global challenges.

**UN Electoral technical assistance discussed**

Erbil, 25 May 2016 – Mr. Aamir Arain, UNAMI Principal Electoral Advisor, met today with Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Department of Foreign Relations, and also had separate discussions with the Chairman of the K-IHEC, Mr. Handrin Mohammed, regarding the status of the memorandum of cooperation between IHEC and K-IHEC and KRG’s request for UN electoral technical assistance. Mr. Arain noted the importance of the memorandum of cooperation to first gain full and legal recognition based on the concurrence of both federal and regional parliaments.
Baghdad, 06 June 2016 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, sends his warmest greetings to the Muslims of Iraq and to all Iraqis on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan. “This is a month of spiritual reflection, peace and compassion. It is when families get together, and is also a time to remember those who are suffering and who are less fortunate”, Mr. Kubiš said. “On this holy month, my thoughts are with the families who lost their loved ones and those Iraqis who were injured from the violence, as well as the civilians who have been displaced and those caught in the fighting or remain captive. This is indeed a difficult time for them and their families to observe a holy occasion in pain and uncertainty”. The SRSG emphasizes that the United Nations will continue to work tirelessly with Iraqi and international partners on the political and humanitarian levels towards restoring peace and security for this country and alleviating some of the suffering of the civilian population.

“May this month mark the beginning of the country and its people coming together to unite behind the main national principles. May it also herald the start of the end of the political divisions and lead to the emergence of an Iraq free of the violence and conflict that has buffeted it for years”.

“My warmest greetings to the Muslims of Iraq and to all Iraqis. May they observe it in peace and unity. Ramadan Kareem”, the SRSG said.

Oud concert for displaced Iraqis to mark World Refugee Day

Baghdad, 20 June 2016 - Hundreds of displaced Iraqis forced to flee their homes due to conflict have been treated to an oud concert at a camp in Baghdad by world-renowned musician, Naseer Shamma.

The event was organised by the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR Iraq, with its partner, IRC (the International Rescue Committee) to mark World Refugee Day. The concert took place at Al Salam camp for displaced families in Baghdad, which houses 1,200 families (more than 7,000 people) from Anbar and Salah al Din.

“We were delighted to enlist the help of Naseer Shamma to join us in arranging this very special event”, said UNHCR Iraq Representative, Bruno Geddo.

“Life in the camps can be very difficult for families who have fled their homes with nothing and left everything behind. But the harmony of music can help Iraqis focus on the beautiful things that unite them and find the courage for reconciliation”, Geddo said. “UNHCR works to help Iraq and its people in establishing peace which we are moving closer towards in Iraq and the region”, said musician, Naseer Shamma.

“Music is one tool for spreading peace to heal the wounds left within the souls of our people by terrorism and wars. From this place, we declare our solidarity with refugees everywhere”, he added.

World Refugee Day is held every year on June 20. It commemorates the strength and courage of refugees and families forced to flee their homes. Iraq hosts nearly a quarter of a million Syrian refugees, while more than 3.3 million Iraqis have been displaced from their homes due to conflict.

To celebrate World Refugee Day this year, UNHCR is showing global solidarity with refugees at a time when record numbers of families are being forced to flee. UNHCR is inviting the public to sign the#WithRefugees petition, calling on world leaders to work together and do their fair share for refugees. The petition will be delivered ahead of the UN General Assembly on 19 September in New York.
Baghdad, 21 June 2016 - On the invitation of His Excellency the Ambassador of India in Iraq, Mr Raju George, the United Nations and its Agencies, Funds and Programmes in Iraq joined the celebration of the International Day of Yoga in Baghdad that was held on 18 June 2016. The General Assembly declared June 21 as the "International Day of Yoga" when a total of 175 nations co-sponsored the UN resolution on the declaration showing the consensus on yoga as a physical, mental, and spiritual practice or discipline that is good for humanity.

"The health benefits of yoga are well known and it's sufficient to say that it is a great tool to harmonize the body and the mind. In an increasingly conflict ridden world this sense of oneness within and the sense of universal consciousness without has never been more needed," said Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Gyorgy Busztin in his address to the enthusiastic practitioners of yoga at the Babylon Warwick Hotel among whom were representatives of the Iraqi Government, diplomatic community and civil society.

This year’s observance of the International Day of Yoga highlights the important role healthy living plays in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted last year by all 193 United Nations Member States.

“On this International Day of Yoga, I urge everyone to embrace healthier choices and lifestyles and to commit to unity with our fellow human beings, regardless of ethnicity, faith, age, gender identity or sexual orientation. Let us celebrate this Day and every day as members of one human family sharing one common, precious home” said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his message on this occasion.

Water conservation awareness campaign continues

Baghdad, 23 June 2016 - The FriendsOfUNICEF volunteer Iraqi youth group continue to build awareness and share information with the Iraqi community on issues of water conservation. Holding their second event this month on Monday, 20 June 2016, at al-Nakhil mall in Baghdad. The FriendsOfUNICEF youth group interacted with mall-goers and shared information and tips on how best to conserve water. Information cards and pamphlets were distributed. The young and enthusiastic volunteers of the FriendsOfUNICEF group invited shoppers, women, men and children to voice their ideas on what water conservation meant to them. The volunteers also demonstrated best practices and methodologies to ensure effective and efficient daily use of water in order to reduce unwanted waste. Gifts were distributed as well.

The ongoing UNICEF water conservation campaign in Iraq and the FriendsOfUNICEF youth volunteer group is sponsored by the European Union with support from the UNICEF Iraq Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Young Iraqi entrepreneur at the Global Entrepreneurship Forum

Erbil, 24 June 2016 – As part of the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Summit, President of the United States of America Barak Obama met with entrepreneurs from Campus London, Campus Seoul, Mexico City, and Erbil, Iraq. Young Iraqi entrepreneur Ali Ismail joined the conversation — even though they were more than 7,000 miles apart! The two were connected through the ErbilPortal, a collaboration between UNICEF Iraq and Shared Studios, with support from our partners in the Harsham Terre des hommes Italia.

Earlier today Ali, an inspiring Iraqi entrepreneur, met with residents of Harsham Camp in Erbil to talk about technology, innovation, and the keys to starting a successful business.

You can see their conversation at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaXZQHGkUFk&feature=youtu.be