Iraq votes ... UN Iraq Representative Kubiš says elections were held in generally calm and stable environment, urges calm as electoral appeals are being adjudicated through established legal channels

New York, 30 May 2018 - Briefing the UN Security Council, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Ján Kubiš said national elections were held on 12 May in a generally calm and stable environment. He called on political actors and their supporters to uphold peace as electoral appeals are being adjudicated through established legal channels, and urged the independent electoral management bodies to adjudicate all appeals properly, fully and expeditiously, to enable corrections of the problems, justice and the timely certification of the final election results.

Mr. Kubiš noted that many Iraqi political leaders publicly endorsed the electoral process including the Prime Minister and the President, but some other political leaders, including Vice Presidents of the Republic and the Speaker of the Parliament, raised concerns over some of the technical shortfalls encountered with the electronic vote tabulation devices, as well as reports of fraud and vote rigging, active intimidation of voters including by some armed formations, and political interference.

“We continue to urge all Iraqi political actors and their supporters to uphold peace, as electoral appeals are being adjudicated through established legal channels. I also call on the Electoral Commission to continue to safeguard the integrity of all electoral materials and equipment and to cooperate fully and abide by the decisions of the Electoral Judicial Panel, including possible measures to effectively address complaints as lodged by stakeholders in a number of locations. We urge the independent electoral management bodies to adjudicate all appeals properly, fully and expeditiously, to enable corrections of the problems, justice and the timely certification of the final election results.”

The Special Representative highlighted the readiness and availability of United Nations electoral advice and expertise, in support of any activities and measures that may be required to retain confidence in the process, including as regards Kirkuk also in the light of the forthcoming Provincial Council elections across Iraq and the regional elections in the Kurdistan Region later this year.

Mr. Kubiš stated that the elections were marked by a low voter turnout of 44.52 percent as reported by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), a significant decrease in comparison with previous national elections in Iraq after 2003. This sends a strong signal to the elites ruling the country since 2003, a loud call on their representatives to finally rise up to the people's expectations. “I urge the Iraqi political elites to hear that call and draw the necessary conclusions on the need for improved representation, justice for all, democratic accountability and good governance void of corruption, sectarian quota system, nepotism and patronage.”

In his briefing, he noted that despite defamation campaigns aimed at undermining the candidacy of women which he roundly condemns, several female candidates received a high number of votes within their political lists, and that some 19 female candidates were elected to parliament.

“Our expectation for the future is that the 25% quota which now guarantees 83 seats for women, represents the minimum threshold and not the ceiling,” he added, calling on political leaders to ensure the full participation of women in political negotiations and their representation at the highest levels in Iraq's political and decision-making structures.

The SRSG urged political leaders to build on the achievements of the current government in the post-election phase, stressing the need to prioritise inclusive, non-sectarian dialogue, and to ensure the swift formation of a new truly national Government which reflects the will of the people of Iraq.
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In this edition ...

UN Iraq Representative Kubiš says elections were held in generally calm and stable environment, urges calm as electoral appeals are being adjudicated through established legal channels

New York, 30 May 2018 - Briefing the UN Security Council, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Ján Kubiš said national elections were held on 12 May in a generally calm and stable environment...

More on page 1

Elections Day in Iraq

Fallujah, 12 May 2018—The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, visited on Election Day, Saturday, 12 May 2018, polling centres in Fallujah, Anbar Governorate, where he witnessed the voting and was acquainted with the process. Fallujah, west of Baghdad, was liberated from Daesh terrorists in 2016...

More on elections from page 14

“Missing Persons in Iraq and the Impact on Women, Peace and Security” ICMP conference held in Baghdad


More on page 38

UN Secretary-General appoints Karim Asad Ahmad Khan of the United Kingdom as Special Adviser of the Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017)

New York, 31 May 2018 - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today announced the appointment of Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as the Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team, which was established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL (Da'esh) accountable by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the terrorist group ISIL (Da'esh) in Iraq...

More on page 12

UN’s Security Council adopts Resolution 2421 (2018) on UNAMI; Extends mandate until 31 May 2019


Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq Ján Kubiš visited Anbar Governorate today, pressing ahead with his call on Iraqis to seize the opportunity of the upcoming parliamentary elections to make their voices heard and effect positive change...

More on page 13

National Development Plan (2018-2022) launched in Baghdad

Baghdad, 09 May 2018 – The Prime Minister of Iraq, Dr. Haidar Al-Abadi, launched today in Baghdad the National Development Plan (2018-2022). The plan defines strategic development goals of Iraq in the post-Daesh phase and establishes the foundations of effective development with social responsibility...

More on page 54

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More on page 54

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In the UNAMI Herald articles are sorted according to the topic and in a chronological order.
Volume 5, Issue 3  Security Council  Page 3

**Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq**

**New York, 30 May 2018** – The United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq at its 8271st meeting. Here is the text (as prepared) of the briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš:

Madame President,

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

I have the honour to present the fourth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2367 (2017), as well as the eighteenth 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.

Madame President,

On 12 May 2018 – within the constitutional time-frame - Iraq held elections to its national parliament, the Council of Representatives (CoR). Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, after the close of the polls, noted that the country held the elections on time, that people were able to cast their votes and select their representatives freely and safely and that the liberated areas witnessed a free voting process for the first time after the victory of the Iraqi forces and the defeat of Da’esh. He stated, "Our heroic forces achieved another victory by protecting the democratic process and the citizens at polling centres spread throughout Iraq, and foiled terrorism’s attempts to destabilize security and stability on this historic day which passed peacefully for all Iraqis."

The Secretary-General on 13 May congratulated the people of Iraq on the holding of parliamentary elections and stated that following the military defeat of Da’esh, the elections represent further progress in building a stronger Iraqi democracy. He saluted the tireless efforts of electoral officials, party agents and the security forces in making the elections largely peaceful and orderly.

Following the elections, international partners, including the governments of Kuwait, Qatar, Iran, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, United Kingdom, and the European Union congratulated the Iraqi people, the security forces and electoral authorities on the peaceful conduct of the elections and pledged to work with the next government in helping deliver stability, security and prosperity for all Iraqis.

Madame President,

Overall, 6,986 candidates out of which 2,014 Women (28.8%) competed for 329 seats (including 9 seats reserved for minorities out of which 5 for Christians, and one each for Sabean-Mandaeans, Shabaks, Yazidis and Fayili Kurds). In total, 52,483 polling stations operated out of the planned 52,936, including 3,000 polling stations devoted to displaced persons, resident both in camps and in local communities. The elections were held in a generally calm and stable environment notwithstanding some 47 security incidents recorded by the Mission, including attacks with improvised explosive devices, indirect attack with mortars, small arms fire aimed at polling centres, and clashes between security forces and unknown gunmen. These incidents occurred mainly in Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates, although incidents with firearms and knives were registered in the southern governorates. Some of the attacks were claimed by Da’esh whose threat to disrupt the elections failed due to the efforts by Iraqi security forces. I also note that prior to the elections, the Mission recorded eighteen reports of attacks against candidates from different political groupings and in various regions of the country. Of these, one was killed, and several were injured.

Madame President,

The elections were marked by a low voter turnout: the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) informed about the participation of 44.52%, just 10.8 million out of 24.3 million eligible voters, a significant decrease in comparison with previous national elections in Iraq after 2003. The new parliament will also witness a massive turn-over - according to the preliminary results less than 100 of the incumbent MPs have secured their place in the new Council of Representatives. The decision by more than half of the voting population not to exercise their democratic right has several reasons. But, actually it sends a strong signal to the elites ruling the country since 2003, a loud call on their representatives to finally rise up to the people’s expectations, to provide for the peoples’ needs, and to place the interests of the Iraqi people and the nation, above partisan, sectarian, individual or group interests. I urge the Iraqi political elites to hear that call and draw the necessary conclusions on the need for improved representation, justice for all, democratic accountability and good governance void of corruption, sectarian quota system, nepotism and patronage.

Madame President,

The candidates and political parties conducted broadly respectful campaigns, largely free from sectarian-based discourse or inflammatory statements. Having said so, I strongly condemn defamation campaigns that specifically targeted women candidates attacking their dignity and their reputation. They were also assailed by death threats, harassment and cyberbullying with one aim - to undermine their engagement in the political process, and further shrink their political space. I urged political parties and all Iraqi society to stand up against such acts that only serve to...
undermine the democratic process. I met a number of women candidates to discuss the situation and encouraged them to proceed with their campaigns irrespective of the intimidation they were facing. The follow-up committee of the Electoral Charter of Honour adopted by political blocs and parties with UNAMI facilitation, issued a statement calling for a free and fair campaign without intimidation or harassment of candidates, especially women.

Despite that defamation campaign, I am pleased to report that several female candidates received a high number of votes within their political lists, and that some 19 female candidates were elected to parliament. Our expectation for the future is that the 25% quota which now guarantees 83 seats for women, represents the minimum threshold and not the ceiling. As part of UNAMI’s advocacy efforts to promote the effective participation and representation of women in political and decision-making processes in Iraq during the elections and subsequent negotiations on government formation, we digitally launched the #WhyNot Campaign - Hashtag #Shakobeha. Short films highlighting successful women as well as men championing women’s participation in political processes are a part of this campaign.

I urge political leaders to ensure the full participation of women in negotiations on the formation of the next ruling coalition and the government, and their representation at the highest levels in Iraq’s political and decision-making structures in the parliament and the government as pledged by many political leaders in the election campaign.

Madame President,

Following the closure of the polls, many Iraqi political leaders publicly endorsed the electoral process including the Prime Minister and the President. They continue to urge a timely conduct and conclusion of the complaint process, certification and acceptance of the results, and speeding-up of the formation of the new government, within the constitutional timeline and in accordance with relevant legal procedures, and to protect the political process and to avoid a constitutional vacuum. Some other political forces and leaders, including Vice Presidents of the Republic and the Speaker of the Parliament, raised concerns over some of the technical shortfalls encountered with the electronic vote tabulation devices, as well as reports of fraud and vote rigging, active intimidation of voters including by some armed formations, and political interference. Criticizing notably the IHEC for failing to perform a sound and transparent electoral process that is trusted by the people, and to effectively address the complaints in a transparent way, they have demanded the recount of votes in some governorates, the annulment of results of out of country voting and voting of the IDPs, and even fresh elections. After failing on several occasions to achieve a quorum; and amidst questions about the legality of some of their decisions, on 28 May in an exceptional session, the Council of Representatives decided i.a. to request the IHEC to undertake the manual counting of 10 per cent of the ballot boxes that could trigger the manual counting of all the ballots in case of a discrepancy of 25 percent and above. Prior to this session, 100 MPs, including the Speaker, submitted a letter to the Secretary-General requesting UN intervention.

On 24 May, the Council of Ministers (CoM) at an extraordinary meeting dedicated to discussing allegations of electoral fraud decided to form a High Commission to investigate reports and documents pertaining to the elections. The committee will present its recommendations to the CoM, Supreme Judicial Council, Federal Supreme Court, and Electoral Judicial Panel for appropriate measures. The High Commission already referred the IHEC to the Integrity Commission, a move rejected by the IHEC as an interference in its independence.

Six Kurdistani parties, namely Gorran, Kurdistan Islamic Union, Kurdistan Islamic Group, Kurdistan Islamic Movement, the Coalition for Democracy and Justice, and the Kurdistan Communist Party, have questioned the credibility of the electoral process in the Kurdistan region and have been calling for a recount of the votes in the Kurdistan governorates, and even for the re-run of the elections. On the other hand, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan have announced their satisfaction with the outcome of the elections and their intention to start dialogue on coalition building with political parties in Baghdad.

In Kirkuk, governorate – one of several hotspots of complaints - the situation remains volatile, with mostly Turkmen and Arab parties, demanding manual recounting of the election results and their supporters camping out around the warehouse in which ballot boxes are stored.

On 17 May, I called on the Electoral Commission to act expeditiously and seriously to address all complaints including, as necessary, the conduct of a partial manual recount in selected locations, notably in Kirkuk. I stressed the importance of undertaking such measures in full transparency, witnessed by stakeholders, to strengthen confidence in the process. I also called on all political actors to uphold the peace and to remain committed to resolving any electoral disputes through the established legal channels.

Madame President,

The preliminary elections results were released by the Electoral Commission on 19 May. IHEC also posted details regarding the number of complaints lodged against the polling process. As per IHEC records, there were a total of 1,438 complaints received, including 27 pertaining to out-of-country voting, 139 on special voting and 1,272 on the regular polling day. However, only 33 complaints were red-flagged as potentially having a serious effect on the results and requiring in-depth investigation. As a result of these complaints, IHEC decided to cancel the results from 134 polling stations located in Anbar (51), Ninawa (16), Salah al-Din (11), Baghdad (28) and Erbil (30). Up to 500 IDPs in Ninawa staged demonstrations against this decision, claiming their votes were annulled unfairly. In addition, IHEC took the decision (No. 13/25 on 18 May
Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

2018) to cancel 186 polling stations’ results in Kirkuk, stating that these polling stations faced difficulties in sending the results to the IHEC Data Center. Likewise, the Board of Commissioners decided during its 18 May meeting (IHEC decision No. 1/25 of 18 May 2018) to cancel 56 out-of-country polling stations for delays in sending the results within the deadline set by the Commission.

We continue to urge all Iraqi political actors and their supporters to uphold peace, as electoral appeals are being adjudicated through established legal channels. I also call on the Electoral Commission to continue to safeguard the integrity of all electoral materials and equipment and to cooperate fully and abide by the decisions of the Electoral Judicial Panel, including possible measures to effectively address complaints as lodged by stakeholders in a number of locations. We urge the independent electoral management bodies to adjudicate all appeals properly, fully and expeditiously, to enable corrections of the problems, justice and the timely certification of the final election results.

I also wish to highlight the readiness and availability of United Nations electoral advice and expertise, in support of any activities and measures that may be required to retain confidence in the process, including as regards Kirkuk also in the light of the forthcoming Provincial Council elections across Iraq and the regional elections in the Kurdistan Region later this year.

Madame President,

The post-election phase represents a crucial time for Iraq. Building on the achievements of the current government, we urge political leaders to prioritise inclusive, non-sectarian dialogue, and to ensure the swift formation of a new truly national Government which reflects the will of the people of Iraq. It is essential that the new Government works as one across the sectarian and ethnic divides in pursuing much-needed political, economic and social reforms, based on the principles of patriotism and citizenship with equal rights, justice and opportunity for all and good governance while working to improve the economy, public services delivery and social justice. A new government, based on such an approach, will guarantee the future of Iraq as a stable, prosperous, united, democratic, fully sovereign and independent federal state with good and balanced relations with all its neighbours based on mutual respect, non-interference, and common interests as a factor for stability, cooperation and prosperity, also in the region.

Madame President,

Although Da’esh’s so-called caliphate has been defeated, the terrorist organisation continues to pose a threat. For example, on 12 April, 20 people were killed and four wounded in a twin attack with improvised explosive devices in Shirqat district, Salah al-Din governorate. On 16 May, the eve of the Holy month of Ramadan, Da’esh fighters opened indiscriminate fire on civilians at a funeral in Tarmiya, southern Salah al-Din governorate, killing 12 and wounding 25. On May 24, a terrorist bombing targeted a crowded park in Baghdad as people were on outings after breaking the Ramadan fast, killing or injuring 20, and just yesterday, a bomb detonated near a girls’ school in Diyala governorate, killing or injuring a number of people. These cowardly and indiscriminate attacks have the sole purpose of inflicting maximum casualties among innocent civilians. In addition, explosives reportedly planted by Da’esh have continued to cause civilian casualties, notably in Kirkuk, Ninawa and Anbar governorates, as a sad legacy of the terrorist organisation’s former presence.

As a result of these attacks and other incidents, I regret to inform you that 144 civilians were killed between 1 April and 30 May, and 236 others wounded. I note that civilian casualties in April constitute the lowest monthly civilian casualty figures in Iraq since UNAMI began publishing monthly figures in 2012, and the lowest since my Human Rights Office began publicly reporting on human rights in Iraq in August 2005. I see no room for complacency, however, and I reaffirm my support to the Iraqi authorities in their efforts to thwart terrorist attempts to destroy, destabilise and divide communities across Iraq and urge them to forge close cooperation with citizens and local communities in this regard.

Madame President,

Iraqi Security Forces maintained constant pressure on the remaining Da’esh presence and activities across North, Central and West Iraq in the past two months through successive security clearance operations. Building on a re-established footprint in towns, villages and rural regions, these operations have expanded the engagement of the Iraqi Security Forces on the ground and have projected intent and capability in pursuing the remnant Da’esh presence, improving the overall security environment and clearing more civilian settlements and main roads of explosive remnants-of-war. These security operations have seen some substantive successes, including the safe conduct of the Imam Musa Al-Khadel anniversary in central Iraq in April and an effective Iraq-wide security plan during parliamentary elections in May. Challenges in the post-election period will include promoting civil peace and calm during the process of government formation; and ensuring that the incoming government engages in measures to reform and rehabilitate its security sector, putting it firmly under the state control and acting resolutely against unruly armed, often criminal formations and groups outside its control.

In an effort to combat the threat emanating from the western deserts and from across the Syrian border, the Iraqi Security Forces have remained deployed along the Iraqi-Syrian border in force and have carried out multiple...
clearance operations in western Anbar governorate to locate and destroy terrorist cells. Within the past several weeks, the Iraqi Air Force launched three strikes on Da’esh targets inside Syria, coordinated with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and with the International Coalition to Counter ISIL. On 15 May, Prime Minister Abadi announced that the Iraqi intelligence and security services had apprehended five senior Da’esh leaders.

On 29 April, the Director of Finance of the Popular Mobilisation Commission, Qassim Da’if al-Zubaidi, was attacked by unidentified assailants in front of his house in Baghdad. He succumbed to his injuries the following day. The Iraqi authorities have initiated an investigation.

Turkish military airstrikes on alleged Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) targets near the Iraqi-Turkish border in northern Iraq, with limited ground operations in the Hakurk area in northern Erbil governorate, have increased over the past few months including most recently on 15, 17, 18 and 21 May, with two Turkish soldiers killed during the latter one.

Madame President,
Negotiations to promote the normalisation of relations between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan regional Government in Erbil were largely suspended over the electoral campaign period. However, I am glad to note that several of the measures placed on the Kurdistan Region following its unilateral referendum on independence have been lifted, including the re-opening of international airports in Erbil and Sulaimaniya, and further dialogue on payment of civil service salaries is required to address outstanding issues, including oil and gas management and revenues, the disputed internal boundaries, as well as the status of Kirkuk. In this regard, I note the Federal Supreme Court’s announcement on 6 May, of postponement of its hearing on the legality of the independent oil exports by the Kurdistan Region’s Ministry of Natural Resources.

UNAMI, under my Deputy for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, has been holding meetings with political parties and key political figures in the Kurdistan Region, in the presence of representatives of the electoral commission and the police, in the framework of the Kurdistan Region Electoral Charter of Honour. The latest meeting took place in Erbil on 17 May to discuss concerns over conduct of the elections, during which my Deputy urged parties to submit their complaints to the electoral commission and the Electoral Judicial Panel.

I note that many of these parties have made a commitment to seek strong co-ordinated Iraqi representation in the next Council of Representatives and the federal government, and to seek full implementation of the Constitution to address outstanding issues between Baghdad and Erbil.

On 7 May, Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani called for a referendum on independence, to be held on 30 September 2018. Given the controversies around the CoR elections, the regional Kurdistan High Electoral and Referendum Commission has on 28 May decided not to use electronic voting and tabulation machines. I urge the Kurdistan Regional Parliament to take immediate action to pass the required electoral legislation. UNAMI stands ready to advise and support that electoral process, in accordance with our mandate.

Madame President,
Recovery involves rebuilding society, in addition to reconstruction. I recently visited several historic and religious sites notably in Ninawa and Salah al-Din to show support for the country’s rich and diverse religious and cultural heritage and United Nations engagement with its restoration post-Da’esh.

With the restoration of security in the country and following the Kuwait International Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Iraq held in February 2018, Prime Minister Abadi launched on 9 May the National Development Plan 2018 – 2022, which incorporates the priorities of the reconstruction and development framework 2018-2027 and the poverty reduction strategy 2018-2022.

In that context, the UN System in Iraq has commenced preparation for a new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2020-2024) to align its interventions with the new Government priorities, with a focus on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this connection, the UNDAF Roadmap has been adopted by the UN Country Team and the Regional Peer Support and, subsequently, the data collection phase of the Common Country Analysis has started. In the interim period before the implementation of the new UNDAF, the UN Country Team will focus its interventions on the UN’s two-year Recovery and Resilience Programme, designed to fast-track the social dimension of the Government Reconstruction Programme.

Madame President,
The United Nations Development Programme Funding Facility for Stabilisation continued its work to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism. This was achieved through reconnecting communities to the electricity grid, rehabilitating water
and sewage systems, roads and bridges, and providing short-term employment through public works schemes in areas directly impacted by Da'esh. With over 2,100 stabilisation projects, the Facility is working in 31 liberated cities and districts, notably in Ninawa, Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk governorates.

In Mosul, where over 700 projects are underway, work completed at the Al Zahoor and Al Sahiron water treatment plants has increased water production capacity to serve almost 500,000 people. The rehabilitation of the Sayedatee Al Jamila bridge has reconnected two commercially vibrant neighbourhoods of Mosul, allowing 4,500 vehicles to cross daily and improving access for the city’s 1.4 million residents. The restored Al Hebda Women’s Dormitory at Mosul University now provides accommodation for 1,000 students, the only such facility for female students at the university. In the Ninawa Plains, work on 880 housing units has been completed; in Anbar governorate, 3,800 homes were rehabilitated, in total providing housing for over 25,000 people.

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq continues, despite the increase in families returning to their communities. Displacement peaked at the end of April 2016, when 3.4 million people were forced to leave their homes. Two years on, more than 2.1 million people remain displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance. Funding to provide the most vulnerable with emergency support is, however, at critically low levels. Out of the required US$569 million in the Humanitarian Response Plan, only $101 million in donor contributions (18%) was received as of 15 May. I therefore appeal to the donor community to extend their generosity to the people of Iraq, recognizing the immense burden they have shouldered on behalf of us all in their heroic fight and victory against Da’esh.

The returns process of displaced families remains fluid. From 31 March until 30 April, over 75,000 displaced people returned to mainly four governorates - Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Anbar. However, new and secondary displacements are also being recorded. For example, by the end of April, almost 51,000 displaced people arrived back at camps in Ninawa, of which almost 27,000 people are secondary displacements. The main reasons for secondary displacement of families are lack of basic services and livelihood opportunities in their places of origin, as well as security concerns and explosive hazard contamination.

The Directorate of Mine Action of the Iraq government, supported by member states, is making progress in its efforts to increase the number of explosive hazard clearance operators in Iraq. Four international NGOs are now in the process of preparing for operational activities in Iraq, including in underserved areas such as Kirkuk, Sinjar and Tal Afar. In addition, UNMAS, in collaboration with the Government of Iraq, has increased the range of its destruction of explosive items, notably clearing improvised explosive devices under water at the Iron Bridge in Fallujah to enable UNDP rehabilitation work. In particular, I salute the courage, resilience and humanity of the highly-skilled clearance operators who remove unstable explosive suicide belts, approximately 200 since the start of 2018, from human remains in the Old City of Mosul.

In April, the first governorate returns committees were established for Anbar, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din, to facilitate a dignified and collaborative returns process. Further committees for Baghdad and Ninawa are expected to be established shortly. Composed of the Government, non-governmental organizations and United Nations representatives, the committees aim to ensure the return of displaced people is voluntary, safe and dignified, and also address the needs of displaced people remaining in camps by relocating them to camps with better services, fewer protection violations and to which humanitarian actors have better access.

During the recent electoral process, I regret to report, humanitarian partners recorded several suspected cases of politicization of humanitarian assistance in camps across the country, allegedly committed by law enforcement authorities and local aid workers. These allegations were brought to the attention of the Independent High Electoral Commission, while humanitarian partners continue to monitor and advocate for the civilian and humanitarian character of camps. A continued military presence in camps across Iraq, the sexual harassment of women and girls, diversion of humanitarian assistance, detention and disappearance of camp residents, recruitment activities inside the camps and armed actors’ attacks on humanitarian staff, despite the Prime Minister’s 2017 directive on the civilian character of camps, remain deeply concerning.

On 12 April, Amnesty International issued a report which concluded that Iraqi women and children with perceived ties to Da’esh experience serious protection issues in camps, including denial of assistance; restrictions on freedom of movement; and sexual harassment, rape and sexual exploitation. The humanitarian community condemns these human rights violations in the strongest terms, including any form of sexual exploitation and abuse of displaced people and refugees. In 2016, the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Network in Iraq was set up as the primary mechanism to raise awareness, build capacity, enable reporting, referral and follow-up and to provide victim support. All cases of alleged misconduct reported to the PSEA Network in the first four months of this year have been referred to the Iraqi authorities, UN or NGO agencies for investigation. The Network collaborates with the IDP call centre, which serves as a community-based complaints mechanism for handling sexual exploitation and abuse cases. I wish to underline that UNAMI is engaged, with our humanitarian partners, in an urgent investigation of reported situations.

Madame President, the government of Iraq continues to reach out to its neighbours and the international community, to build...
cooperation in fighting and countering terrorism and extremism in the region. Officials from the International Coalition against ISIL collaborate closely with Iraqi counterparts and politicians working to eradicate residual threats in the country and to build the capacity of Iraqi forces to counter violent Da'esh elements seeking to stage a resurgence, predominantly from hideouts across the border in Syria.

More broadly, Iraq has built stronger bilateral relations with neighbouring states in the region, moving towards common goals and working together in various fields, including the economy, education and security. More than 960 electoral observers from the region and internationally came to Iraq to assist in observing the elections process. Technical and security cooperation between Iraq and regional states continues to be enhanced. Stability in Iraq is inseparable from sustainable peace and prosperity in the region and vice versa. Continued commitments from the governments in the region and the international community to assist Iraq in the reconstruction of the country remain key at this time of transition to stability and the consolidation of democracy.

Madame President,
I turn briefly to some further human rights issues on which my Mission is currently focusing. On 16 April, the Ministry of Justice announced that 13 executions have taken place thus far in 2018, including eleven for terrorism-related crimes. This was the first time in 2018 that Iraqi authorities have reported executions.

On 8 January, the Council of Representatives formed an investigative committee to examine potential human rights violations committed in last October in Tuz Khurmatu. Membership of the investigative committee was finalised in March. I look forward to the release of its Terms of Reference and subsequent findings, with a view to those assessed responsible being held fully accountable.

On 6 April, in Mosul city, a mass grave containing 22 bodies of former security personnel and Independent High Electoral Commission employees was discovered. On 2 April, in southern Mosul district, a mass grave containing 51 bodies of Iraqi security forces was discovered. Both mass graves reportedly contain victims of Da'esh. At least 122 mass graves have been discovered since June 2014, and the overwhelming majority are believed to contain victims of Da'esh. Systematic preservation and excavation of these sites remains critical, given that they may contain evidence of the perpetrators of these crimes, but also important evidence of the identities of the victims.

Following the approval by the UN Security Council of the Terms of Reference for the UN Investigative Team to be established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), a UN assessment mission led by UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares visited Iraq at the beginning of April. The Secretary-General intends to take expeditiously the next steps that will lead to establishment of the Investigative Team.

Madame President,
Allow me to now turn to the eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the issue of missing Kuwaiti persons. Commitment for action persists, but the need to adopt fresh and innovative ways to take the file forward is evident from the lack of tangible results.

In April, for the second time in 15 years, Iraq hosted meetings of the Tripartite mechanism, demonstrating its commitment to the missing persons file and a steady return to normality. The discussions held among the Tripartite members were constructive and forward-looking. Focusing primarily on the recommendations of the ICRC review project, agreements were reached on how best to reinvigorate the search.

I am grateful for the positive response received towards the proposals tabled...
Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

by UNAMI during these meetings, namely a pilot project to conduct mass grave site surveys in Iraq with the help of the UN Global Service Centre in Brindisi. In line with the multifaceted approach advocated by the ICRC review project, the pilot project would also encompass training and capacity-building of the technical teams on the use of Ground Penetrating Radar and data analysis. I hope that the outcomes and agreements stemming from the latest Tripartite mechanism meetings will translate into positive outcomes. While the Government of Iraq bears primary responsibility for this work, I would like to use this occasion to call upon the international community to consider how it might further support these activities. More particularly, I draw attention to the need for Member States in possession of relevant satellite imagery from 1990-1991 to come forward and provide analysis and information to the Government of Iraq that could assist in identification of burial locations. Procurement of field equipment, as well as provision of forensic, DNA, and anthropological trainings and capacity-building for Iraqi and Kuwaiti technical teams are equally important in moving this file forward. It is paramount that despite challenges and the accumulated frustration from lack of results, we do not lose sight of the ultimate goal, which is to provide the families of the missing with answers about the fate of their loved ones.

Madam President, The missing Kuwaiti property file has unfortunately not registered any progress during this period. UNAMI has been meeting with the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss how best we can support and facilitate the repatriation of already located Kuwaiti property, which has been pending for over a year. I would like to reiterate the call to both Iraq and Kuwait to reach an agreement on the date of the official handover. UNAMI stands ready to provide logistical support and observe the process. In conclusion, I urge the Government of Iraq to explore new strategies to revive this file and fulfil its obligations, under this file.

Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism at the 8271st meeting of the UNSC

New York, 30 May 2018 - Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism addressed the 8271st meeting of the UNSC that was deliberating the situation in Iraq. Here is the text of his statement:

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to start by expressing my solidarity with the people and Governments where terrorist attacks were recently perpetrated – the list is long and includes Afghanistan, Belgium, France, Indonesia, Iraq, Libya, and Nigeria. Our prayers are with the victims and the survivors of these heinous crimes.
I also call on all Member States to redouble their efforts to strengthen international cooperation to address terrorism in a comprehensive manner and bring those responsible to justice.
Madam President,
Thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the joint visit I conducted with ASG Michele Coninsx to Iraq in March this year. This visit was conducted within the framework of the common efforts of UNOCT and CTED to facilitate the delivery of counter-terrorism related technical assistance to Member States in accordance with Security Council resolution 2395. In this resolution the Council underscored the need for the two United Nations entities to work closely together.
The visit took place at the invitation of the Government of Iraq, and with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, for which I am grateful. I am honoured to have the opportunity to brief you today alongside my colleagues CTED Executive Director Madame Michele Coninsx and Mr. Jan Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq as well as Permanent Representative of Iraq Ambassador Alaloom.
Madam President,
Iraq has been affected by and is suffering severely the consequences of terrorism. The military set back of Da’esh clearly demonstrates the long-term resolve of the Iraqi authorities in their fight against terrorism. The continued vigilance and the determination of the Iraqi Government to consolidate the military victory against ISIL through a comprehensive approach focused on both prevention and resilience is of utmost importance.
In this regard, I would like to stress the continued commitment of Iraq in addressing the 16 recommendations made by the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council on advancing Iraq’s efforts on implementing key counter-terrorism priorities.
Madam President,
During our joint mission with CTED to Iraq we were able to have high-level consultations with a number of ministers and senior officials. In order to understand better the realities on
the ground, we visited Fallujah to discuss what could be additionally done from the UN side to support the local population. All our interlocutors stressed Iraq’s continued commitment to fighting terrorism as it transitions from a military-focused counter-terrorism approach to a more comprehensive one, which also includes preventive, law enforcement and criminal justice components. It was the conclusion of our Iraqi interlocutors that national reconciliation and reconstruction, owned and driven by the Iraqi people, are essential to prevent the resurgence of violent extremism and terrorism in Iraq. I would like to express my words of appreciation for this kind of approach.

During our visit to Fallujah, we had the opportunity to meet with the mayor of the town and some survivors. We were witnesses of the large scale devastation caused by ISIL. I was personally touched by the admirable resilience of the Iraqi people while visiting the reconstruction work in areas surrounded by mine fields and booby traps, and youthful faces studying in rehabilitated school premises.

Our joint delegation reiterated the United Nations’ strong support to Iraq. Based on the priority needs identified during the mission and on Security Council resolution 2395, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism proposed five areas in which it could provide technical assistance to Iraq: Firstly, advice for the development of a comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategy; secondly, training on countering the financing of terrorism; thirdly, PVE through youth skills development and vocational training, including for youth in Fallujah; fourthly, PVE through strategic communications; and finally, capacity building to prevent and respond to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) related terrorism.

In order to move expeditiously on our fruitful dialogue and in consultation with the Government of Iraq and UNAMI, we were able to dispatch a joint UNOCT-CTED scoping mission to Iraq at the beginning of May to identify the specific elements of programmatic support under the five priority areas. The scoping mission held meetings with a range of Iraqi ministries and national agencies, the diplomatic community, as well as the UN country team and the World Bank. Based on the findings of the scoping mission, UNOCT is working now on the development of project concept notes on the priority thematic topics. It is going on about projects that could have a measurable impact on the ground while avoiding duplication with existing initiatives. UNOCT is also planning to deploy a consultant to support Iraq finalize its national counter-terrorism strategy. The practical implementation of these projects in consultation with the Government of Iraq will start next month.

Madam President,

Distinguished colleagues,

As the Secretary-General has often emphasised, UNOCT is committed to deliver on key counter-terrorism capacity building priorities of Member States, as “one UN”, in a coordinated and coherent manner, and as requested by Member States. Our first joint CTED-UNOCT mission to Iraq in collaboration with UNAMI was a concrete step in that direction. We plan to further build on this approach in other regions of the world.

Thank you.

CTED briefing to the Security Council on the Republic of Iraq

New York, 30 May 2018 — Statement of Ms. Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director and Assistant Secretary-General, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) at the 8271st meeting of the UNSC:

Madame President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour and pleasure to address the Council today, alongside Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jan Kubíš.

I wish to begin by conveying my deepest respect for the Government and people of Iraq, for their continued determination and resilience to overcome the scourge of terrorism. I also wish to express my continued and unwavering support for all the victims of terrorism in Iraq, as well as their families.

The Under-Secretary-General and I were able to witness the remarkable determination of the Iraqi people at first hand, in both Baghdad and Fallujah, during our recent high-level consultations with the Iraqi Government.

The consultations were conducted in accordance with the respective mandates of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and CTED, and within the framework of the strengthened coordination between the two Offices called for by the Council in its resolution 2395 (2017).

Our discussions focused in part on the facilitation and provision of tailored capacity-building assistance to Iraq, on the basis of the priority needs identified by the Committee in accordance with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I would also like to thank the Iraqi authorities, and the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Ambassador Mohammad Hussein Ali Bahr Aluloom, for the hospitality extended to us during our
CTED briefing to the Security Council on Iraq (continued)

visit and for their continued willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with us on a broad range of issues.

Madame President,

I now wish to inform the Council about the recent efforts of CTED to assist Iraq in the area of counter-terrorism.

Acting on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, CTED conducted an assessment visit to Iraq in September 2015. The visit report was endorsed by the Iraqi Government in March 2016 and subsequently adopted by the Committee.

At that time, Iraq’s response to the terrorist threat was primarily military in nature.

In an effort to assist Iraq to combat terrorism also in non-military areas — particularly in the post-conflict phase — CTED identified key recommendations on ways to strengthen its overall response.

Recognizing that Iraq had the capacity to implement several of those recommendations, the Committee noted, nonetheless, that Iraq would benefit from receiving technical assistance in 16 priority areas.

Those areas included legal and judicial matters, counter-financing of terrorism, law enforcement and border control, and countering radicalization and incitement to commit terrorist acts.

The 16 priority needs were identified on the basis of CTED’s long-term dialogue and partnership with Iraqi counter-terrorism officials.

They were formulated in accordance with the international best codes and practices of our partner organizations, including INTERPOL, WCO, ICAO, UNODC, and others.

In follow-up to the visit, we have endeavoured to make the findings of the visit accessible to as many donors and implementing partners as possible.

And this approach marks a significant turning point in our engagement with Member States.

For the first time since its establishment, the Committee held two informal meetings on Iraq for donors and partners, in March 2016 and May 2017, respectively.

The meetings enabled the Committee to follow-up on progress achieved since the 2015 visit and to take stock of recent developments and continued challenges.

This approach has since been emulated for Afghanistan.

Since the two informal meetings, CTED has returned to Iraq on several occasions in an effort to ensure that the discussions held at Headquarters continue to reflect the situation on the ground.

These various activities have been organized in close cooperation with UNAMI and have also involved Iraqi Government officials, as well as representatives of the donor community, international and regional organizations, and other United Nations entities.

The focus of our efforts has been to facilitate the integration of the Committee’s recommendations into the existing or planned programmes of our implementing partners.

We are determined to ensure that our partnership with the Iraqi Government is complemented by close cooperation with UNAMI and that our work on counter-terrorism is fully complementary with UNAMI’s overall mandate.

I wish to thank the Iraqi Government for its continued commitment to this process.

And I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Special Representative and his team for their invaluable cooperation.

Madame President,

Throughout our engagement with Iraq — whether in New York, Baghdad or Fallujah — Iraq has retained full ownership of the assistance facilitation and delivery process and has continued to endorse the 16 identified priority areas.

Our implementing partners and organizations have also continued to share and update information concerning their current and planned efforts; areas in which they continue to require financial support; and areas in which they might be able to partner with other implementing agencies and stakeholders.

All this information is entered into a matrix, which is designed to ensure full transparency for our partners in Iraq, New York, and other relevant capitals.

This process helps us not only to avoid duplication and overlap, but also to develop new partnerships.

An example in this regard was our recent facilitation of a legislative drafting workshop organized by the Terrorism Prevention Branch of UNODC.

The workshop led to the development of draft counter-terrorism legislation that has been submitted to the Iraqi National Counter-Terrorism Committee for subsequent consideration and adoption by parliament.

I wish to reiterate the need for Iraq to actively manage the adoption of counter-terrorism legislation in accordance with the relevant international standards, in order to ensure that the perpetrators of terrorist acts are brought to justice in accordance with human rights and the rule of law.

The CTC is currently considering ways to strengthen its assessment process and follow-up mechanisms, pursuant to paragraph 9 of Council resolution 2395 (2017).

And I firmly believe that the example of CTED’s engagement with Iraq will be very useful to the Committee’s work in that area.

I am convinced that this historic joint mission, and our follow-up mission, organized by UNOCT, provides and effective model for our future engagement with Member States.

Madame President,

We are grateful for the continued efforts of all implementing partners that have helped Iraq to achieve such encouraging progress in implementing some of the Committee’s priority recommendation.

We urge them to continue their efforts and to encourage other partners to join with the Committee, CTED and the Iraqi Government in their efforts to strengthen Iraq’s counter-terrorism capacities in the areas identified by the Committee.

I wish to assure the Council that CTED will continue, in close cooperation with the Under-Secretary-General’s Office of Counter-Terrorism and UNAMI, to engage closely with its implementing partners to determine the most effective ways to support Iraq. We must spare no effort in sustaining and strengthening our collective support for the Government of Iraq and its people.

Our joint visit was unique in its approach and I hope it will be unique in its impact as well.

We are determined to ensure that we and our implementing partners continue to act as “One UN”; that our efforts continue to be aligned; and — most importantly — that those efforts continue to have a direct and tangible impact on Iraq and on the lives of the Iraqi people, who have suffered so greatly from the ravages wrought by ISIL and other terrorist groups.

Our aim is to ensure transparency, accountability, and impact on the ground. We are determined to do everything in our power to ensure that there are no more victims of terrorism.

Thank you, Madame President.
Statement from the Polish Presidency of the UN Security Council for May on Iraq

New York, 31 May 2018 – Following the discussion on the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on Iraq and briefing of Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Ján Kubiš on Iraq on 30 May 2018, the Polish Presidency of the Security Council for May 2018 issued the following Press Statement:

“The members of the Security Council congratulate the Iraqi people on the safe and successful conduct of the May 12th parliamentary elections, Iraq’s first since its military victory over ISIL, also known as Da’esh.

Council members call on all political entities to work together to support the political process, and urge Iraq’s Independent High Electoral Commission to investigate all credible complaints concerning the electoral process, with the aim of further strengthening and reaffirming Iraq’s national unity, sovereignty, and independence.

The members of the Security Council underscored in this regard the importance of national reconciliation, inclusive national institutions, full participation of women, accountability, and respect for the rights of all components of Iraqi society, in keeping with the values set forth in the Iraqi constitution.

Finally, Council members reiterated their support for the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and SRSG Ján Kubiš.”

UN Secretary-General appoints Karim Asad Ahmad Khan of the United Kingdom as Special Adviser of the Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017)

New York, 31 May 2018 - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today announced the appointment of Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as the Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team, which was established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL (Da’esh) accountable by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the terrorist group ISIL (Da’esh) in Iraq.

Mr. Khan is the first Head of the Investigative Team. He is a barrister and Queen’s Counsel in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with more than 25 years of professional experience as an international criminal law and human rights lawyer. Mr. Khan has extensive experience in acting as prosecutor, victim’s counsel and defence lawyer in domestic and international criminal tribunals, including, but not limited to, the International Criminal Court, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Mr. Khan holds an LLB (Hons) in law from King’s College, University of London, and various other degrees and qualifications. Mr. Khan has studied and lectured on Islamic law and has published extensively in the area of international criminal justice and human rights.

The Security Council,


Reaffirming the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, and emphasizing the importance of the stability and security of Iraq for the people of Iraq, the region, and the international community, particularly in light of Iraq’s victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da’esh),

Supporting Iraq in addressing the challenges it faces as it turns to the task of post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation including the requirement to meet the needs of all Iraqis, including women, youth, children, displaced persons, and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities,

1. Decides to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2019;

2. Decides further that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI, at the request of the Government of Iraq, and taking into account the letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq to the Secretary-General (S/2018/430), shall

(a) prioritize the provision of advice, support, and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation;

(b) further advise, support, and assist:

(i) the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission on the development of processes for holding elections and referenda;

(ii) the Government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives on constitutional review, the implementation of constitutional provisions, as well as on the development of processes acceptable to the Government of Iraq to resolve disputed internal boundaries;

(iii) the Government of Iraq on facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation, including on issues of border security, energy, environment, water, and refugees;

(iv) the Government of Iraq with progress on security sector reform efforts, on planning, funding and implementing reintegration programmes for former members of armed groups, where and as appropriate, in coordination with other multinational entities;

(c) promote, support, and facilitate, in coordination with the Government of Iraq:

(i) the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safe, orderly, and voluntary return, as appropriate, of refugees and displaced persons, including through the efforts of the UN Country Team;

(ii) the coordination and implementation of programmes to improve Iraq’s capacity to provide effective civil, social and essential services for its people and continue active donor coordination of critical reconstruction and assistance programmes;

(iii) Iraqi, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other efforts on economic reform, capacity-building and setting conditions for sustainable development, including through coordination with national and regional organizations and, as appropriate, civil society, donors, and other international institutions;

(iv) the contributions of UN agencies, funds, and programmes to the objectives outlined in this resolution under the unified leadership of the Secretary-General through the Special Representative for Iraq, supported by their designated Deputy;

(d) promote accountability and the protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform, in order to strengthen the rule of law in Iraq, in addition to supporting the work of the investigative team established in resolution 2379 (2017);

(e) approach gender mainstreaming as a crosscutting issue throughout its mandate and to advise and assist the Government of Iraq in ensuring the participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels;

(f) and assist Government of Iraq and United Nations Country Team efforts to strengthen child protection, including the rehabilitation and reintegration of children;

3. Recognizes that security of United Nations personnel is essential for UNAMI to carry out its work for the benefit of the people of Iraq and calls upon the Government of Iraq to continue to provide security and logistical support to the United Nations presence in Iraq;

4. Expresses its intention to review the mandate of UNAMI by 31 May 2019 or sooner, if requested by the Government of Iraq;

5. Welcomes the results of the independent external assessment of UNAMI as requested by resolution 2367 (2017), its findings, and its recommendations, and encourages UNAMI, the Secretariat and UN agencies, offices, funds and programs to implement those recommendations;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of all UNAMI’s responsibilities, including actions taken in response to the independent external assessment;

7. Decides to remain seized of the matter.
SRSG Kubiš’s statement at the UN High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of member states

New York, 29 June 2018 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, addressed today the High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of member states. Here is the text of his address (as delivered):

Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Madame Chairman Collins, Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

The military defeat of so-called Da'esh caliphate structures in Iraq last year by the heroism and sacrifices of the Iraqi people and with support of its international partners represents a truly historic achievement. But as the developments of the past decades have shown, terrorism, and especially ideologically motivated terrorism, is a resilient and adaptive enemy. Therefore, we need to recognize that the struggle cannot be over without addressing the root causes, ideology of Da'esh and similar forms of international terrorism. Otherwise the next stage of their evolution, will again exploit the gaps that the recent military victories did not and could not address.

In support of the activities of the Government of Iraq, we need also collectively to formulate and implement policy and operational responses that will undermine Da'esh’s ideological appeal, in addition to technical assistance that will further limit the group’s physical and online operations, exploitation of cyberspace.

Distinguished Participants,

The continued resolve of the current and soon to be established future Iraqi Government to consolidate the gains of military victory against Da'esh through a comprehensive and inclusive approach based on prevention is of the utmost importance. Primacy must be given to voluntary returns of IDPs to the conditions of at least basic security and stability, community and national reconciliation and stabilization, including justice and accountability based on principles of equal citizenship, tolerance and resilience. That also requires political, ideological, economic, social and legal solutions and reforms with a specific focus on how to provide an increasingly young Iraqi population with a dignified future, and how to empower women. Prevention must be at the centre of strategies and measures against violent extremism at this stage.

Distinguished Participants, I commend the commitment of the newly established United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to Iraq to facilitate implementation of the 16 recommendations made by the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council on advancing Iraq’s counterterrorism priorities, in full coordination with the Government of Iraq.

Based on the findings of the joint UNOCT and CTED scoping mission in Iraq last month, UN Office of Counter Terrorism is now working on the development of priority thematic projects.

In April this year, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Terrorism Prevention Branch officially launched its new program for Iraq for the biennium on the “Lessons learned from Iraq’s counter-terrorism efforts and response to future challenges” and announced the plan to open an office in Baghdad.

The current conference is a contribution to our common efforts. It should help mobilize support for these and other activities to counter and prevent terrorism, based on the needs of Iraq.

Thank you.

Elections

A demonstration of electronic voting ahead of 12 May 2018 Iraqi national elections

Baghdad, 6 May 2018 – Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq Ján Kubiš visited today a polling station at a primary school in Baghdad, six days ahead of national elections in Iraq. Staff of the Independent High Election Commission (IHEC) gave a demonstration of how electronic voting is to be conducted, from marking the special ballot paper, to depositing it in the ballot box through a scanner that registers it electronically. After the polls close, the results are transmitted via satellite to the main centre for a final tally.

Iraqis go to the polls on Saturday 12 May 2018 to elect members to the Council of Representatives. The United Nations is providing technical support and advice to the IHEC, the body that is organising the elections.
Iraqi political candidates have ‘real appetite’ to work together – UN official

Baghdad/New York, 1 May 2018 - Politicians in Iraq are working constructively with each other ahead of this month’s parliamentary elections, a senior United Nations official said.

“Elections by their nature are adversarial,” Alice Walpole, one of the top officials at the UN mission in Iraq, told UN News. “One of the challenges in a place like Iraq is to avoid falling back to sectarian hostilities in the run-up to the elections.”

The more than 6,000 candidates vying for some 300 seats in the Parliament have been asked to sign and abide by a code of conduct. The two-page document stipulates that politicians and their parties will avoid hate speech and incitement to violence, and contribute to a peaceful atmosphere.

“I detect among politicians a real appetite to move forward and to work for Iraq and to work constructively,” she said.

The elections will be the first held since the Government declared victory over the Islamic State or Daesh. In a televised address in December, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced that more than three years of combat operations drove out the extremists from the territory they once held, and that Iraqi forces were in full control of the country’s border.

The Government has focused on returning thousands of the two million people displaced since the start of the 2014 crisis back home before the polls. This is particularly important, she noted, for all the people who lived under Daesh for a few years, whose voices were completely lost.

“I think it’s really important to enfranchise them so that they get the chance now to say what they want, and people are very conscious that the Government they vote in now will shape the future of the country.”

Ms. Walpole disagrees with those who say that holding elections in present-day Iraq is not possible and have called for a delay.

She noted that the UN has a credibility and a legitimacy in Iraq that it does not enjoy in all countries. “We're not doing the elections; the Electoral Commission is, and we're advising and supporting. But the fact that we're identified with the elections is giving them credibility and giving people confidence to engage.”

By UN News Center
SRSG Kubiš visits Kirkuk, meets with officials, to assess electoral preparations, stresses importance of voting

Kirkuk, 8 May 2018 – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq Ján Kubiš visited Kirkuk on Monday, 7 May 2018. The visit is part of a tour of governorates across Iraq of senior UNAMI leadership to assess the election preparations and the general situation, and to explore the needs of these areas in the post Da’esh, post-election period and how the UN can assist.

In Kirkuk, SRSG Kubiš met with Acting Governor Rakan Saed Ali Radwan al Juboury, members of the Arab, Turkmen and Kurdish blocs in the Kirkuk Provincial Council. The SRSG also met with the Commander of the Kirkuk Police Directorate, Brigadier-General Ali Kamal Abdul Razaq Hamza, for an update on the security situation in the Governorate and the measures in place to ensure security, in particular during the national elections on 12 May, and was briefed further by the Ministry of Displaced and Migration Director in Kirkuk on the issue of voting of Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Following his meetings in Kirkuk, the SRSG met in Erbil with the Acting Chair of the Kirkuk Provincial Council, Rebwar Talabani.

Participants in the meetings stressed the importance of the Council of Representatives elections while raising some concerns; but in particular highlighted the critical importance of the provincial council elections in December 2018, to be held in Kirkuk for the first time since 2005. They also stressed the need to resolve contentious issues in Kirkuk soon after the parliamentary elections, starting with the convening of the existing Provincial Council, the review of the voter list for the provincial council elections, voluntary and safe return of IDPs from and to Kirkuk and stopping the forced evictions of IDPs from the city to camps, as well as issues related to missing persons. The interlocutors stressed a key role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in facilitating or participating in resolving some of the issues.

The SRSG stressed how important it is for voters in Kirkuk to take part in the Council of Representatives elections on 12 May 2018.

UNAMI is pleased to announce the launch of the #WhyNot Campaign - Hashtag #Shakobeha / #شكوبيها

Baghdad, 08 May 2018 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is pleased to announce the launch of the #WhyNot Campaign - Hashtag #Shakobeha. The #WhyNot campaign aims to promote the effective participation of women in political and decision-making processes in Iraq. Key messages from Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, and Ms. Mmabatlharo Nono Dihemo, UNAMI Gender Advisor, recorded at the following link:

Video | English/Arabic: https://youtu.be/nFHPOhFmX30

View these short films, produced by the Arab Human Rights Academy and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), on successful women and on men supporting or championing women’s participation in the public sphere, and animation films on the importance of women participation in political processes.

#WhyNot Campaign: Women Can Fly
Animation film on the importance of women participation in political processes

Link: https://youtu.be/JsNb7autLvI

#WhyNot Campaign: Women championing women’s participation in the public sphere
Link: https://youtu.be/U1U9SsYPF8

#WhyNot Campaign: Men supporting women’s participation in the public sphere
Link: https://youtu.be/E3uSS6JDfZw
Deputy UN Special Representative Walpole assesses election preparations during visit to Sinjar, Dohuk and Sheikhan

Dohuk/Sinjar, 9 May 2018 – Deputy UN Special Representative for Iraq for Political and Electoral Affairs Alice Walpole travelled to the conflict-devastated Yazidi heartland of Sinjar in Nineva Governorate, visited Dohuk in Kurdistan Region to meet local officials, and called on the Yazidi leadership and a camp for displaced Yazidis in Sheikhan.

UNAMI senior leadership has been criss-crossing the country recently to assess electoral preparations and the political situation, and to explore the needs of several areas in the post-Da'esh, post-election period and how the United Nations can assist. The United Nations is providing technical support and advice to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), the body that is organising the elections. Holding discussions with several interlocutors during her 7-9 May visit, Ms. Walpole joined the Director of IHEC for Dohuk governorate to witness a simulation exercise of voting and transmission technology in two polling centres. The Deputy Special Representative commended the IHEC and polling station staff for their dedication. Meetings were also held with the Governor of Duhok and the Provincial Council Chair, during which the local political situation, the challenges of hosting an extensive displaced population, as well as preparations for the upcoming elections were the main topics of discussion.

Ms. Walpole also visited Esyan IDP camp in Sheikhan, which is home to over 14,000 Yazidis mainly from Sinjar. She met the camp manager and convened a focus group discussion with a cross-section of camp residents to hear about their preparations for voting in the upcoming elections. The Deputy Special Representative highlighted the importance of the participation of IDPs in the elections, and encouraged them to exercise their right to choose their representatives in parliament.

Ms. Walpole also travelled to Sinjar in Nineva Governorate, where she met with the Mayor of Sinjar and lunched with the regional PMF and YBS commanders. There, she discussed recent security developments in the area and explored possible areas for UNAMI support in promoting reconciliation across Sinjar’s communities.

"Despite the tragedy that befell the Yazidi community with the onslaught of the Da’esh terrorist group in Iraq in 2014, leading to atrocities against thousands and mass destruction of Iraqi heritage, culture and infrastructure, the Yazidi community in Iraq has shown extraordinary resilience," noted Ms. Walpole. Ms. Walpole also visited Esyan IDP camp in Sheikhan, which is home to
SRSG Kubiš meets officials in Salaheddin Governorate, stresses importance of election participation

Tikrit, 10 May 2018 – Visiting Salaheddin Governorate, one of the prime victims of the terror of al-Qaida and Dae’sh, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, stressed the critical importance of holding the forthcoming parliamentary elections in a safe and secure environment free of intimidation and pressure from any side.

The visit to Tikrit and Samarra on Wednesday, 9 May 2018 is part of a tour of governorates across the country to assess the pre-election atmosphere and the state of preparations of the process, and in the longer term to assess the needs and priorities for UN assistance in the post-election period and the phase after the military defeat of Dae’sh terrorists.

In Tikrit, the Special Representative met with the Governor and Provincial Council (PC) Chair accompanied by other PC members. They focused on the general security and political situation in the Governorate, and the state of election preparations, specifically security arrangements for the elections and the voting by the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The ways to move forward on return of IDPs and a community and tribal reconciliation in Tuz Khurmatu and other areas in Salaheddin were discussed. The interlocutors, while acknowledging generally good preparations for the elections and calm atmosphere, raised concerns regarding instances of intimidation of voters from formations affiliated with the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF). The Special Representative also met with the director of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) Office.

Mr. Kubiš highlighted the priority of holding elections with strong participation and said it is the voters’ right in a democracy to freely choose their representatives. He encouraged the people to vote wisely and send to the Council of Representatives (CoR) representatives that will work for change, for reforms, for justice, for rule of law. He affirmed the intention of the UN to continue providing assistance with targeted interventions in specific fields important for return of IDPs, rehabilitation and reconstruction, social progress and protection as well as development, where assistance is most needed in the post-Dae’sh phase.

In Samarra, Mr. Kubiš met with the Mayor and was briefed by the Samarra Operations Commander on security arrangements for the electoral process, potential security challenges. He visited the Shrine of Imam Ali al-Hadi and Imam Hassan al-Askari and the 9th century Grand Mosque and its famous Malwiya minaret, Islamic sites that speak of Iraq’s proud past. The Shrine of the Imams, built in 944, was destroyed by al-Qaida terrorists in 2006, but has been rebuilt, and is currently being expanded.

“The rebuilding of the golden dome of the shrine is a shining light of hope and encouragement for Iraq’s future,” Mr. Kubiš said. “Terrorists cannot prevail. They cannot win over the resilience of the Iraqi people who are determined to rebuild united Iraq as their common home of peace, tolerance and dignity for all, to preserve their common heritage and a millenary civilization and culture, so important for Iraq, Islam and the whole humanity.”
UN Special Representative Kubiš urges voters to turn out in large numbers and build a new future for Iraq

Baghdad, 10 May 2018 – On the eve of the elections, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, is urging voters to turn out on 12 May in large numbers and vote.

“Since the last elections four years ago, Iraq faced the worst assault by the terrorist Daesh, which has committed untold atrocities. Today, with Daesh’s structures defeated, and the country liberated, it is your opportunity to consolidate this historic victory that was won with the blood of the martyrs and the unity and perseverance of the people, and embark on a new beginning,” the Special Representative said.

“Throughout my recent trips to various governorates across Iraq, I sensed the desire for positive change and a determination to make the country move forward.”

“Failures and disappointment from the crises, mismanagement and corrupt practices of the past should not stand in your way to vote for your better future, for better future of your country,” said the SRSG. “The sacrifices that were made by all Iraqis must now be translated through the ballots in voting in a good government that will represent the people and through good governance will respond to their aspirations to live in peace, stability, freedom and dignity.”

Mr. Kubiš welcomes the call of His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani on the Iraqis to keep the best interests of the people and the country as they cast their vote reminding the people that abandoning their right to vote will give others an undisputed opportunity to put their candidate in the position who may be very far from the aspirations of the people and the country.

The SRSG calls on all Iraqis, including in the Kurdistan Region, to come together to strengthen fully sovereign, united, democratic and federal Iraq. The Iraqis have a chance and a collective responsibility to build a nation where all citizens enjoy equal rights and responsibilities, justice and accountability, protection of their human rights under the law, to build a state that will ensure all Internally Displaced Persons return home voluntarily, in safety and dignity, rebuild the towns and villages, reinvigorate the economy through private sector development, fight corruption, waste and sectarian quota-based system of patronage, give women their rightful, equal place in the political, social and economic life, and create jobs for ever younger population of the country.

Mr. Kubiš praises the security forces for their commitment and tireless vigilance, saying he has full confidence in the ability of the authorities to ensure the security and safety of voters and the electoral process. He commends the efforts of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in putting in place a robust election process regardless of tight deadlines and many organizational and technical challenges.

Mr. Kubiš concludes by wishing Iraqis a good and peaceful Election Day.

“Saturday 12 May is your day. Let’s celebrate it by your strong participation in the election as a successful next step in building your democracy, your prosperous future. Major challenges are ahead for Iraq, which require the country to pull together if it is to emerge stronger and fully regain its rightful place in the community of nations.”

Election Day - 12 May 2018

Fallujah - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, visited on Election Day, Saturday, 12 May 2018, polling centres in Fallujah, Anbar Governorate, where he witnessed the voting and was acquainted with the process. Fallujah, west of Baghdad, was liberated from Daesh terrorists in 2016.

The UN is providing technical assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC).

Mr. Kubiš called on Iraqis to turn out in large numbers to vote and build a better future for their country.
Election Day—12 May 2018

**Kirkuk** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Alice Walpole, visited a polling centre at an IDP camp in Kirkuk, where she witnessed the voting and was acquainted with the process. Iraqis went to the polls on Saturday, 12 May to elect a new parliament.

**Erbil** – The Deputy UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Marta Ruedas, visited polling centres in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, where she witnessed the voting and was acquainted with the process.

**Basra** - United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Chief of Staff, Mark Rutgers, visited polling centres in Basra where he witnessed the voting and was acquainted with the process.

**The Secretary-General congratulates the people of Iraq on the holding of parliamentary elections on 12 May**

**New York, 13 May 2018** - The Secretary-General congratulates the people of Iraq on the holding of parliamentary elections on 12 May. Following the military defeat of Da'esh, the elections represent further progress in building a stronger Iraqi democracy. The Secretary-General salutes the tireless efforts of electoral officials, party agents and the security forces in making the elections largely peaceful and orderly. He commends all Iraqis who took part, in particular those internally displaced persons who cast their ballots despite their difficult conditions. The Secretary-General calls on all Iraqi political actors and their supporters to uphold peace as the results are processed. He further urges political actors to resolve any electoral disputes through established legal channels and to complete the electoral process by forming an inclusive government as soon as possible.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting the Government and people of Iraq in this endeavor.
Iraqis vote in first election since ISIL defeat; UN chief hails polls as progress on path to stronger democracy

Baghdad/New York, 13 May 2018 - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has congratulated the people of Iraq on the holding yesterday of the first national parliamentary elections since the country declared victory over Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Dae’sh) terrorists late last year.

“Following the military defeat of Dae’sh, the elections represent further progress in building a stronger Iraqi democracy,” Mr. Guterres said in a statement issued Sunday by a UN spokesperson.

According to media reports, nearly 7,000 candidates from 87 parties competed against one another in the polls. The UN provided technical assistance to Iraq’s Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The Secretary-General saluted the tireless efforts of electoral officials, party agents and the security forces in making the elections largely peaceful and orderly.

“He commends all Iraqis who took part, in particular those internally displaced persons who cast their ballots despite their difficult conditions,” said the statement. Calling on all Iraqi political actors and their supporters to uphold peace as the results are processed, the UN chief further urged political actors to resolve any electoral disputes through established legal channels and to complete the electoral process by forming an inclusive government as soon as possible.

“The United Nations remains committed to supporting the Government and people of Iraq in this endeavor,” the statement concluded.

Ahead of the elections, Ján Kubiš, head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), called on all Iraqis, including in the Kurdistan Region, to come together to strengthen fully sovereign, united, democratic and federal Iraq.

“Since the last elections four years ago, Iraq faced the worst assault by the terrorist Dae’sh, which has committed untold atrocities. Today, with Dae’sh’s structures defeated, and the country liberated, it is your opportunity to consolidate this historic victory that was won with the blood of the martyrs and the unity and perseverance of the people, and embark on a new beginning,” he said last Thursday.

On Saturday, Mr. Kubiš visited several polling stations in Fallujah, west of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, describing the process very orderly and saying that he was very impressed to see the numbers of people, especially women, headed to vote.

UN News Center

UN Special Representative Kubiš calls on IHEC to promptly and thoroughly investigate all complaints concerning the electoral process

Baghdad, 17 May 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, calls on the Independent High Electoral Commission to immediately and fully investigate all the complaints concerning the electoral process.

“The Commission has to act expeditiously in order to seriously address all complaints including, as necessary, the conduct of partial manual recount in selected locations, notably in Kirkuk. It is important that these are undertaken in full transparency, witnessed by stakeholders, to strengthen the confidence in the process. The UN is ready to provide assistance, if requested,” Mr. Kubiš said.

“I also call on all political actors to uphold the peace and to remain committed to resolving any electoral disputes through the established legal channels,” Mr. Kubiš added.

Press Statement following recent elections related developments

Baghdad, 11 June 2018 – Following the Council of Representatives elections on 12 May 2018 and in light of the recent developments, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Mr. Ján Kubiš: “Calls upon Iraq’s election management bodies expeditiously to investigate and adjudicate all complaints of electoral fraud and violations, in a fully transparent way that promotes the integrity of the electoral process and the legitimacy of its results, in line with the laws and Constitution of Iraq.

Calls upon all political actors and their supporters to uphold the peace, and to remain committed to resolving any electoral disputes through legal channels.

Calls upon all constitutional and political leaders and entities to work together in support of the steps to address the complaints concerning the electoral process, to support the electoral and political processes. Urges the government, the security forces and the electoral management bodies to take all appropriate steps to secure electoral materials, in particular in light of the recent fire incident affecting some of the electoral commission’s warehouses.”

UNAMI stands ready and available to extend further technical advice and assistance to the electoral bodies, as requested.
Baghdad, 21 June 2018 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) takes note of the ruling issued today by the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court regarding the third amendment to the election law adopted by the Council of Representatives on 6 June 2018.

The United Nations reiterates its readiness to continue providing advice, support and assistance to the elections management bodies in line with UNAMI’s mandate, and to deploy additional resources at the request of the Board of Judges, which the Higher Judicial Council has appointed in conformity with the amended law.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, is confident that the Board of Judges will develop such modalities of recount that will enable them to conduct the work as expeditiously as possible and in a fully transparent way, that will increase public confidence in the election process, enhance its integrity, deliver electoral justice and contribute to the legitimacy of the results of the elections. That will allow the rapid certification of the final results that would lead to a speedy establishment of the next Council of Representatives and formation of the future government.

The Special Representative calls on all political actors and their supporters to respect the law, and to remain committed to resolving any electoral disputes peacefully and adjudicate verifiable complaints through the appropriate legal channels and mechanisms, in support of the electoral and political process and democracy in Iraq.

International Day of Living Together in Peace celebrated in Basra

Basra, 16 May 2018 – Welcome to Basra Peace Festival! Citizens of Basra, internally displaced people, religious leaders, and local government representatives were engaged in activities aiming to raise awareness on social integration, civic participation, tolerance and coexistence. The event took place at the Anglican Church in Basra to encourage interaction between Christians and Muslims and was attended by over 100 people, including youth and children.

“I hope this initiative will help displaced people feel welcomed in our community”, said Ali Sajit, youth from Basra.

The Peace festival is part of a broader project supported by UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) with generous funding from the Government of Japan. This project is promoting social cohesion and mitigating potential conflicts between internally displaced people and host community in Basra, which is hosting thousands of Christians who had to flee their home during the crisis caused by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

“It is truly exciting to see representatives of the Christian and Islamic communities celebrating peace today; and particularly to see young survivors of ISIL-occupation retelling their stories through performing arts with a poignant focus on reconciliation and renewal”, said Ashley Carl, UNDP ICRRP Programme Manager.
The dialogue session raised awareness on co-existence and social cohesion and addressed challenges of public concern

Jalawla, 22 May 2018 - “After liberation from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), reconstructing infrastructure is not enough; we need to rebuild people’s mind”, said Yaqob Youssef mal Ali, Mayor of Jalawla, Diyala. “A civic engagement approach is paramount in order to enable citizens to work together to make a change in the community. Community leaders, local government and trained peace actors are committed to rebuilding the fabric of society in Jalawla through dialogue sessions.

Supported by UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) with generous funding from the Government of Germany, a roundtable discussion at Jalawla Community Centre brought together 28 people (host community members and internally displaced people), including peace actors, local authorities and community leaders. The dialogue session raised awareness on co-existence and social cohesion and addressed challenges of public concern, such as ethnic and religious divisions, rule of law, and women’s rights.

“Diversity is strength – it is through the sharing of diverse viewpoints that we synergize to create new ideas, thereby allowing society to grow and prosper. It is truly inspiring to have witnessed this community dialogue in Jalawla and the respect with which you have listened to each other’s perspectives”, said Ashley Carl, UNDP ICRRP Programme Manager. Using a civic engagement approach, regular dialogue sessions between local authority and peace actors are taking place at Jalawla Community Centre to identify and address social cohesion issues affecting the internally displaced people and the host community. In addition, the capacity of peace actors is being strengthened to manage conflicts and promote peace and coexistence approaches, as a way to enhance civic participation.

In Diyala, women are playing a critical role as agents of change.

“As a female activist, it is my duty to support peace and social cohesion in Jalawla and encourage other women to advocate for peace in our area. Women must play an active role if we want to rebuild an inclusive Iraqi society”, said Elaf Yousef Mohamed, 23, peace actor.

“Promoting a Peace Education Framework for Reconciliation” conference held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 11 June 2018 - “The academics and researchers trained through the workshops organized by Iraqi Al-Amal Association with support from UNDP will have an effective and critical role to play in rebuilding the Iraqi society. They have now capacity and tools required to contribute to the reconciliation efforts in post-conflict Iraq.” said Prof. Ph.D. AbdulRazzak Al-Issia, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, at the opening of the Conference “Promoting a Peace Education Framework for Reconciliation”.

This national conference, held in Baghdad on 11 June, was the first of its kind and brought together more than 200 participants, including academics and researchers from several Iraqi universities, youth groups, and civil society representatives.

“Social cohesion and peacebuilding constitute a fundamental goal for Iraqi citizens. UNDP is deeply committed to support Iraq efforts to “Build Peaceful and Just Societies” as reflected by the Sustainable Development Goal 16. We are convinced that an integrated and systematic education for peacebuilding can contribute actively in promoting the culture of peace in Iraq.” said Mr. Gerardo Noto, Deputy Country Director of UNDP Iraq.

This event is part of a peace education project implemented by UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) in partnership with Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and generous support from the Government of Japan.
UNDP provided training for the local peace committees from Nineveh Plains, to build the knowledge of the essential roles they should play to support the reconciliation process

Mosul, 13 June 2018 - Bringing over 60 Nineveh Plains actors, community leaders, tribes and minorities representatives to increase social cohesion, expand dialogue between communities and agree on the role and objectives that the future Local peace committee should play - those are the objectives of this three-day training taking place at the University of Mosul. After organizing the training for the local peace committees from Al Anbar, the UNDP through the Community Reconciliation Project is providing a training to the local peace committees from Nineveh Plains, to build the knowledge of the essential roles they should play to support the reconciliation process in their communities.

UNDP focuses on enhancing civic participation and inclusion in Iraq’s reconciliation efforts led by the Government of Iraq through the coordination of the National Reconciliation Committee (NRC) and supporting the establishment and functioning of Local Peace Committees in liberated areas. LPC members undergo intensive training on peacebuilding and conflict management and receive ongoing support from local UNDP facilitators.

Political Consultations

The leadership of the United Nations in Iraq continued intensive political consultations within Iraq and the region.

Baghdad, 3 May 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, met today with the Executive Director of Yazda NGO, Mr. Murad Ismail. Issues important to the Yazidi community, including the current political and security situation in Ninewa and Dahuk, were discussed, with a particular focus on ensuring a safe and supportive environment for Yazidi voters during national elections next week.

Photo: Courtesy of Mr. Murad Ismail

Baghdad, 3 May 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, met today with the Executive Director of Yazda NGO, Mr. Murad Ismail. They discussed progress on preparations for the upcoming national elections, including voter card distribution and IDP voting. DSRSG Walpole commended the efforts of the IHEC to ensure a smooth election on 12 May. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is mandated to provide technical support and advice to the IHEC.

Erbil, 7 May 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, chaired in Erbil the last Kurdistan Region Electoral Charter of Honour Follow-up Committee meeting prior to the upcoming parliamentary elections. Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), police and representatives of political parties attended the committee meeting. The forum facilitated dialogue between political parties and allowed representatives of political parties opportunities to raise and follow-up on issues of concern.
Baghdad, 7 May 2018 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and United Nations Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, presented her credentials to the Government of Iraq today at a meeting with the Head of Protocol Directorate at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Al Manhal Al-Safi. Ms. Ruedas was recently appointed to the post by UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

Baghdad, 08 May 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Mr. Ján Kubiš, visited today the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Baghdad where he met with the Board of Commissioners, leaded by its Chairman, Mr. Ma'an al-Hitawi. The commissioners briefed the SRSG about the state of the latest preparations for the forthcoming national parliamentary elections scheduled for 12 May.

Baghdad, 16 May 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Ms. Marta Ruedas, met with the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers Secretary General, Mahdi al-Allaq. They discussed the means to facilitate and expedite the implementation of the stabilization projects in liberated areas, with Ms. Ruedas announcing that three projects are scheduled for completion in Mosul next week. Photo courtesy of CoM.

Baghdad, 15 May 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole today chaired a meeting with the Electoral Charter of Honour Follow-up Committee in Baghdad, at the request of committee members. The meeting was attended by representatives of political parties and coalitions as well as representatives of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), Ministry of Interior and Supreme Judiciary. Participants discussed violations on Election Day and reported concerns and demands of their parties to the government officials.

Baghdad, 16 May 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Mr. Ján Kubiš, visited today the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Baghdad where he met with the Board of Commissioners, leaded by its Chairman, Mr. Ma'an al-Hitawi. The commissioners briefed the SRSG about the state of the latest preparations for the forthcoming national parliamentary elections scheduled for 12 May.

Photos courtesy of the Ministry of Finance.

Erbil, 16 May 2018 – The Head of UNAMI Erbil Office, Ricardo Rodriguez, met today with Bayan Sami Rahman, Kurdistan Regional Government Representative to USA and member of the leadership of Kurdistan Democratic Party. They discussed preparations for the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Iraq and Kurdistan's parliamentary election in September.
Erbil, 17 May 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, chaired in Erbil today a meeting of the Electoral Charter of Honour Follow-up Committee, at the request of committee members. Participants discussed violations on Election Day, reported concerns and demands of their parties to government officials.

New York, 18 May 2018 – The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, met today with the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Ambassador Bahar Al Uloom. The outcomes of recent elections and its significance for the Iraqi future, the role of the United Nations and its agencies, were among the topics discussed.

Photos courtesy of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations.

Baghdad, 20 May 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG) for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, visited today the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Baghdad and met with Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Ma’an Al-Hitawi to discuss latest developments on the electoral results, including IHEC’s role in addressing electoral complaints.

DSRSG Walpole urged the Commission to undertake a full investigation of all complaints, notably those raised in Kirkuk, expeditiously and thoroughly. She underlined that, in the event IHEC decides to undertake a ballot recount in regard to any polling centres, the UN stands ready to provide assistance and observe the process, if requested.

Photo courtesy of IHEC.

Baghdad, 21 May 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the Head of the Supreme Judicial Council, Judge Faik Zidane. They discussed a number of issues of common concern, including legal procedures for electoral management bodies in dealing with complaints as well as the progress of the establishment of the special investigative committee for holding ISIL accountable for its crimes.

Baghdad, 21 May 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the Leader of the Conquest Coalition (Fateh), Hadi al-Amiri. They discussed elections related issues, including post-election prospects.

Photo: UNAMI archive
Mosul, 21 May 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and UN Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, and Mosul Governor, Nawfal Al-Aagoub, inaugurated today one of many buildings of the University of Mosul - rehabilitated by UNDP Iraq - setting the stage for educating Iraqi youth striving for a better future.

Baghdad, 22 May 2018 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the Leader of al-Hai Party, Jamal al-Karbouli. The discussion focused on the way forward in the post-elections phase and the government formation.

Baghdad, 23 May 2018 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with Sayyid Muqtada Al-Sadr, leader of the Alliance Towards Reforms (Saairun) movement. SRSG Kubiš congratulated Al-Sadr on his electoral victory and discussed the latest developments after the elections.

Baghdad, 23 May 2018 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the group of Sunni leaders, Mr. Qassim al-Fadhawi, Minister of Electricity, Mr. Salman al-Jumaili, Minister of Planning, MP Hamed Al-Mutlak, Mr. Kamil Karem al-Dulaimi, former member of the Council of Representatives and Mr. Awad Al-Jugheifi. They discussed elections related issues, including complaints and post-election prospects.
Baghdad, 24 May 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, received today a Yazidi delegation which included the newly-selected Yazidi quota seat Member of the Council of Representatives, Mr Suh Khidr; Yazda NGO Executive Director Murad Ismael; and Mayor of Kocho, Sheikh Nayif Jaso Qasim. Discussion centred on the Yazidis' vision of their role as full participants in Iraqi society and Iraq's future, and on the importance of the rehabilitation of the town of Sinjar (Shingal) to enable the return of its Yazidi community. DSRSG Walpole underlined that the United Nations fully supports the peaceful coexistence of different components in Iraq and urged that Iraq's unique and valuable diversity be fully and fairly reflected in the incoming government.

Baghdad, 07 June 2018 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, was received today by H.E. Fuad Masoum, President of the Republic of Iraq. They discussed the current political situation in the country, with special emphasis on the post-elections developments.

Najaf, 9 June 2018 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the leader of the Sadrist Movement, Moqtada al-Sadr. The political situation in Iraq and especially elections related topics were discussed.

Baghdad, 10 June 2018 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with Sheikh Abdel-Halim al-Zuhairi, a member of Dawa politburo. They discussed political and electoral developments.

Baghdad, 10 June 2018 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the Chairman of the Fatah Coalition, Hadi al-Ameri. They discussed political and electoral developments.
Baghdad, 10 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with Sayed Ammar al Hakim, Chairman of Hikma National Trend. The political situation in Iraq and especially elections related topics were discussed.

Photo courtesy of the Hikma National Trend.

Baghdad, 11 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, accompanied by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Alice Walpole, met today with the Head of the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq, Judge Faik Zidan. They discussed numerous issues related to the recently held elections.

Photo courtesy of NINA.

Baghdad, 11 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the Council of Representatives Speaker, Salim Jubouri. The political situation in the country and elections related developments were discussed.

Photo courtesy of CoR.

Baghdad, 11 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, Vice President, Dr. Ayad Allawi. They discussed electoral, political and security situation in Iraq.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Vice President.

Baghdad, 11 June 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, met today with the Iraqi Minister of Water Resources, Hassan al-Janabi, to discuss the water situation in Iraq.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Water Resources.
Erbil, 12 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Masoud Barzani. They discussed the political developments in Iraq and results of the May 12 parliamentary elections.

Photo courtesy of KDP.

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Erbil, 12 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the Kurdistan Region Minister of Interior, Karim Sinjari, and discussed election related developments.

Archive photo.

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Erbil, 13 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the head of Coalition for Democracy and Justice, Barham Salih. Current political situation in the Region and in Iraq was discussed, including election related issues.

Photo courtesy of CDJ.

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Sulaymaniyah, 13 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today Gorran’s General Coordinator, Omer Sayid Ali, discussed elections related developments.

Photos courtesy of PUK.

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Sulaymaniyah, 13 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the head of the New Generation Shaswar Abdulwahid to discuss election related developments.

Photos courtesy of the New Generation.
Baghdad, 13 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the nine judges appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council to replace the IHEC’s Board of Commissioners, and discussed election related prospects including UNAMI’s possible assistance.

Photo courtesy of the Supreme Judicial Council.

Baghdad, 19 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with Iraqi Vice-President, Osama Al-Nujafi. They discussed elections-related developments.

Photo courtesy of the Office of Vice-President.

Baghdad, 20 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with Vian Dakhil, member of the Council of Representatives (from Kurdish Democratic Party). The post-electoral developments in the country were discussed.

Photo: Archive

Tehran, Iran, 19 June 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, met in Tehran today with Mr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, senior advisor to the Speaker of the Iranian parliament.

It is Ms. Walpole’s first visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran since assuming the post of DSRSG and deputy head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in November 2017 and comes as part of the regular visits to regional neighbours of Iraq. The visit falls within the context of UNAMI’s mandate to advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq on facilitating regional dialogue including on issues of border security, energy, environment, water and refugees. In her meetings with Iranian officials, the Deputy Special Representative touched on the political and security developments in Iraq after the defeat of Da’esh and the parliamentary elections.

Baghdad, 20 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the Iraqi National Security Advisor, Faleh al-Fayyad. They discussed the political and security situation in the country.

Photo: Archive
Baghdad, 20 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the leader of the Alfadhila Islamic Party (Islamic Virtue Party), Ammar Ta’ma Abd-Abbas. The post-electoral developments in the country were discussed.

Photo courtesy of the Alfadhila Islamic Party.

Baghdad, 20 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Sheikh Humam Hamoudi. The general political and security situation in the country were discussed as well as the post-electoral developments.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Deputy Speaker.

Baghdad, 24 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the former Minister of Defence, Khaled al-Obeidi, and discussed current political and security developments.

Photo courtesy of the Office of Khalid al-Obeidi.

Baghdad, 24 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Nizar al-Khairalla, and discussed current political developments. SRSG also informed his host of the recent UNAMI mandate renewal.

File photos.

Baghdad, 21 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Dr. Salim al-Jubouri, to discuss elections related and political developments in Iraq.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Speaker.

Baghdad, 21 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with Badr Organisation Secretary-General, Hadi al-Amiri, and discussed current political and security developments as well as prospects for the new government formation.

Photo: UNAMI Archive
Erbil, 26 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, was received today in Erbil by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani. Discussions focused on political and security developments in Iraq.

Photo: Courtesy of DFR, KRG

Kirkuk, 27 June 2018 – The Acting Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Alice Walpole, visited today southern Kirkuk to meet representatives of the Kurdish Kakai community in their villages around Daquq, to learn about the history and culture of this community and to discuss the current security situation.

Ms. Walpole also held meetings with the Kirkuk Acting Governor, Rakan Sa’id al-Jubouri, and the Kirkuk Federal Police Commander, General Shakir Quen, to discuss recent developments in Kirkuk on the security and political fronts.

Security

UN’s Kubiš condemns terrorist attack at Tarmiya, supports authorities’ efforts to thwart the terrorists’ aims

Baghdad, 2 May 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the terrorist shootings at Tarmiya, north of Baghdad, in which a number of innocent civilians were killed and wounded.

The Special Representative offers his condolences to the families of those who were murdered and wishes the injured a complete and rapid recovery. He reiterates his support for the Iraqi authorities, including the security forces, in their efforts to thwart the terrorists’ attempts to destroy, destabilise and divide communities across Iraq.

“Terrorist sleeper cells continue to mount sporadic attacks, despite the defeat of their main military structures by Iraqi security forces. They aim to undermine stability and break the morale of Iraqis who have begun to enjoy the benefits of peace. They will fail, as they failed before. I call on the authorities, and local communities, to remain alert to thwart the terrorists’ plans,” Mr. Kubiš said.

The Special Representative also voiced concern at the news of a bomb attack on 1 May, targeting Iraqi police in the liberated city of Mosul and causing casualties.
UN Acting Special Representative Walpole condemns Tarmiya suicide bombing

Baghdad, 16 May 2018 – Acting Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Alice Walpole, strongly condemned the cowardly suicide terrorist attack in the Tarmiya district north of Baghdad today, killing and injuring a number of people.

“After their military defeat, remnants of the Da’esh terrorist organisation continue to seek to destabilise Iraq. With total disregard for human and religious values, these terrorists targeted a group of mourners receiving condolences, and they struck on the eve of the Islamic Holy Month of Ramadan. It was a despicable act. But, as in the past, they will fail to dampen the independent, democratic spirit of the Iraqi people, who are looking ahead to a future of peace and prosperity,” Ms. Walpole said.

“I offer my deepest condolences to the families of those killed, and I wish the injured a rapid recovery.”

SRSG Kubiš condemns suicide bomb attack in Baghdad

Baghdad, 24 May 2018 – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, strongly condemned the suicide bomb attack that took place in Baghdad on Wednesday, 23 May.

“This attack which targeted innocent civilians is the work of cowards who have no respect for human life and no respect for the Holy Month of Ramadan,” Mr. Kubiš said. “All Iraqis must stand united in rejecting such heinous acts and in working together to consolidate their hard-won democracy.”

“My condolences go to the families of the deceased and my warm wishes for a speedy recovery to the injured,” he added.

UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of May 2018

Baghdad, 31 May 2018 – A total of 95 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 163 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in May 2018*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

The figures include ordinary citizens and others considered civilian at the time of death or injury, such as police in non-combat functions, civil defence, personal security teams, facilities protection police and fire department personnel.

Of the overall figures recorded by UNAMI for the month of May, the number of civilians killed (not including police) was 86, while the number of injured (not including police) was 148.

Baghdad was the worst affected Governorate, with 117 civilian casualties (45 killed, 72 injured), followed by Diyala with 9 killed and 35 injured, and Kirkuk with 20 killed and 16 injured.

According to information obtained by UNAMI from the Health Directorate in Anbar, the Governorate suffered a total of 21 civilian casualties (6 killed and 15 injured). Figures are updated until 31 May, inclusive.

*CAVEAT: The figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum. UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in certain areas due to volatility of the situation on the ground and the disruption of services. In some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. Figures for casualties from Anbar Governorate were provided by the Health Directorate and might not fully reflect the real number of casualties in the Governorate.

SRSG Kubiš condemns bombing in Kirkuk

Baghdad, 9 June 2018 – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, strongly condemned the bombing that took place late on Friday in Kirkuk.

“This is yet another cowardly attack on innocent civilians as they went about their normal Ramadan business,” SRSG Kubiš said.

“It is clear that those who carried out this cowardly attack do not have any respect of the Holy month of Ramadan, which is meant to be a time of peace and celebrations,” he added. “My heart goes out to the families of those who lost their lives and my wishes go to the injured for a speedy recovery,” he said.

UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of June 2018

Baghdad, 01 July 2018 – A total of 76 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 129 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in June 2018*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

The figures include ordinary citizens and others considered civilian at the time of death or injury, such as police in non-combat functions, civil defence, personal security teams, facilities protection police and fire department personnel.

Of the overall figures recorded by UNAMI for the month of June, the number of civilians killed (not including police) was 68, while the number of injured (not including police) was 118.

Diyala was the worst affected Governorate, with 52 civilian casualties (16 killed, 36 injured), followed by Kirkuk (10 killed, 36 injured) and Baghdad (18 killed and 18 injured).

According to information obtained by UNAMI from the Health Directorate in Anbar, the Governorate suffered a total of 7 civilian casualties (none killed, 7 injured). Figures are updated until 30 June 2018, inclusive.

*CAVEAT: UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in certain areas; in some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. Figures for casualties from Anbar Governorate are provided by the Health Directorate and might not fully reflect the real number of casualties due to the increased volatility of the situation on the ground in Anbar and the disruption of services. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum.
Minister for Health and Environment (MoEHNV), Mr. Jassim Al-Falahi at the launch of WfGSI. He added, “With the setting up of this platform, the Governmental institutions in Iraq will now be better aware of the importance of women’s participation in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”. The Deputy Country Director of UNDP Operations in Iraq, Mr. Thair Shraideh said, “Women in Iraq are more vulnerable to environment and disaster risks and hazards due to socio-cultural and structural obstacles in the way of their participation at every level in the development process and their constrained access to resources in general. There can be no sustainable development if the structural and social barriers that hold back half the population are not addressed”. Close to 125 representatives from the Government of Iraq, non-governmental organizations and disaster risk management experts and gender focal points participated in the launch of WfGSI. UNDP Gender Specialist, Ms. Sundus Abbas stated that “UNDP would work with all its partners to extend support to this initiative and to ensure its sustainability.”

On the occasion of the launch, the Ministry of Culture facilitated an exhibition of paintings on the theme of women and development by more than 20 women artists and painters from across the country. UNDP has been a major partner of the Government of Iraq in addressing the challenges in areas of environment, energy, and disaster and climate risks management. Environmental protection is core to UNDP’s development mandate. The Environment, Energy and Climate Change (EECC) programme cluster responds to the national challenges through a host of projects that aim to promote resilience based development in Iraq by addressing the root causes, risks and mitigation measures associated with environmental degradation, climate change and disasters shocks. In so doing, UNDP’s strategy is to capacitate the relevant ministries, departments and the regional authorities to fulfil their obligations and commitments in terms of policy, legal and regulatory functions.
Syrian refugees in Iraq: a survivor’s journey towards making a difference

Baghdad, 26 May 2018 - Adolescents are subjected to a fair amount of changes at the early stages of their lives. These changes can be physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and others. Yet, despite the fact that change is the essence of life, young people find it hard to embrace it. In times of war, these natural changes are topped with trauma and shock. In Syria, the devastating seven-year-long war destroyed most parts of the country, leading to the displacement of hundred thousands of people. Many have sought refuge in neighbouring countries like Iraq.

Aysheh was only 15 years old when she and her family fled Qamishli, north-eastern Syria, to find refuge in Iraq in 2014. They landed in Domiz 1 camp for Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. However, the miserable livelihood conditions pressured her father to travel to Europe seeking better job opportunities.

“I was devastated; not only had I lost my friends and home, but now my father was leaving. I remember consoling myself that day and saying that at least I was fortunate to continue my education. I had plans to obtain a degree and then, when we return home, to work on rebuilding my community and country,” said Aysheh. However, two years later, her stepmother decided to take her out of school and marry her off to a 45-year-old man; 28 years her senior. Feeling helpless, the then-teenager sought help from the women centre in the camp where she told them her story. The women centre reached out to the stepmother and explained to her the risks of early marriage and the repercussions it would have on the young girl. Luckily, the intervention was successful, and the social workers convinced the step-mother to allow Aysheh to go back to school and complete her education.

“I would not be exaggerating if I said that that was the best day of my life; I couldn’t believe it,” she recalled. “I had given up on the idea of having a normal life again; I felt my life had meaning again.”

Shortly after, the young woman became a regular, at the women centre attending all the sessions given and when a part-time volunteering opportunity at the centre rose, Aysheh applied and was selected.

“My goal right now is to advocate against early and child marriages through the awareness sessions and activities conducted at the centre,” concluded the 19-year-old Domiz 1 camp is home to close to 5,608 Syrian refugees families who fled the war seeking a haven. UNFPA supports a reproductive health unit within the Domiz hospital, a youth centre and a women’s social centre. These centres provide young people and women counselling, psychosocial support, awareness sessions, recreational activities, and life-skills courses.

Women’s peace and humanitarian fund in Iraq launched

Baghdad, 28 May 2018 - The UN in partnership with the Government of Iraq and the civil society and with the generous support from the UK and Canada launched the Women’s peace and humanitarian fund in Iraq with a total allocation of 2 million dollars. At country level, the fund is managed by a national steering committee which is under the patronage of Dr. Mehdi Al-Alaq, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers and the membership of Governmental, Non-Governmental organisations, international donor communities and UN agencies. UN Women acts as the Women’s Peace & Humanitarian Fund’s Technical Secretariat at the global level. UN Women also acts as the Secretariat for the WPHF’s Iraq National Steering Committee.

UNWomen will welcome online proposals from national and local Civil Society Organisations; women’s grassroots and community-based organizations that are high impact, innovative and respond directly to the following objectives: Enabling environment for the implementation of WPS commitments and Conflict prevention.

Interested applicants are encouraged to read the Call for Proposals and start preparing for the online application process that will open from 13 May to 9 June 2018. Application packages can be emailed to: Wphf.iraq@unwomen.org.

The fund is a flexible and rapid financing mechanism. It supports quality interventions to enhance the capacity of local women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities. The goal of the WPHF’s theory of change is to achieve peaceful and gender equal societies. Achievement of this goal will require that women are empowered to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from conflict prevention, crisis response, peacebuilding, and recovery.
Finding a way out of child marriage and towards a vocation

Dohuk, 4 June 2018 – Aysheh was only 15 years old when she and her family fled Qamishli, northeastern Syria, to find refuge in Iraq in 2014. They ended up in Domiz 1 camp in Iraq’s Kurdistan region. Built rapidly and with little planning to accommodate the large numbers of refugees fleeing northern Syria in 2012, Domiz 1 is now home to 5,608 Syrian refugee families. They contend with overcrowding, and live in shelters in need of upgrading. And livelihood opportunities are scarce.

“My life had meaning again”. Aysheh told UNFPA. “Not only had I lost my friends and home, but now my father was leaving. I remember consoling myself that day and saying that at least I was fortunate to continue my education. I had plans to obtain a degree and then, when we return home, to work on rebuilding my community and country.” But two years later, as the family continued to struggle, Aysheh’s stepmother decided to take her out of school and marry her off to a 45-year-old man. As Aysheh’s new husband, she hoped, he would support the family financially.

“My life had meaning again”.

While the number of child marriages occurring among Syrian refugees in Iraq is not available, research conducted among Syrian refugees elsewhere suggests a link between the poverty and instability facing displaced families like Aysheh’s, and rising pressure for girls to get married.

Feeling helpless, Aysheh sought help from the UNFPA-supported Zahrat Al-Yasamin women’s social centre in the camp. After Aysheh told her story to the centre’s social workers, they reached out to her stepmother and explained the risks of child marriage and the repercussions it would have for an adolescent girl. They convinced her to allow Aysheh to go back to school and complete her education.

“I would not be exaggerating if I said that was the best day of my life. I couldn’t believe it. I had given up on the idea of having a normal life again,” Aysheh recalled. “I felt my life had meaning again.”

A livelihood and a goal

The Zahrat Al-Yasamin centre is one of 140 women’s centres supported by UNFPA as part of its emergency response throughout Iraq. In the Domiz 1 camp, UNFPA also supports a reproductive health unit within the Domiz hospital, as well as a youth centre.

These facilities provide a spectrum of support and care for the camp’s women and young people. Services includes family planning, maternal health care, as well as counselling, psychosocial support, awareness sessions, recreational activities and life-skills courses.

After the successful intervention that got her back to school, Aysheh became a regular at the women’s centre, attending all the sessions on offer. When a part-time volunteering opportunity arose, she applied and was selected to shadow social workers, gaining the practical experience to take up the work herself.

“I feel content when I help women who are going through hard times,” said Aysheh. “They talk to me; I listen and advise them.”

“Besides,” she added, “the sum I get in return helps me support my sibling and our family.”

Now 19, Aysheh is determined to continue her work to help other girls and women. “My goal right now is to advocate against early and child marriages through the awareness sessions and activities conducted at the centre,” she said.

By Seepal Tayeb and Salwa Moussa, UNFPA Iraq

Becoming a woman in Iraq; the challenges of menstruation

Baquba, 4 June 2018 - Getting your period and becoming a woman is a natural development for every girl. In most parts of the world, discussing menstruation is a normal process and is explained both at school and at home. In Iraq, this subject remains a taboo, and not enough information is provided to young girls prior to menstruation.

“When I first got my period, I was confused and afraid. I thought I had done something wrong. At first, I was terrified to inform my mother of this happening,” recalls Rusul, a 27-year-old Y-Peer educator from Baquba, in Diyala Governorate, eastern Iraq.

Rusul got her period for the first time at the age of 13. Similar to many girls in Iraq, she remembers how confused she was and how little information she had about this new transformation.

“I felt so embarrassed and did not know whom to turn to. I eventually went to my mother and explained to her what happened to me. She was my go-to person but I remember I was terrified. No one had ever told me this was going to happen to me. I didn’t understand what was happening. All I could think of was how I would go to school the next day and proceed with my daily chores,” she says.

To Rusul’s surprise, her mother was more helpful than she had expected; “She smiled at me and said: Congratulations! You’ve become a woman!” recalls Rusul.

A few years later, UNFPA opened a Women Social Centre in Rusul’s neighborhood. With her best friend, she began attending the different sessions offered at the centre.

One of the sessions provided tackled puberty. The social worker discussed the mental and emotional state of women when menstruating. The course described how the lack of information on menstruation for young girls could lead to discomfort, shame, and isolation for several days each month.

“It was then that I realised how I could contribute positively to society and help young people, especially girls in my town,” she says, remembering the day she decided to become a youth Peer Educator.

“I believe that sharing one’s experience is the best way to raise awareness; I wanted to make a positive impact in my community and reach vulnerable girls to walk them through the challenges they are likely to face while growing up. I wanted to empower youth. I felt that the Youth Peer Network would give me that opportunity as I can relay messages about human rights, sexual and reproductive health, women rights, and life-skills in an interactive and modern way”, concludes the Peer Educator.
**World Press Freedom Day in Baghdad celebrated as Iraq expected to establish national mechanism to protect journalists**

**Baghdad, 3 May 2018** - World Press Freedom Day was marked this year in Iraq with optimism and hope regarding the safety of journalists, for the country is expected to establish a National Mechanism for the safety of journalists and impunity related to crimes of expression.

At an event on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, the Iraqi Journalists’ Syndicate (IJS), together with UNESCO and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) focused on the expected announcement by the government of establishing the national mechanism.

An event hosted by the Iraqi Journalists’ Syndicate addressed the multiple challenges facing the safety of the media profession in the country: journalists operate in extremely volatile environments facing various threats and killings.

“I welcome the upcoming establishment of a strengthened national mechanism for the prevention of and protection against threats and attacks on freedom of expression. This mechanism will enable more swift and effective investigations of crimes against journalists. It will also address impunity, by promoting systematic prosecution of perpetrators of such crimes. And it will allow a closer collaboration between governmental entities, the media profession and the civil society on the crucial issue of safety of journalists,” said Louise Haxthausen, Director of the UNESCO Office for Iraq.

Moaed Al-Lami, the Head of IJS stressed that “the Iraqi journalists deserve more protection and safety, this is our mandate and we hope that, with the Iraqi government, we can improve the rights of journalists, and ultimately, foster an environment that enables the media profession to operate without fear.”

UNESCO also participated in another event in Baghdad on the occasion of World Press Freedom, organized by the National Union of Journalists-Iraq and the US Embassy in Baghdad and hosted at The Station. At the event, discussions on the role of journalists during the war against Daesh and in reconciliation efforts were debated. Louise Haxthausen facilitated a panel discussion on the role of journalists in building peace after conflict.

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**Human rights**

**“Missing Persons in Iraq and the Impact on Women, Peace and Security” ICMP conference held in Baghdad**


Representing the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Nono Mmabatlharo Dihemo, Gender Adviser, presented the audience with an overview of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, noting that the resolution “calls for the participation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention and resolution, in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts”.

In her remarks, Ms. Dihemo stressed the importance of the conference, adding that “addressing the concerns of missing persons contributes to peace and to building an inclusive society in which rights are upheld and trust is restored between communities and institutions”.

Here is the text of Ms. Dihemo remarks:
Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Guests, and Civil Society,
Salam Aleykum!

I am here today to talk about a priority and urgent issue—Missing Persons in Iraq and the impact on their families, notably on women and girls. Let me begin by acknowledging the pain and suffering of families who continue to search for their loved ones. The United Nations stands with these families and reiterates its commitment to engage with all relevant stakeholders to ensure this issue remains a priority. The role of women is critical to advancing reconciliation, accountability and long-lasting peace in Iraq.

Distinguished guests,
I will focus briefly on the international legal framework that recognizes the gendered impact of conflict and the critical role of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, namely UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (often referred to as the women, peace and security agenda).

1325 recognizes that conflict affects women and men differently, and that women have critical roles to play in peace and security processes. 1325 also calls for the participation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention and resolution, in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts; the protection and promotion of women’s rights, including ensuring justice and accountability systems are gender sensitive, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and provision of services for survivors.

Distinguished guests,
It is an internationally accepted norm that a gender-blind understanding of conflict significantly undermines international peace and security efforts. It is therefore our common obligation to ensure that conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities are properly informed by an analysis of the impact of conflict on women and that we take all steps to ensure women’s inclusion in these activities.

To date, little attention has been given to the impact of missing persons on women, specifically, and on their role in ensuring peace and security in Iraq. Reportedly, the majority of those who have disappeared in Iraq are male, due to the nature of previous armed conflicts, leaving a disproportionate number of female-headed households. Female-headed households who often face particular risks linked to the psychosocial, socio-economic, cultural and political consequences of the disappearance of their husbands or fathers. In addition, women whose male relatives have gone missing face particular harsh legal, social and economic vulnerabilities without the traditional "protection" of the male head of household. They are at greater risk of displacement and sexual exploitation or violence; their children are at greater risk of child labor, early marriage and radicalization.

Relatives of the missing have a right to official efforts that can establish the truth. Healing and closure can only come with the truth. Moreover, the State has an obligation to provide the necessary support to the families of the missing, without discrimination. The families of missing persons have the right to be represented in decision-making in various post-conflict justice mechanisms such as the Missing Persons, and other institutions.

Distinguished guests,
Iraq is the first country in the MENA region to adopt a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. We acknowledge the efforts of the Cross-Sector Task Force (respective ministries) as well as Civil Society in the implementation of the 2014-2018 plan. Some elements of the plan still require implementation, for example, the participation pillar. Currently, consultations with civil society are ongoing on drafting emergency Governorate plans to address the immediate needs of communities for Ninewa (including Mosul) and Anbar, Baghdad, Basra and Diyala Governorate Plans have been adopted. The necessary budgetary allocation is still required to implement the plans.

The UN Family continues to support the Iraqi Government to implement the National Action Plan, in different programmatic areas, including advocacy and technical assistance. The next National Action Plan is expected to be adopted and implemented in 2019. It is our hope that it will have a budget and the next government will prioritize establishing a women machinery or Commission to advance the women, peace and security agenda.

The National Action Plan does address the issue of female heads of household in a patriarchal society and the feminization of poverty as a result of the death or disappearance of men during armed conflict. Distinguished guests, we should not forget also, the missing women, girls, men and boys due to the conflict with ISIL. In most instances, even when the missing person is presumed to be dead, the process for surviving women to access legal documentation, property rights, administrative rights, inheritance, custody, and compensation is hindered by both legal and practical obstacles.

Though Iraq is slowly emerging from the nightmare of ISIL, but there can be no closure or healing without identifying the fate of missing persons in Iraq and providing the necessary support to their families and loved ones.

Addressing the concerns of missing persons contributes to peace and to building an inclusive society in which rights are upheld and trust is restored between communities and institutions.

In closing, UNAMI strongly encourages government authorities, in particular the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Defense, and Health and the Martyrs’ Foundation, to develop a unified process to locate and identify the missing, and fulfill the rights of surviving families, in particular, surviving women. The UN Family remains at your disposal to support a centralized unified structure to address missing persons concerns.
UNFPA strengthens the clinical response to rape in Iraq

Erbil, 10 May 2018 - Health care for sexual violence survivors is one of the most critical and life-saving interventions. In order to prevent and mitigate possible health consequences, rape survivors must have access to quality clinical care, including supportive counselling, immediately after the incident. Yet, in Iraq, the services required to meet the needs of sexual violence survivors are limited and require improvement.

To strengthen the clinical response to rape, UNFPA conducted a four-day training of trainers’ workshop on Clinical Management of Rape from 6 to 9 May attracting 25 social and health workers, forensic experts, investigators, and Gender-Based Violence specialists from NGOs and UN Agencies in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

During the sessions, the experts familiarized themselves with the guidelines and protocols on clinical services for sexual violence survivors including procedures for providing post-rape care and treatment, performing physical examinations, collecting forensic evidence as well as treatment and individual follow-up.

“The training is a critical step to creating an enabling environment for the provision of and access to safe, quality, confidential and comprehensive survivor-centred clinical management of rape services for vulnerable women, men, girls and boys in Iraq,” says Mr. Lionel Laforgue, UNFPA Iraq’s Humanitarian Programme Coordinator for Gender Based Violence.

UNAMI-HRO human rights training for NGOs in Dohuk

Dohuk, 9 May 2018 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office (HRO) organized a training course in Dohuk for human rights activists and staff members of NGOs working in the field of human rights in Dohuk Governorate. The training course, entitled “Strengthening Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation Skills,” was part of a series of activities the HRO is running to support civil society organizations and regional institutions for protecting and promoting human rights in the Kurdistan Region.

The training course focused on deepening participants’ understanding on key principles, legal frameworks and core skills including fact-finding missions, interviewing, and report-writing. Sessions were provided by United Nations human rights professionals.

Representatives of 25 NGOs (10 women and 15 men) from Dohuk city and surrounding areas participated in the training.

Mr. Zito Siany, the Human Rights Officer of HRO, stated that the training is part of the HRO program aimed supporting the NGOs in Dohuk and other KR districts to build their staff members’ capacities in monitoring and documenting violations of human rights.

Participant Twana Othman, from the National Center for Human Rights (NCHR), noted that the training assisted him in acquiring knowledge about human rights monitoring principles along with his involvement in prison monitoring and holding interviews with detainees.

“Through this training I have learned the appropriate methods of preparing for and conducting interviews with the victims and have gained substantial knowledge regarding the state’s obligations towards the ratified international human rights treaties, and how to make the best use of United Nations Human Rights Conventional and Unconventional Mechanisms to protect and promote human rights,” Mr. Othman further explained.
UNAMI-HRO launched the first human rights training for NGOs in Halabja

Halabja, 15 May 2018 – Human rights activists and staff members of human rights NGOs working in Halabja Governorate have just completed a training entitled “United Nations Mechanisms for the Protection of Human Rights” delivered by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office (HRO) in cooperation with Halabja-based Nwe Organization. The training course was part of a series of activities by HRO to support civil society organizations and regional institutions working to protect and promote human rights in the Kurdistan Region.

The training course focused on orienting NGOs with various United Nations mechanisms for protecting human rights and how NGOs can contribute to these mechanisms, for example by exchanging reports on various human rights issues. Representatives of 28 NGOs (15 women and 13 men) from Halabja city and surrounding areas participated in the training.

Participant Mr. Qaysser Rahman Ahmed, General Director of Nwe Organization, noted that the training is the first of its kind ever held in Halabja on human rights principles, protection and promotion for NGOs. Halabja, Mr. Ahmed put it, has long been waiting for this opportunity.

“The UNAMI Human Rights Office has taken a timely initiative for launching this training course. The training has been tremendously insightful about using and employing the mechanisms for human rights protection. It was an excellent learning opportunity because the topics and subjects under discussion were new to almost all participants. For NGOs in Halabja, acquaintance with, adoption and use of such UN mechanisms are indispensable in order to arm NGO workers with human rights international protection standards,” Mr. Ahmed added.

Hazha Ahmed Othman, another participant, stated that Halabja has many activists, but they are at a disadvantage because there are few opportunities for training within their city. She added: “more importantly, activities in Halabja have been at the local level, while this course regarding the UN mechanisms for the protection of human rights was at the international level, a step Halabja has long needed.”

UNAMI HRO also took advantage of the opportunity to distribute to participants 60 copies of the nine core international human rights treaties in the Sorani Kurdish language.

UN chief urges governments to shield more civilians from violence in conflict

New York, 22 May 2018 - With more than 128 million people worldwide requiring immediate humanitarian aid, mostly due to war and violence, the United Nations Secretary-General has urged the international community to do more to protect civilians caught in conflict.

António Guterres made the appeal during a Security Council meeting on Tuesday, where he presented a report outlining three ways governments can step up action.

He noted that last year, more than 26,000 civilians were killed or injured in six countries affected by conflict: Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen.

“The most effective way to protect civilians is to prevent conflicts and to end them,” Mr. Guterres told the Council. “This is why conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding are, and will remain, the highest priorities for the whole United Nations system.”

The Secretary-General’s report first calls on governments to develop national policy frameworks to offer more protection for civilians caught up in fighting.

Countries are also asked to support efforts by the UN and others to engage with non-state armed groups to develop practical codes of conduct for them, and action plans that address civilian protection.

Mr. Guterres said 17 groups have already signed action plans with the UN on ending child recruitment, adding that “we need more of these initiatives.”

Finally, he urged countries to ensure accountability for serious violations to end what he called “the climate of impunity.”

Steps include conducting credible national investigations and giving full support to the work of the International Criminal Court, which prosecutes individuals charged with atrocities such as genocide, war crimes and
UN chief urges governments to shield more civilians from violence in conflict (continued)

crimes against humanity. The Secretary-General’s speech highlighted numerous ways lives have been upended by war, such as being subjected to rape and other human rights violations, or enduring the horrors of bombing and shelling in densely populated areas. Also briefing the Council, Yves Daccord, Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), echoed another concern expressed by the UN chief: attacks against medical facilities and personnel.

He said that in the two years since the Council adopted a resolution on this subject, the ICRC has recorded more than 1,200 incidents in 16 countries, with health workers killed, hospitals bombed or looted, and medical supplies destroyed or prevented from crossing front lines.

Ms. Hanaa Edwar, Secretary-General of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, addresses the Security Council meeting on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Civilians in Iraq have endured more than three decades of war, insecurity and violence, veteran human rights defender, Ms. Hanaa Edwar, reminded ambassadors. She urged the Council to give more support to recovery efforts there, such as those underway in the city of Mosul, the last stronghold of the extremist group, ISIL, or Daesh. Ms. Edwaar said all Iraqi civilians must have access to accountability, which she stressed “should not be limited to some people and some types of violations.”

Children faced with unspeakable violence in conflict as number of grave violations increased in 2017

New York, 27 June 2018 – The number of children affected by armed conflict and the severity of grave violations affecting them increased in the past year, concludes the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict released today.

“The report details the unspeakable violence children have been faced with, and shows how in too many conflict situations, parties to conflict have an utter disregard for any measures that could contribute to shielding the most vulnerable from the impact of war,” the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Virginia Gamba, declared.

Over 21,000 grave violations of children’s rights have been verified by the United Nations from January to December 2017, an unacceptable increase from previous years (15,500 in 2016). The crises unfolding in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen brought about serious increases in verified grave violations.

Over 10,000 children were killed or maimed in 2017 with numbers growing substantially in Iraq and Myanmar, while remaining unacceptably high in Afghanistan and Syria.

“When your own house or your school can be attacked without qualms, when traditional safe-havens become targets, how can boys and girls escape the brutality of war?” SRSG Gamba asked.

“This shows a blatant disregard for international law by parties to conflict, making civilians, especially children, increasingly vulnerable to violence, use and abuse,” she added.

The number of children detained for their alleged association with armed groups remained extremely worrisome. For instance, in Iraq, at least 1,036 children were held in juvenile detention facilities on national security-related charges, mostly for their alleged association with ISIL. In Nigeria, over 1,900 children were deprived of liberty because of their or their parents’ alleged association with Boko Haram.

“I’m committed to working with parties to conflict and UN partners to develop strong prevention mechanisms. Efforts and resources should be directed toward this end to ensure that in the future, children will be better protected from grave violations,” SRSG Gamba said.

“Enhanced engagement between my office and parties to conflict is more likely to bear fruit when coordinated supporting action is also available. In this regard, we have seen the country visits of the Security Council Working Group to conflict situations and the active support of CAAC Groups of Friends as key enablers for our work,” SRSG Gamba concluded.

United Nations Calls for the protection of children born of sexual violence in conflict

Baghdad, 27 June 2018 – The United Nations family, the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict by organizing two events in Erbil and Baghdad on 25 and 26 June respectively. This was the third annual event and the first to be observed since the Iraqi government’s recapture of areas formerly under the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The theme of the event was “The Plight and Rights of Children Born of War.”

Speaking from Baghdad, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance (DSRSG), Alice Walpole, called for the protection of children born out of rape.

“Women and children usually suffer the brunt of armed conflicts. For those that lived under ISIL however, the suffering was unprecedented. This suffering unfortunately continues as they are often rejected by the society and viewed as affiliates rather than victims,” she said.

“I, therefore, urge the Government to ensure that children born of rape grow up in dignity, with official legal status, so as not to be perpetually marginalised and stigmatised”, DSRSG Walpole added.

She further added that the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), renewed on 14 June in UN Security Council resolution 2421, explicitly instructs UNAMI to assist the Iraqi Government’s efforts, and those of the United Nations Country Team, to strengthen child protection, including the rehabilitation and reintegration of children into Iraqi society.

Yet, the paramount principle of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child is that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children must always come first.”

“Within this context, there are some initiatives that need to be commended. The Bayan Dini and Fatwa that were respectively issued by Baba Sheikh in 2015 and the Sunni Endowment leadership in 2017 on accepting survivors of sexual violence are positive steps that could be replicated to promote the acceptance of children of born of sexual violence in conflict,” he concluded.

In 2016, the Government of Iraq and the United Nations signed an agreement of cooperation, also known as the “Joint Communiqué”, on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq. This Communiqué lists six priority areas that the UN family and Government of Iraq committed themselves to. The third priority area calls for “Ensuring the provision of services, livelihood support and reparations for survivors and children born of rape. To this end, the Joint Communiqué provides a platform to work collectively with different stakeholders including religious and tribal leaders and civil society to foster an environment for prevention and mitigation of conflict-related sexual violence.

The United Nations family in Iraq stands ready to provide the necessary support to ensure a comprehensive implementation of the Joint Communiqué including protection of the rights of children born out of rape and strengthen child protection, including the rehabilitation and reintegration of children into Iraqi society.
Life in and after captivity: the story of a Yezidi survivor

Erbil, 19 June 2018 - Four years ago, tens of thousands of Yezidis, an ethnic minority in Iraq, were forced to flee Sinjar, north west of Iraq, when the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) took over the area. Thousands of Yezidi women were taken into captivity and sold as slaves.

“I had a good life, I was at peace and surrounded by friends and family just like any other teenager. I had many friends, enjoyed school; my favorite courses were Mathematics and English. I dreamed of becoming a teacher,” says 18-year-old Nihad Barakat, remembering her life before the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

“I was only 15 years old when they came into our village, they killed men and older women while they kidnapped and raped the younger ones. My family of 18 people packed into cars and headed for Mount Sinjar but we were captured at one of their checkpoints,” she recalls.

After her capture, Nihad was taken to a village on the Iraq-Syria border where the male captives were separated from the girls and women.

“I was first taken to Raqqa, and then to their stronghold in Mosul. I was tortured and raped for two weeks. I was sold as a sex slave to one of their fighter. I wasn’t alone; they chose 21 other girls. They put us in a room and the rapes started,” she adds.

A month after, she was “bought” by one of the fighters, Abu Faris who raped her repeatedly and soon after Nihad became pregnant. He then moved her to live with his family; his wife, four children, and another Yezidi girl he had bought earlier. She explains how she hated her child and tried to miscarry it multiple times.

“I had mixed emotions, this was a baby out of rape, out of hate. I believed that this baby is a criminal and would grow up to become an ISIL fighter and kill innocent people. That’s why I called him Issa, the Arabic translation of Jesus. I thought it would save him from his dark future,” she continues.

Three months after giving birth, Abu Faris wanted to marry her and when she refused, he decided to marry her off to his cousin. To her surprise, his family were sympathetic and helped her escape. His wife and neighbor allowed her to make a phone call to her family which helped her secure a smuggler. The only problem was that she had to leave Issa behind: “His father wouldn’t let me take him away for a second. I kept thinking that even if I manage to escape with my son, the community would reject him. So I left him in Mosul with the family.”

Nihad was freed on 15 October 2015. “The journey was long and tiring. I never thought I’d be free and see my family again,” she says. “I still have nightmares though... of the rape, the mistreatment, the screams...”, she adds.

After her release, Nihad applied for Australia’s protection, along with her family members who survived ISIL’s attacks. The family is expected to fly this month to Australia to start a new life.

Sexual violence can have multiple physical, psychological and social effects on survivors, their social networks and their communities. Nihad, and other Yezidi survivors, are in desperate need of support to restart their lives again.

On 20 May 2018, UNFPA opened a Women Support Centre (WSC) in Sinjar which was visited by up to 50 Yezidi women and girls in its first 10 days of opening. These women have all suffered from sexual violence under the ISIL reign and are looking for a new start. At the centre, survivors receive psychosocial first aid and participate in awareness sessions.

By Salwa Moussa, UNFPA

Humanitarian

Life in Mosul after Daesh/ISIL – Perspectives from the field

Mosul, 04 April 2018 - It took the Iraqi army three years to break Daesh/ISIL’s territorial hold of Iraq, which at one point amounted to a third of the country. The war against Daesh/ISIL resulted in large-scale destruction and humanitarian needs on a massive scale. At its peak, over 5 million Iraqis fled their homes and just under half are still waiting to go back. Many of the major cities formerly held by Daesh/ISIL were completely destroyed as a result of the conflict.

One example is Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, renowned for its rich cultural and historical heritage. Following the liberation of the city in July 2017, the focus is now on rebuilding basic infrastructure so that internally displaced persons can go back to their homes and resume some form of normality. However, the challenges of doing so are turning out to be a lot greater than anyone had expected. The Embassy visited Mosul to observe the work of the UN in the area and to see the challenges of
stabilisation in the aftermath of war. One of the biggest challenges is the clearance of explosive hazards. There are unexploded and lethal ordinances everywhere, purposely left behind by Daesh/ISIL or as remnants of aerial and ground warfare. Examples of explosive hazards include improvised explosive devices, missiles and suicide belts. The quantities are vast. In Mosul’s Old City, a relatively small area consisting of 8 districts, over 27,000 explosive hazards have been identified so far, but the number is believed to be far greater. The UN, the Iraqi Government and its partners are working at full speed to clear explosives in public spaces such as roads, hospitals and schools.

Mosul, in particular the western part of Mosul which saw the heaviest fighting, was once a beautiful and vibrant city. Today, the Old City is empty and quiet. Most of the houses are destroyed and artificial roads need to be paved on top of the rubble to create access. Beneath the debris, there are unknown numbers of bodies waiting to be exhumed, more than seven months after the fighting ceased. Innocent civilians were used as human shields and those trying to flee were targeted by Daesh/ISIL in the final stages of the fighting. During the daytime, relatives of the deceased come back to search for and bury their loved ones. At night time, looters roam, searching for any valuables left behind. Around half a million people are still waiting to return to Mosul, but there is currently little or nothing to return to.

The Old City has no electricity or running water and is largely uninhabitable. UNDP and the Iraqi Government are working to restore basic infrastructure such as water plants, hospitals and electricity networks. In some parts of western Mosul, you can see people returning and rebuilding their homes or their shops bit by bit amidst the devastation, perhaps as an indication that it is the only choice they have. However, UNDP’s work is completely dependent on the work of experts clearing explosive hazards, an effort that takes time and where the demand outstrips the available resources.

The human cost and suffering as a result of the conflict against Daesh/ISIL is all too evident. Displacement, mass killings, loss of schooling and missing persons are but a few consequences that will create long-lasting scars and set back Iraq’s development for decades to come. Needless to say, women and children have been particularly affected by the conflict. Daesh/ISIL targeted women and girls for sexual slavery as part of their caliphate. The women who survived these atrocities are deeply traumatised and facing stigma from their local communities because of their affiliation with Daesh/ISIL and their children born out of wedlock. There are still over 2,000 Yezidi women and girls missing since liberation. Behind each individual statistic lies a human tragedy.

In a post-conflict situation, security is often a key factor in ensuring the minimum conditions for stabilisation. In Mosul, the security situation is still precarious. Militias are operating in the area and cells of Daesh/ISIL are still active. Iraqi forces attack Daesh/ISIL cells on a regular basis. Daesh/ISIL has been militarily defeated, but its ideology, networks and financing still exist, threatening all stabilisation efforts, including those in Mosul. Mosul and its Old City are in many ways a symbol of the war against Daesh/ISIL when it was at its worst. Its near total destruction and the scale of human suffering show us the real and ugly face of war. Going ahead, developments in Mosul will be indicative of how well Iraq manages to recover and provide for its population post-Daesh/ISIL. The UN estimates that rebuilding alone will take ten years or even more.

Sweden’s humanitarian and development commitment to Iraq Sweden is providing several forms of support to Iraq in the wake of the conflict. Sweden is one of the main contributors to the UNDP stabilisation fund for Iraq, which works to rebuild basic infrastructure in the liberated territories. Sweden also supports UNMAS in its work on clearing explosive hazards.

In 2017, Sweden provided more than USD 22 million to alleviate humanitarian needs. The initial allocations for 2018 stand at USD 15.3 million, a reflection of decreased acute humanitarian needs. Sweden remains one of the largest core contributors to UN agencies, the ICRC and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, allowing them the flexibility to play a crucial role in the humanitarian response in Iraq. Sweden places special importance on supporting survivors of sexual violence. Sweden is one of the main contributors to UNFPA’s programme in Iraq towards this end.

Sweden has a five-year development strategy for Iraq. Between 2017 and 2021, Sweden will contribute USD 225 million to Iraq’s development. The strategy focuses on building peaceful and inclusive societies and increasing gender equality in Iraq.

Written by Josefine Hellgren, Swedish Embassy in Baghdad
UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) is piloting innovative savings groups and promoting resilience building mechanisms

Sulaymaniyyah, 2 May 2018 - “This project helped me to buy equipment and tools for my shop, and to support my family with whatever they need. I didn’t notice a difference with my financial income only, I noticed that I have become closer with the people in my group as well; the project has helped us to build friendships and trust among us.”

Rahim, 44, had to flee his home when ISIL attacked Salah Al Din and took shelter in a camp for displaced people in Ashti, Sulaymaniyyah. This project helped him to buy equipment and tools for his TV repair shop and to earn an income.

Renas, a Syrian refugee and motorbike mechanic, was able to buy a generator and other equipment to run his business. He noted: “I have a family to look after, I am married and I have two children. One of my children is just ten months old and needs milk, diapers and other things that I couldn’t afford without participating in the savings and small business grants project”.

Rahim and Renas are amongst the hundreds of people who are benefitting from saving groups.

UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) is piloting innovative savings groups and promoting resilience building mechanisms to support micro and small enterprises, in partnership with OXFAM. A total of 125 beneficiaries (45% women) from displaced people, refugees, returnees and host communities formed 25 Rotational Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCA) groups and were supported through small grants. This mechanism is the result of a mapping of the saving and small business financing system in the targeted communities to ascertain existing saving patterns. The mapping exercise took place in the three governorates of Kurdistan, Erbil, Sulaymaniyyah and Dohuk, covering three host communities, three IDP camps, three IDP groups living in urban settings, and three refugee camps. This has been made possible by the generous support of the Government of Germany.

My name is Sidad

Drama, Greece, 17 May 2018 - “My name is Sidad. I was born in Sinjar, Iraq. My family arrived in Greece and we are now living at the accommodation center for migrants and refugees in Drama, northern Greece. I enjoy going to school and my favorite subject is English but I also want to keep learning Greek; I really like the Greek language. When I grow up, I want to be an interpreter.

I don’t have any Greek friends yet. But we go to school together every day and play ball during the breaks.”

IOM Greece, with support from the European Commission’s Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid Operations Office, is addressing the need for safe and dignified living conditions for migrants and refugees in Greece; it ensures the transportation of pupils from the Accommodation Centers to schools and equips them with school kits including notebooks, pens, pencils and other necessary school material.

Storms and floods hit Duhok and Sinjar

Duhok/Sinjar, 15 May 2018 - Storms hit Duhok in northern Iraq recently, causing flooding in camps for IDPs and Syrian refugees. UNHCR Iraq responded with new tents for the worst-affected families, shelter repairs and replacement household items.

UNICEF through its RRM partner WEO has reached the flood affected families by delivering around 1,000 RRM packages (consisting of hygiene kits, water and dignity kits) in Sinjar district. The aid was made possible through generous support from ECHO.
Iraq: Floods leave hundreds of families strained in Sinjar Mountain

Erbil, 23 May 2018 - The humanitarian situation in Iraq is becoming a protracted displacement scenario that could remain unresolved for years. But it comes at a time when urgently needed humanitarian assistance in the country is threatened by a severe lack of funding. As of mid-May, the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan—a blueprint for humanitarian activities in Iraq—is less than 20 per cent funded.

Unusually cold weather and heavy rain in early May have left over 1,400 displaced families living in makeshift tents in Dahuk and northern Nineva governorates, and with no food supplies. Floods washed away their personal belongings, and they were forced to move to relatives’ tents in nearby areas. Particularly at risk are some 720 displaced Yazidi families who have been living in makeshift tents on Sinjar Mountain for the past four years. About 220 of these families lost their tents, food supplies and other personal belongings due to the floods. The delivery of much-needed assistance to Sinjar Mountain was hampered by its geographical remoteness and the limited presence of humanitarian partners. And due to restrictions imposed by authorities during the May parliamentary election period, humanitarian partners were unable to access this area for days. Once those restrictions were lifted, operations finally resumed, and the distribution of food parcels, blankets and basic hygiene items gave people a glimpse of hope and dignity. On 17 May, a joint UN assessment mission reached people living on the mountain to assess response gaps and priority areas. Replacing destroyed tents and repairing damaged water pumps are now key priorities, and humanitarian partners continue to monitor response efforts.

Four years of precarious living conditions in the mountains

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) took over the Sinjar region in August 2014, forcing an estimated 50,000 people, mainly Yazidis, to seek refuge on Sinjar Mountain. ISIL was defeated in November 2015, and the roads in the area were secure again, allowing humanitarian partners to reach the mountains with vital humanitarian assistance. Since then, some 12,500 members of the ancient Yazidi religious minority have continued to live on Sinjar Mountain, the majority in makeshift tents erected in 2016. Most of these tents urgently need to be repaired or replaced due to extreme weather conditions. Like displaced people in Sinjar city, these families rely on humanitarian assistance to survive. Unable to return home despite ISIL no longer being a threat in the Sinjar area, people cannot return home due to insecurity and lack of economic prospects, or because their homes were destroyed. But due to the severe lack of funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan, humanitarian partners often cannot provide the most basic assistance, including food and shelter, which many of these displaced families depend on. Any unforeseen natural disasters, such as the recent floods, put additional strain on partners’ ability to provide timely and desperately needed assistance to the most vulnerable families.

Iraq Humanitarian Fund keeps WFP logistic services moving

Baghdad, 6 June 2018 – The Logistics Cluster, led by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), has welcomed a generous contribution of US$860,000 from the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF). The Cluster facilitates the movement of humanitarian supplies including food, medicines and even ambulances on behalf of the entire humanitarian community in Iraq.

“This contribution is perfectly aligned with the objectives of the IHF, to provide timely and flexible humanitarian funding to enable effective emergency response, increase humanitarian access, and strengthen coordination and partnerships among local and international responders,” said Marta Ruedas, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

With this contribution, the Logistics Cluster will continue to provide coordination and information management support to the humanitarian community. The Logistics Cluster will also continue to facilitate common storage services for humanitarian supplies at three main operational hubs in Baghdad, Dahuk and Erbil, while maintaining a stock of mobile storage units ready to be deployed and installed at short notice.

“The Logistics Cluster plays a critical role in the Iraq context, offering logistics solutions and technical support to humanitarian partners responding to the needs of highly vulnerable displaced families and returnees,” said Sally Haydock, WFP Representative in Iraq. “We thank the IHF, the Humanitarian Coordinator and donors that have made this timely contribution possible.”

Established in 2015, the Iraq Humanitarian Fund supports humanitarian partners, allowing them to respond to the complex and dynamic situation in the country. IHF allocations have been made possible thanks to generous contributions from the United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Ireland, United States, Norway, Denmark, Australia, Canada and Cyprus.

Since 2014, the IHF has provided US$3.5 million in funding to WFP activities in Iraq, including food assistance to internally displaced people and support for the Food Security, Emergency Telecommunications and Logistics Clusters. As Iraq emerges from four years of conflict and unrest, the entire humanitarian community is providing critical resilience and recovery support for vulnerable communities after years of hardship, conflict and displacement.
Mosul, 16 June 2018 – UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie today visited West Mosul, less than a year after the city’s liberation in June and July 2017. The visit marked Jolie’s 61st mission – and her fifth visit to Iraq – with the UN Refugee Agency since 2001. She arrived in the city on the second day of Eid al-Fitr, the Muslim holiday marking the end of Ramadan.

Jolie walked among the bombed-out buildings that line the narrow streets of the Old City and met displaced families, to discuss efforts to rebuild the city and the needs of the returning population.

West Mosul was held captive by ISIS for three years. The combat operation to re-take the city was the largest and longest urban battle since World War II, and the wreckage reminiscent of Dresden. Civilians faced aerial bombardment, artillery barrage, cross-fire, snipers, and unexploded ordnance. Hundreds of thousands of people were subjected to siege-like conditions, used as human shields or targeted as they fled the city. Large swathes of West Mosul were flattened. Many residents are now slowly returning, to scenes of complete destruction. Like residents of other former ISIS strongholds, they have suffered nearly unprecedented levels of psychological trauma.

Statement by UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie at Domiz refugee camp in Iraq

Dohuk, 17 June 2018 - In my country, when we speak of the Middle East we often focus on conflict and human suffering.

And it is true that countless families in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen are suffering from conflict they personally have no part in, instability they cannot control, and extremism that they reject. But on this visit I have been reminded, as I am every time I am here, of the truly extraordinary dignity, resilience, warmth, generosity and grace of the people of the Middle East.

And I want to thank the people of Iraq for their generosity towards Syrian refugees and displaced people, and in particular the KRI government, which is setting a model for refugee protection.

I am happy have been here on Eid al-Fitr, and I wish the Iraqi people, the Syrian people, and families across this region and beyond, Eid Mubarak, or Jaznawa Piroz Bit.

UNHCR is helping many returning families, with programs including cash assistance to rebuild their homes, legal representation for family members who have been arbitrarily detained because of mistaken identity, and help to obtain essential legal documents that were confiscated, destroyed or denied during the occupation.

Speaking in front of the ruins of al-Nuri Mosque, Special Envoy Angelina Jolie said:

“This is the worst devastation I have seen in all my years working with UNHCR. People here have lost everything: their homes are destroyed. They are destitute. They have no medicine for their children, and many have no running water or basic services. They are still surrounded by bodies in the rubble. After the unimaginable trauma of the occupation, they are now trying to rebuild their homes, often with little or no assistance.

I have no words for the strength it must take to rebuild after loss like this. But that is what the people of this city are doing. They are grief-stricken and traumatized, but they are also hopeful. They are clearing their homes with their own hands, and volunteering and helping each other. But they need our assistance.

I am in Iraq to mark World Refugee Day next week. On Tuesday, UNHCR will publish new figures showing that the numbers of displaced people, and the duration of their exile, are the highest they have ever been. At the same time political solutions seem completely lacking, leaving a void that humanitarian aid cannot fill. Words like “unsustainable” don’t paint a picture of how desperate these times are.

This is my third visit to Domiz camp in six years. The vast majority of its inhabitants are Syrian women and children.
Statement by UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie at Domiz refugee camp in Iraq (continued)

Their lives are on hold indefinitely because of the war. They cannot go back, they cannot move forward, and each year they have less to live on.

I met two mothers this morning, both of them widows. They both lost their husbands while living as refugees, to medical conditions that could normally have been treated.

And now they are both caring for young aged five 5 and 7 who also have life-threatening medical conditions.

When UNHCR’s Syria response was only 50% funded last year, and this year it is only 17% funded, there are terrible human consequences. We should be under no illusions about this.

When there is not even the bare minimum of aid, refugee families cannot receive adequate medical treatment, women and girls are left vulnerable to sexual violence, many children cannot go to school, and we squander the opportunity of being able to invest in refugees so that they can acquire new skills and support their families.

This is the picture in Iraq, in Syria, and wherever in the world you find refugees and displaced people today.

The only answer is to end the conflicts that are forcing people to flee their homes - and for all governments to meet their responsibilities.

So this World Refugee Day I hope that people around the world will consider this larger picture:

What this level and length of displacement says about our world being dangerously out of balance.

What it will say about us if our response is to be selective about when we help, and when we are prepared to defend human rights.

And what it will mean for the future if we are unable to provide enough basic humanitarian support for displaced people and unable to find any solutions to conflicts at the same time.

That is the situation today, but it is not hopeless.

There are millions of refugees and displaced people who want to return home and to work and start over – as I saw in Mosul yesterday, where brick by brick, with their own hands, they are rebuilding their homes.

There are countries that are keeping their borders open to refugees, despite all the pressures and challenges.

There are aid relief workers who are stretching the aid resources, somehow, to minimize loss of life and provide protection.

And there are people around the world who are more committed than ever to defending human rights and basic values.

So on World Refugee Day this year I hope that we can find the strength to find a better way forward together: so that we move into a new era of preventing conflict and reducing instability, rather than simply struggling to deal with its consequences.

Thank you.

Photo: © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

Statement by Mr. Bruno Geddo, UNHCR Representative in Iraq, on World Refugee Day

Erbil, 20 June 2018 - “World Refugee Day is a time for reflection and solidarity with people displaced by violence and persecution the world over. In this turbulent and unpredictable time, remembering refugees and internally displaced people is more topical than ever.

Some 68 million people are now uprooted around the world; displaced by conflict, human rights abuses and natural disasters. In an unsettling statistic, in 2017 someone somewhere fled their home every two seconds.

Iraq shelters 300,000 refugees. The majority are from Syria. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq houses 97 per cent of the Syrian refugees in Iraq, generously received and afforded equal access with locals to employment, education and social services. It is of vital importance that the communities who opened their doors to Syrian refugees are empowered, and donor funding to invest in the institutions that support the refugees and host communities increases. This will help ensure that social cohesion and peaceful coexistence amongst communities is more effectively pursued.

The best solution to forced displacement is peace. Peace would bring down the number of refugees and internally displaced people across the world, and dramatically improve perspectives for the future for millions of people.

But after seven years, the Syrian conflict shows no sign of abating. Every day people cross the Syrian border to escape the fighting, amounting to 700 new arrivals every month.

For the 250,000 Syrian refugees sheltering in Iraq, return is not a sustainable option at present. Resettlement opportunities are limited, and available only to the most acutely vulnerable. Syrian refugees in Iraq and the communities that host them will continue to need support for some time to come.

As the Syrian crisis protracts and deepens, it is time to think creatively about our refugee response. In collaboration with the Kurdish authorities and partner agencies and NGOs, UNHCR is exploring new and sustainable solutions for refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. By investing in the host communities and public services, strengthening access to education and skills acquisition, we hope to help refugees rebuild their lives. Refugees need to be included in new communities and have the chance to put down new roots, and realize their potential.

As forced displacement worldwide increases year on year, helping refugees rebuild their lives must be a shared responsibility. Hand in hand with partners, the Iraqi and Kurdish people, and refugee communities themselves, we at UNHCR work tirelessly to try and find sustainable solutions for refugees in Iraq.

On World Refugee Day we recognize that solidarity starts with every one of us.”
Volume 5, Issue 3  Humanitarian  Page 50

Brief interview with Ms. Marta Ruedas, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq

You have been in Iraq for only a few weeks, nevertheless how would you assess the humanitarian situation?
The humanitarian situation has noticeably improved since 2017, but there are still significant humanitarian needs that require our attention. Even though 3.8 million people have returned to their homes since the start of the crisis, more than 2 million Iraqis remain displaced as of May 2018. Some needs that require specific attention are protection issues, especially related to the presence of armed actors in camps across Iraq. It is very concerning that humanitarian partners continue to record protection incidents in camps, including sexual harassment of women and girls, shooting incidents, and restrictions on freedom of movement. Whilst mechanisms are in place for victims to report these incidents, we must continue to work with all partners to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of camps is preserved. All these developments are taking place as the funding focus is somehow shifting away from the humanitarian assistance to stabilization and recovery phase. We received only 28 per cent of funding for the current Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the funding shortfall is already limiting programmed response activities.

What do you believe should be key priorities for the humanitarian response going forward?
The shift in focus has, to some extent, distracted the support needed for the HRP. Yet, it is true that unless we address the root causes for continued displacement, we will not be able to reduce the number of displaced. It is equally important to continue with the implementation of the 2018 HRP. We will also need to look at some other critical issues, such as rebuilding of houses as well as security concerns and explosive hazard contamination, which are not necessarily in the HRP, but are essential preconditions for displaced families to be able to return home. One of the priorities is to find durable solutions for displacement and to ensure the returns of displaced Iraqis are voluntary, safe and dignified. The Governorate Returns Committees, comprised of Governorate authorities, UN and NGO representatives, have been put in place in several governorates and by working through these structures we need to ensure the returns process is implemented in line with humanitarian principles.

The comfort in knowing you are not alone; A refugee story from Aleppo, Syria to Iraq

Dohuk, 20 June 2018 - Ghalia, 33 from Aleppo, is one of the thousands of people who found themselves running for their lives in the wake of the battle of Al-Hasakah, north-east of Syria, in 2016. With her uncle’s family, she settled in Domiz 2 camp, in Duhok Governorate in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

When her parents and brother were killed during an airstrike in Aleppo a few years ago, she went on to live with her uncle’s family in Al-Hasakah. A few months later, she fell in love with an Iraqi man and, given the security situation in Syria at the time, they proceeded with a customary marriage.

Seven months into the marriage, the man she trusted abandoned her, stealing her belongings which she had inherited from her mother and the little money she had saved from her work at a bakery in Al-Hasakah. ‘I lost everything. My husband not only took my physical belongings but he also took away the little feeling of stability, safety, and happiness I had. I couldn’t go to court to get my rights given that I had no legal document supporting my story. To top it all, I was pregnant when he left me. His actions took a toll on my health and I lost the baby. Everything went downhill,’ says Ghalia.

To add to her misery, the increased fighting in Al-Hasakah forced her and her uncle’s family to flee to Domiz 2 camp. The young lady suffered from a nervous breakdown soon after as displacement and heartache led her to attempt suicide on many occasions.

Soon after, her uncle’s wife reached out to the Women Centre in the camp seeking their help. The social workers immediately sat with Ghalia and listened to her story.

“It took a while for me to trust the social workers. I only attended the first meeting because my uncle’s wife pushed me to,” explains Ghalia. “A few sessions later, I saw empathy and support from the social workers. They started giving me advice on how to act and how to think when I feel like I am heading to a dark place in my mind. They told me that I wasn’t the only one who was feeling this way; I didn’t believe them at first”.

Ghalia began attending the awareness sessions and life skills courses offered by the Women Centre where she met other women with their own interesting story each. Meeting individuals who had gone through the same challenges gave Ghalia the confidence and strength she needed to move forward and stop dwelling on what initially broke her.

“I now work as a volunteer in the Centre. I get to tell my story, talk about my depression to those who are going through a rough patch and share my lessons learnt from this experience, with the hope that it can give them a sense of relief,” she says with a proud smile on her face.

Domiz 2 camp is home to close to 8,700 Syrian refugees who fled the war seeking a safe haven. UNFPA has one maternity unit, a reproductive health clinic, a youth centre and a women’s social centre that is providing counseling, psychosocial support, awareness sessions, recreational activities and life-skills courses to hundreds of women on a monthly basis.
The “House of Artists”: a house for refugees in the Kurdistan region of Iraq

Erbil, 24 June 2018 - Trauma generated by wars is often not confined to the battlefield. Refugees are negatively affected by the multiple displacements, loss of loved ones and properties, and the instability which lead to a sense of helplessness and despair.

In recent times, art has emerged as a valuable tool to help mitigate the sense of despair and integrate refugees into their new surroundings. It generates creativity which helps them overcome the emotional and social challenges of adjusting to the overwhelming and sudden change.

In Iraq, up to 250,000 Syrian refugees are hosted in nine camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Out of those, 35,000 found haven in Domiz camp. To help them cope with the difficulties and integrate into the social fabric of the Kurdish community, the Governor of the Region of Duhok inaugurated on 20 June [World Refugee Day], the “House of Artists” initiative as part of the Fil Manfa project.

Fil Manfa Project and the House of Artists, initiated and backed by UNFPA and the Roberto Cimetta Fund (RFC), offer young refugee artists a safe space to develop their talents and practice live or visual arts, dancing and music. Hundreds of adolescents and youth have so far benefitted from the project globally.

The inauguration was attended among others by Mr. Farhad Ameen Atrushi, the Governor of the Region of Duhok, Mr. Dominique Mas, the French Consul in Erbil, Mr. Ferdinand Richard, the Chairman of the Roberto Cimetta Fund, Ms. Siham Mamand, the Assistant Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and Mr. Nestor Owomuhangi, the Deputy Representative of UNFPA to Iraq.

Returns continue while obstacles to return remain in Iraq: IOM

Erbil, 26 June 2018 - The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Iraq has decreased to 2 million, and the number of returnees has increased to 3.8 million, according to IOM Iraq’s latest Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) report, released this past week by IOM Iraq.

The largest return population is found in Ninewa governorate (1.4 million; mainly Mosul, Tel-Afar and Al-Hamdaniya districts), followed by Anbar governorate with 1.2 million returnees (Fallujah and Ramadi districts), and Salah al-Din governorate, with over 534,000 returnees. Of the more than 3.8 million returnees, more than 3.7 million have returned to their areas and pre-displacement residence.

Despite more than 590,000 IDPs having returned in 2018, the pace is slowing down as the remaining IDPs face significant obstacles to return. In IOM Iraq’s Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) Round III, an annual survey which was released this week, IDPs cite damage and destruction to housing (26%), lack of job opportunities (25%), and lack of safety in their locations of origin (18%), as the main obstacles to return.

As a result, only 30% of the remaining IDPs intend to return in the next six months, while the majority of IDPs have no immediate plans to return. In the long term (six months or more), 60 per cent of IDPs plan to return to their place of origin, 22 per cent want to locally integrate and 15 per cent plan to integrate because they do not have other viable options.

When it comes to recovery needs, the greatest expressed needs for returnees is access to employment and livelihood opportunities, followed by access to solutions for displacement related rights violations, and improved safety, security and freedom of movement, among others.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite said: “While IDP returns continue across Iraq, we remain cognizant of the fact that many IDPs remain in displacement, facing significant challenges to return. We must all be reminded of the long road that remains ahead for the most vulnerable returnees and IDPs and scale up our support to address their immediate needs.”

In cooperation with the Government of Iraq and local communities, IOM Iraq is implementing comprehensive projects in return areas to assist with the sustainable reintegration of IDPs, including through rehabilitation of infrastructure, livelihood support, access to basic social services, community policing forums, and social cohesion and peacebuilding initiatives.

More information is available on the DTM website: http://iraqdtm.iom.int
The latest DTM report can be accessed at: http://iraqdtm.iom.int/Downloads/DTM%202018/May%202018/Round%2096.pdf
The Integrated Location Assessment – Round III, completed from March to May 2018, looks into displacement and returns, profiling locations and social dynamics. This includes the demographics, conditions, movement intentions, and vulnerabilities. Data is available at: http://iraqdtm.iom.int/ILA3.aspx
A full report on this data will be available later this year.
The baker

Dohuk, 24 April 2018 - "When we first arrived here in Dohuk, Iraq, our financial condition wasn't good that's why I had to work as a daily worker in a pastry factory. I loved working in the factory and I always imagined myself with my own business as a baker. I used to ask myself how it would possible to have my own business, as a woman. I had to work because we needed an income, especially because I have a disabled child in constant need of medication" says Yasmin Muhammad Ali.

"I am a Syrian refugee from Al Hasaka and I've been here for six years, I am married and I have three children. When I was in Syria, my brother used to make a kind of traditional Syrian dessert called Mushabak and sometimes I used to help him with making it because I like to make desserts and pastry.

"I found out about this project while working as a volunteer with another group, we are still doing the same. Every 15 days we collect $100 and follow the same process. This project helped me to make more friends and they supported me a lot in the beginning of it, whenever someone they know needs some pastry or dessert they send them my way and I do the same as well, when I need to buy food I would go to the market that one of them opened with this project and so on."

"I laugh when I remember how I wanted to have my own business but couldn't; I came here as a refugee and had to work as a daily worker in a factory to support my family and now I have my own business. I still can't believe that my dream came true."

Thank you to UNDP for funding this project through the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP).

By Noor Tahir, Oxfam Iraq

UNHCR and Consul General of Kuwait follow progress of Kuwait Fund project in Iraq

Baghdad, 3 May 2018 - UNHCR Coordinator for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Ms. Monica Noro, and the Consul General of the State of Kuwait in Erbil, Dr. Omer Al-Kendari, visited Dohuk Governorate yesterday to observe the progress of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) project to improve the living conditions of camp-based Syrian refugees in Dohuk and Erbil Governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The USD 10 million multi-year project aims to improve the shelter, water and sanitation conditions of over 73,000 Syrian refugees living in five camps in Dohuk and Erbil. It will upgrade 1,500 shelters and construct 150 new shelters, build a drainage channel and install outdoor solar lights in Domiz camps in Dohuk, and enhance protection by providing lighting at night in the camps. The project also funds much-needed construction work to improve roads, and replace generator-run water pumps with solar water pumps in camps in Erbil. The upgrade of shelters in the Dohuk camps is almost complete, while construction work in the Erbil camps is expected to begin in May.

By reducing pressure on existing infrastructures and facilities, it contributes to improvements to the living conditions of the wider community. Effective collaboration with the Government enabled the implementation of the project.

Dr. Omer Al-Kendari said, “The State of Kuwait continues to affirm its humanitarian commitment to support the Syrian refugees in several countries. This support came from the humanitarian vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Leader of Humanitarian Action.”

“The State of Kuwait has adopted three conferences for donor countries and their participation in the Fourth Conference, in continuation of these humanitarian stands,” continued Dr. Al-Kendari. “We are visiting Al-Domiz camp today to see the development of services provided by the Kuwaiti Fund for Development in cooperation with the international partners represented by the UNHCR, which we are proud of this relationship, and of course with the support of the local government of Duhok Governorate represented by Mr. Farhad Al-Atrushi the Governor of Duhok. We hope that this cooperation will continue and that humanitarian projects will be implemented until the crises of the refugee brothers, whether in this camp or in other camps, ends.”

Acknowledging the fruitful collaboration between Kuwait and UNHCR, Ms. Monica Noro said: “Thanks to the generous contribution of KFAED thousands of Syrian refugees will benefit from enhanced protection, new and upgraded shelter facilities, additional livelihood opportunities, and reinforced camp infrastructures.”

Ms. Noro added, “While funding for Syrian refugees in Iraq is critically low, the Kuwait contribution will offer a more sustainable solution to refugees and their hosting communities since conditions are not yet conducive for their return to Syria.”

In 2018, the State of Kuwait is to date the largest donor for earmarked funding to the Syria situation response in Iraq.
A water treatment plant rehabilitated in Hawija

Hawija, 2 May 2018 - UNICEF’s Representative in Iraq, Mr. Peter Hawkins, and the Governor of Kirkuk, Mr. Rakan Al-Jubouri, opened a water treatment plant in Hawija that was rehabilitated by UNICEF and the Directorate of Water. The water plant will pump safe drinking water to 80,000 people as they return to their homes.

Startup Bootcamp begins ‘Entrepreneurship for All’ programme in Northern Iraq

Erbil, 8 May 2018 – Startup Bootcamp, an entrepreneurship training to promote development of innovative business ideas among young innovators, entrepreneurs and software developers from displaced, refugee and host communities, took place on 4-5 May in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The event was supported by IOM Iraq, and organized by Five One Labs, a start-up incubator based in Iraq that assists displaced and conflict affected entrepreneurs develop their businesses. More than 30 entrepreneurs from across Iraq and Syria received training in business plan development and coaching from mentors; they also had the opportunity to pitch ideas to panels of judges.

The training included: entrepreneurial mindset development, customer interview techniques, ideation, business model canvassing, prototyping and pitch development. Mentors and judges included local business leaders, innovation experts, development agency staff, academics, staff from the United States Consulate in Erbil and IOM staff.

In the weeks leading up to the training, participants were chosen through a rigorous selection process based on a proposed business idea, understanding of entrepreneurship and English proficiency.

Ideas included: e-commerce platforms for groceries, books, and other products; virtual reality rehabilitation games for people with disabilities; an education platform to teach soft skills and another to teach the Kurdish language; a dental marketplace; HR management systems; and a Syrian shipping business using an Uber-like business model to send documents with travellers.

The winner was determined in a lightning round face-off between the first-place winner from the individual competition – the creator of a weight loss game – against the first-place winners from the team competition. The winning team, Darwan Soap production, is developing and marketing a soap made of natural ingredients using traditional soap-making techniques. Team members include two junior physicians, a medical student and a business manager.

“During the Startup Bootcamp we studied our customer segment and built our business model. We are excited to develop this natural soap made from the seeds of a tree that grows in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq,” said Shehin Jihad, who initiated the idea. “We are using our medical knowledge to analyse potential ingredients that are helpful for people with sensitive skin and skin conditions,” she added.

First-place winners receive: membership in the TechHub co-working space in Erbil for one month, continued business mentoring from international business experts and entrepreneurs, modest funding to cover business expenses (USD 150), and an opportunity to apply for a USD 1,000 business grant to launch their ventures.

This Startup Bootcamp is part of the ‘Entrepreneurship for All’ project, which is managed by Five One Labs in cooperation with various community partners and sponsored by IOM, with funding from the US Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).

Entrepreneurship for All is a two-month long series of on-line and in-person business and leadership trainings across northern Iraq. Participants include Syrian refugees, displaced Iraqis and host community members; more than 200 people will participate. Training is provided in Arabic, Kurdish and English.

The project aims to build cohesion between entrepreneurs who have been internally displaced and the local community through entrepreneurial ventures that contribute to the local economy. In addition to the series of trainings for aspiring entrepreneurs, ten existing start-up companies launched by displaced and conflict-affected entrepreneurs will be offered advisory, legal and financial support to scale-up.

Entrepreneurship for All is implemented in the framework of the IOM 3RP programme supported by PRM. The overall aim of this programme is to provide Syrian refugees, IDPs and vulnerable host communities with access to education and employment opportunities.
National Development Plan (2018-2022) launched in Baghdad

Baghdad, 09 May 2018 – The Prime Minister of Iraq, Dr. Haidar Al-Abadi, launched today in Baghdad the National Development Plan (2018-2022). The plan defines strategic development goals of Iraq in the post-Daesh phase and establishes the foundations of effective development with social responsibility.

Greeting the attendees, Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General / Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, declared, “We stand ready to support you as we move forward together on the post-Daesh path of sustainable development, promoting equity between regions and groups, promoting inclusive development and justice, and ensuring that all citizens benefit from the fruits of development, and that indeed no one is left behind.”

FAO chief says building rural communities' resilience is crucial in conflict-ridden Near East

Rome, 10 May 2018 - Conflict has increased food insecurity in the Near East and to reverse this situation it is crucial to strengthen the resilience of poor, rural communities, including through social protection systems, FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva said today.

“Even in conflict situations, there is much we can do, to keep local food systems functioning and bring hope to affected populations. We need to keep farmers on their farms producing food,” Graziano da Silva said at the opening of FAO’s Regional Conference for the Near East which is being attended by ministers and other top officials from more than 30 countries.

Graziano da Silva also noted that in 2016, there were almost 66 million forcibly displaced people in the world with nearly 25 million originating from just five countries facing conflict in the Near East and North Africa region.

FAO's highest priority is to support countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goal Number 2 on ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition, and also promoting sustainable agriculture development, the Director-General said.

While peace remains the main prerequisite for countries in the Near East and North Africa to achieve Zero Hunger, the region also faces other challenges affecting its already limited resources to produce food. Fresh water availability in the region is only 10 percent of the world average - a situation that is not likely to improve as climate change impacts accelerate, and rapid urbanization and population growth continue.

In this regard, Graziano da Silva cited FAO launching the Regional Water Scarcity Initiative which has been endorsed by the League of Arab States and has been working well as a platform for collaboration and exchange of knowledge.

Australia substantially increases support to stabilization in Iraq

Baghdad, 8 May 2018 – The Government of Australia has contributed an additional USD 13.5 million (AUD 18 million) to the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which finances fast-track initiatives in areas of Iraq liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This brings Australia’s total contribution since 2015 to USD 16.5 million (AUD 22 million).

UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, said: “The progress being made is clearly visible across the country. Roads are being repaired, hospitals are reopening, electricity is being restored and people are returning to work. More than 60 percent of the almost 6 million people who fled during the conflict have returned home. UNDP deeply appreciates the timely and flexible funding provided by the Government of Australia, and while there remains a great deal of work to do, this generous contribution will help liberated areas get back on their feet.”

The Australian Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Dr. Joanne Loundes, said: “Australia is committed to the stabilisation and redevelopment of Iraq. On top of restoring essential public services and rehabilitating critical infrastructure in liberated areas, the FFS prioritises projects that meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including women. Gender equality and women’s empowerment is a core part of Australia’s foreign policy, economic diplomacy and development work and I welcome the opportunity to support work that directly contributes to this objective.”

At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the Funding Facility for Stabilization in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism. The Facility currently has more than 2,000 projects underway in 31 liberated cities and districts, helping local authorities to quickly rehabilitate essential infrastructure. Over 95 percent of all stabilization projects are carried out by local private sector companies, providing a key source of employment for local people.
Mudbricks houses pilot project’ site visit in Zummar

Zummar, 15 May 2018 – Today, UN-Habitat conducted a visit, joined by UNMAS and the Shelter Cluster of Iraq and with the support of UNHCR Iraq, to Zummar area in Nineveh governorate.

The mission aimed to assess the level of destruction in the villages where houses are traditionally built in dried mudbricks. During the visit, the team met with local authorities and returnees affected by the destruction of their houses. Displaced families have started to return to their villages of origin after the end of the military operations against the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL). Today, a significant number of households are living in tents alongside their destroyed houses. The Mukhtar of Aziziya village, Mr. Abdu Zia Ali, highlighted the importance to support families in this area:

“This is the poorest village in the area. All families were displaced around Mosul, when our houses were destroyed. We received these tents from the government, just before we came back here this year (2018). Here, we do not have decent houses and very limited access to safe drinking water, which made some of our kids sick. We have no school in the village, and have to walk 45 minutes to go to Zummar town, electricity is not working because the network is damaged. We are grateful for UN-Habitat, because this is the first time that we receive a visit since we came back to our village'.

Since the beginning of the conflict, a minimum of 60,000 houses have been damaged or destroyed in Iraq. Support to rehabilitation of damaged houses are necessary to encourage returns, reintegration and rebuild confidence between communities.

UN-Habitat is committed to support the Right to Adequate Housing for populations affected by armed violence. Under the project funded by the Iraqi Humanitarian Pool Fund (IHPF) and titled ‘Transitional shelters for extremely vulnerable families in Zummar area’, UN-Habitat will support the construction of 150 highly damaged or destroyed dried mudbricks houses to meet minimum shelter standards and support families to live in safety and with dignity.

IOM Iraq published its Social Cohesion Programme Annual Report for 2017

Baghdad, 15 May 2018 - The IOM Social Cohesion Programme aims to mitigate tension between IDPs, returnees and host community members, and to strengthen social cohesion within and among different communities. Expected outputs include improved access of IDPs, Returnees and Host Communities to social and recreational services, information on and opportunities for community engagement and dialogue, improved socioeconomic infrastructure, and increased capacity to diffuse tensions, manage conflict and channel stress and frustration effectively.

Focusing on Four Objectives
1. Strengthening the capacity of individuals and communities to cope with the ongoing crisis in Iraq.
2. Helping to mitigate tensions between IDPs and host community members and strengthening social cohesion.
3. Supporting the role of women in peace and security.
4. Increasing the understanding of IOM and the humanitarian community on community dynamics and the factors linked to the youth mobilization.

Program Insights
Countries that experience protracted conflict often suffer from economic underdevelopment and damaged assets. More critically, psychosocial welfare and social relations are often ruptured. After war, individuals and communities can become insular, leaders may start to rationalize that resources are for ‘us’ and not ‘them’, and parents may caution their children against the children of others. These cracks in the social fabric mean that even as the country starts to recover economically, citizens may not be willing to return to the coexistence and mutual trust they once had. In other words, after a civil war, not only the financial and human capitals but also social capital is often depleted. However, a breakdown in social relations is never a fait accompli. Individuals and communities often prove remarkably resilient; this is particularly the case in Iraq where a long practice of coexistence and mutual tolerance have retained an enduring legacy even in the recent years of conflict. The challenge for development actors is to recognize that post-conflict reconstruction is not just about repairing physical assets; more critically, it is about supporting communities to work towards common objectives, to which social cohesion is central.

IOM seeks to use community-based initiatives such as infrastructure rehabilitation and social service provision as tools of conflict mitigation and social repair. The foundation of this programming is a robust understanding of the sources of tension in each community, as well as the opportunities to bring people together. To this end, after completing the social cohesion assessments across four governorates IOM established five community centers in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Zummar, Khanaqin and Baquba. Fifty communities were surveyed and participants were asked about the interaction between different groups; triggers for stress and disputes; and ways in which people build and maintain positive community relations. The findings reflected both pressures and strengths within each community. Many IDPs spoke of the efforts made by host communities to include them: schools would add extra classrooms, hospitals welcomed all patients, and host communities made do with fewer hours of electricity as their grid shifted to incorporate new demands. IOM used these findings to identify infrastructure projects that might alleviate emotional and social tensions. Other findings informed the way IOM engages with local peacebuilders, and carry out activities that support healthy relationships within diverse communities. Ultimately, it is about seeing stabilization programming as a fundamentally social endeavor, and one that addresses underlying tensions. Full report is available at http://iomiraq.net/file/52954/download
Iraq’s Institutional Performance Management System endorsed for implementation across Iraq’s public sector

Baghdad, 23 May 2018 - The Council of Ministers has endorsed “Iraq Government-Wide Institutional Performance Management System” for immediate application across public sector institutions in Iraq. The system is a non-prescriptive business excellence framework for organizational management, designed to help organizations to become more competitive. It provides a framework that allows public sector institutions to determine their current level of excellence and identify areas for improvement.

With the technical assistance provided by Iraq Public Sector Modernization Program under UNDP, who shared international best practices and standards, the system was developed by the Council of Ministers Secretariat (CoMSEC), in consultation with key Iraqi stakeholders, including the Federal Board for Supreme Audit (FBSA). The system design was guided by the “European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)” standards. It was first piloted during the second half of 2017 in the ministries of Electricity, Youth & Sports and Trade. Lessons learned from the pilot were used to further refine the model for the implementation throughout the public sector.

UNDP Iraq supported the Government of Iraq’s preparedness to implement this innovative performance management system through a major capacity development program, which concluded on the 22nd of March, 2018. This program benefited a total of 142 staff from 21 federal ministries and CoMSEC who received training in the fundamentals and procedures of the institutional performance management.

The Government of Iraq’s institutional capacity was further strengthened through the specialized training of a team of 20 Iraqi staff from CoMSEC and FBSA who will be leading the implementation of the new performance management system. This team has successfully completed the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Assessor Training (EAT), the internationally recognized standard for performance management. With this training, the team will be equipped with the skills and knowledge required to effectively assess the public sector institutions in the year 2018 and beyond. Effective public sector management allows the Government to set clear goals, monitoring the activities of the ministries in order to better allow it to expand on successes and correct deficiencies. This helps ensure that all Iraqis are better served by their government.

This nationally-owned and -led initiative falls within the framework of UNDP Public Sector Modernization Program support to Government of Iraq to reinforce its mechanisms for accountability and efficiency. IPSM works to support more efficient, accountable and participatory governance at national and sub-national levels in Iraq.

EU, Ministry of Water Resources and UNESCO celebrating the official closing of the EU funded ASHRI-2 Project

Baghdad, 28 May 2018 - The European Union, the Ministry of Water Resources and UNESCO have marked the official closing of the EU-funded project entitled “Advanced Hydrogeological Survey of Groundwater Resources in Iraq - Phase II (ASHRI-2)”. Building upon UNESCO’s long experience and studies in the field of drought and water resources’ management in Iraq, ASHRI-2 has been addressing the geoscientific assessment of Iraq’s groundwater resources, in view of water shortage and scarcity, and its dangerous outcome on socio-economic and cultural development, health, environment and eco-systems.

Since its launch in November 2013, ASHRI-2 has been delivering critical data, information and knowledge management tools required for sound management of groundwater resources in Iraq and deployed state-of-the-art methodologies and techniques in geoscientific mapping of groundwater resources, and IT-based database management, forming important outcomes.

The Government of Iraq representative Mr. Dhafer A. Hussain, said in his speech “This project is a very important step in the path of optimal investment of national resources, and mapping the Iraq’s most important groundwater system, which, overall, underlie much of the national territory and which represent an important component of the total water supply of the republic.”

The EU Chargé d’Affaires, Mr. Tomas Reyes Ortega highlighted that: “Hydrological resources, including groundwater, are one of Iraq’s many treasures, which if efficiently and properly managed can have an everlasting impact in the livelihoods of the Iraqi people”

“ASHRI-2 has touched on the complexity of managing water resources, addressing the knowledge about groundwater, the ability to manage it technically sound, and the improvement of water sector related steering competence, towards adequate sector management and policy development. ASHRI-2 has equipped the beneficiaries with applied international best practices, standard procedures and normative methodologies, to be built upon,” said Louise Haxthausen, Director of the UNESCO Office for Iraq.

In his closing notes, Dr. Andreas Lück, the project manager of ASHRI-2, appreciated the continued support by the Iraqi Government making the implementation of the project a great achievement for the national efforts towards the development of capabilities in the sustainable management of limited water resources.

Through an EU contribution of EUR 5 million, the project has been validating and updating essential data and information on Iraq’s groundwater resources, improving the governments’ management competence in this field. By the end of ASHRI-2, UNESCO Office for Iraq aims to harness a more developed knowledge base on groundwater resources, and to provide evidence based policy guidance and recommendations to the Government. Both, the Government of Iraq, and the EU, have expressed their interest and readiness to further cooperate on the development of technical capabilities, and overall institutional steering competence of the water sector authorities, namely the Ministry of Water Resources in Baghdad, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources in Erbil.
FAO improves rural livelihoods, nutrition and food security for refugees, IDPs and vulnerable hosting families

Baghdad, 28 May 2018 - Maryam and her son Abdul-Khudher happily receive poultry from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in their home in Iraq. This is part of the Organization’s work to improve rural livelihoods, nutrition and food security for refugees, IDPs and vulnerable hosting families.

Hygiene improves

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, many refugees have fled to Iraq. Due to limited space, families are living in crowded conditions, which increases the risk of disease. The

Syrian refugees, displaced and host communities in Iraq graduate from IOM vocational training

Erbil, 29 May 2018 – Throughout May, students in Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah governorates of Iraq celebrated their graduation from different vocational training courses run by IOM, the UN Migration Agency. A total of 273 graduates – including Syrian refugees, displaced Iraqi and host community members – completed courses in information technology, English language, mobile phone maintenance, small engine repair and tailoring. Each course lasted between four and eight weeks.

“The vocational trainings offer young people the opportunity to enhance their skills through market-driven training programmes,” said Gerard Waite, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission. “These trainings are targeted at young adults with secondary education, who want to develop technical skills, or those who are skilled and are looking to enhance their knowledge,” added Waite.

Online English courses were conducted in four refugee camps around Erbil, while vocational trainings took place at the Swedish Academy Training Centre in Erbil, which is supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Participants received graduation certificates and start-up packages, such as tablets, mechanic toolkits, and mobile repair equipment, to help them seek employment or start their own business.

“In Syria, I was an interior designer. After we fled to Iraq, I worked as a designer, but unfortunately business slowed down and I lost my job. Now, paying rent is difficult,” said Nashwan, who left Syria with his family of five in 2012. “I have a diploma in computers and IT, so I participated in the vocational training on mobile phone maintenance. I learned a lot about both software and hardware. The training had a positive impact on my mental state because I was able to meet and communicate with new people. After being unemployed for a long time, I finally feel confident that I can earn a living. I am even thinking of opening a business,” Nashwan added.

Ahmed Salah was displaced from Salah al-Din in 2014 when ISIL attacked his town. He completed the vocational training for English language in Erbil. Rojin Abdulla is a Syrian refugee who lives with her four children in Dohuk. “In Syria we used to live with dignity but because of the war, we are now refugees. I left Syria with my children in the summer of 2014 and joined my husband who came before us. One of my friends told me about this tailoring course; it was like a dream come true. I always wanted to learn sewing. The training was useful and fun, and I made a lot of friends,” said Rojin. “Sewing is both a science and art. I can’t wait to start tailoring.”

IOM Iraq’s Regional Refugee and Resilience Programme (3RP) aims to provide Syrian refugees, Iraqi internally displaced persons and vulnerable host communities with access to education and employment opportunities. The programme contributes to the long-term self-reliance of individuals and communities and to strengthening the role of the Government in delivering basic services to refugees and host communities. Through efforts to enhance human capital and support local economies, the programme contributes to improving social cohesion in the communities hosting Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Northern Iraq.

Statistics from the recent programme evaluation report show that the employment rate of former graduates has increased from 20 to 44 per cent. Meanwhile, around 47 per cent of the former beneficiaries of training courses reported an increase in their income. In 2016 and 2017, more than 1,300 beneficiaries including refugees, IDPs and host community members received livelihood support, including small business support, employability training, business associations, greenhouse activities and cash-work.

The 3RP is funded by the US State Department, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).
Development of the agricultural sector in the focus

Baghdad, 31 May 2018 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in cooperation with the World Bank and the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture, organized today a meeting with Iraqi private sector, represented by businessmen, business owners, economic and financial institutions concerned with the agricultural sector. This meeting aimed to develop the means of investment in this sector and solve the obstacles that it was facing.

Mr. Fadel El-Zubi, the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Iraq, stated that this forum aimed to discuss the problems that the agriculture sector in Iraq was facing especially with regard to support funding and access to solutions. He emphasized that private sector intervention should create an agricultural sector that help the growth of the Iraqi economy through different agricultural projects in Iraq, such as dairy, dates and other agricultural projects in addition to livestock projects.

Mr. El-Zubi added that the meeting came out with a set of recommendations such as the setting up of laws and policies for the import and export operations, emphasize on research centers for animal production as well as the eradication of genetic deterioration in livestock sector, focusing on the market and the production life cycle also opening the roads and markets for exporting.

Further, he added that the meeting highlighted the importance of the cooperation with intentional banks in order to obtain global banking facilities and services to develop the agriculture sector in Iraq. In addition to linkage the Iraqi agricultural institutions with foreign institutions and companies to bring tangible technology and expertise in managing their products.

Dr. Hamid Hdwan, the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, said that the ministry was seeking to find appropriate solutions to the investment challenges faced by the private sector in Agriculture.

UNDP support to Iraq's Six National Report on Convention on Biodiversity

Baghdad, 05 June 2018 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment conducted the first technical workshop on drafting the Sixth National Report (6NR) of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) to start the critical report preparation consistent with the highest standards of scientific and gender-responsive data analysis, with the purpose of informing the fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBOS) and the Global Biodiversity Strategy of 2021 – 2030.

In the two-day workshop participated international experts, a cross-section of national biodiversity experts, senior representatives from the Ministries of Health and Environment, Agriculture, Planning, Water Resources, Higher Education, Iraqi Universities, several academic and research institutions and a number of NGOs working on biodiversity. All stakeholders who will play an important role in the process as data providers and in drafting the report chapters. The workshop was organized by the UNDP-Environment, Energy and Climate Change Program and funded by UNDP-Global Environment Facility (GEF).

In his opening speech, The Deputy Minister for Health and Environment Dr. Jassim Al Falahi said: “Iraq's commitment to the Convention on Biodiversity requires us to complete the sixth national report within the time set by the General Secretariat of the Convention, and to mobilize all the necessary resources to complete the report”. He added: “the report will provide an opportunity to identify what has been accomplished by all relevant stakeholders in the field of biodiversity conservation, for the first three years of implementation phase of the National Strategy for Biodiversity 2015-2020”.

The Head of UNDP - Energy, Environment and Climate Change programme, Mr. Tarik ul-Islam highlighted the importance of adopting a participatory approach for the preparation of the Sixth National Report by the Government of Iraq. He said: “The report will benefit from the participation of all professional bodies to ensure that inputs in the report adhere to the highest standards of scientific analysis and global quality, leading to a report that Iraq will be truly proud of”.

The project was launched in March 2018 under the leadership of the Deputy Minister for Health and Environment of Iraq. A project steering committee for preparation of the 6NR Project has been established. Roles and responsibilities and the work plan has been approved for preparation of drafting the Sixth National Report, following a nationally-led and nationally-owned process.

Integrating gender mainstreaming perspective, the project focus on gender-responsive planning, gender-disaggregated data analysis, as well as on the involvement of women as stakeholders and participants in various project teams. In addition, the report will reflect Iraq’s contributions to the attainment of the global (Aichi Biodiversity Targets) to reflect the main issues addressed by the SDGs and Agenda 2030.

With financial support from the GEF, the CBD Secretariat has received 181 fifth national reports. The information received from Parties has been used in the formulation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the globally agreed framework to conserve, restore and sustainably use biodiversity and enhance its benefits for people.
**UN-Habitat rehabilitated significantly damaged houses in Teleskuf**

**Teleskuf, 10 June 2018** - Today, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) officially handed over a total of 27 housing units in Teleskuf, Nineveh Governorate, rehabilitated under the project titled “Promoting Urban Recovery and Resilience in Newly Liberated Areas in Iraq”, generously funded by the Government of Japan.

In Teleskuf, based on the guidelines developed by the Shelter Cluster, UN-Habitat engineers identified and selected for rehabilitation 27 war-damaged houses of vulnerable returnees that were categorized as having suffered “major and severe damage”. In total, 137 vulnerable returnees benefitted from the action, including 31 women and 75 children. During the handover ceremony, Mr. Bashar Hamid Mahmud Kiki, the Head of the Provisional Council of Nineveh Governorate, said “I am very pleased that Teleskuf was one of the towns selected for conducting rehabilitation work and I suggest that the UN-Habitat’s work should extend to cover more parts of Nineveh province. Mr. Bashar praised the fact that the UN-Habitat’s presence in the region is clear evidence that the region is safe and life is back to normal.

“When safety, stability and wise management are offered, life returns and everyone can live in peace and stability.” – Mr. Adel Marruki Jojjo, Mayor of Tilkayaf stated in his speech – Great efforts have been made by the central Government, Kurdistan Regional Government and humanitarian organizations to eliminate the aggression and destruction which was left behind by ISIL. We gather here today in Teleskuf to celebrate and express our gratitude to all those who contributed to the reconstruction and the return of the people, especially to the Government of Japan and UN-Habitat.

Mr. Natiq Qeryaguse Feranci, Representative of the Christian Affairs Office in Teleskuf, voiced his appreciation to the Peshmerga forces for providing safety and security in Teleskuf and thanked the UN-Habitat team for their role in rehabilitating the houses in such short time.

His Excellency Mr. Iwai Fumio, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, expressed his sincere appreciation for all who contributed to this project in Teleskuf and his hope that this project will promote recovery and social stabilization there, while recalling the handover ceremony of housing units rehabilitated in Bartella under the same project which he attended on 12 March, 2018. He added that Japan is determined to support Iraq’s effort for serving displaced/returning people, refugees and host communities in Iraq.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Erfan Ali, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, thanked the Government of Japan for its generous contribution to the Housing Rehabilitation Project emphasizing how it constitutes an important step toward the recovery of the town, the community, and the families in Teleskuf. The project strengthens UN-Habitat’s response to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus in Nineveh Governorate and Iraq. Overall, 2,377 war-damaged houses have been or are being rehabilitated since 2017, supporting the dignified and sustainable return of more than 17,000 people in Iraq. Dr Ali also highlighted how 37 beneficiaries in this town were employed by the project to partake to the rehabilitation work, contributing to rebuild their livelihoods.

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**IFC Invests $269 million in Iraq to reconstruct telecom operations and drive growth**

**Baghdad, 26 June 2018** — IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, is providing a financing package of $269 million to Zain Iraq, a leading mobile network operator, to help reconstruct the country’s telecom operations and spur economic growth.

IFC arranged a $269 million debt package including $100 million from IFC’s own account, and $169 million in mobilization. The mobilized amount includes a B Loan from Arab Bank, a loan through the IFC Managed Co-Lending Portfolio Program, a new syndications platform that offers institutional investors the ability to passively participate in IFC’s future senior loan portfolio, and a parallel loan from DEG and Finnfund. The financing will help Zain Iraq enhance the capacity and quality of its 3G network and expand coverage to unserved areas, as well as helping the company modernize its networks and customer service in northern Iraq.

“This financing from IFC and partners will help us strengthen our footprint, modernize infrastructure, and provide a better quality of service to our customers,” said Ali Al-Zahid, the CEO of Zain Iraq. “It will also enhance access to higher quality broadband, a key enabler of broad economic activity, for both consumers and businesses.”

Iraq is one of the least developed telecom markets in the Middle East region due to the fragile security situation, and mobile network operators have struggled to maintain their networks and have refrained from investing heavily in infrastructure.

“Supporting infrastructure development in Iraq is an essential building block of the reconstruction effort,” said Mouayed Makhlufo, IFC Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa. “Restoring and enhancing broadband infrastructure can have a substantial multiplier effect on the economy through increased connectivity and reduced transaction costs, enhanced flows of information, and more efficient and effective matching of market players, among many other much needed benefits.”

By arranging and mobilizing a seven-year loan in a country where long-term financing options remain limited, IFC’s investment will support Zain Iraq’s growth plans, while sending a positive signal to domestic and international players at a critical point in the country’s recovery.

Zain Iraq has been an IFC partner since 2011, when IFC arranged a $400 million syndicated loan for the company. This included mobilization of $195 million from DEG, Proparco, FMO, and the Infrastructure Credit Facility.
CTED and UNOCT return to Iraq to follow-up on recent high-level visit

Baghdad, 7 May 2018 - In follow-up to their recent joint high-level consultations in Iraq, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) conducted a joint mission to Baghdad in early May 2018, with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The objective of the joint mission was to identify specific capacity-building projects to be implemented in accordance with the counter-terrorism needs identified by the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

The delegation consulted with the Iraqi authorities on the delivery of targeted and results-oriented technical assistance to be implemented alongside existing assistance initiatives, in consultation with local actors. The technical assistance will address countering terrorism financing; countering terrorist narratives; and developing youth skills, through technical and vocational training, to support Iraq’s efforts to prevent violent extremism. It will also address the development of a national counter-terrorism strategy and support Iraq’s efforts to prevent and respond to the use of weapons of mass destruction for terrorist purposes.

The joint team also met with the Mayor of Fallujah, to discuss targeted youth engagement and skills development, as well as with the United Nations Country Team, donors, international organizations, and civil society representatives.

The follow-up mission demonstrates the commitment of the UNOCT and CTED to provide rapid follow-up to the high-level visit of March 2018, within the framework of the sustained engagement of the United Nations in Iraq.

Enhancing police role and responsibilities in criminal investigations in Iraq

Baghdad, 10 May 2018 - The Ministry of the Interior of Iraq and UNDP held a workshop on establishing standard operating procedures (SOP) for criminal investigations.

The need for developing an SOP on Criminal Investigations for the police had been identified as a priority recommendation in Criminal Justice Systems within the government’s on going security sector reform efforts. The draft SOP aims to outline the roles of the operation room, first crime responders, crime scene technicians and lead investigators in criminal investigations. It sets standards on victim and witness treatment, suspect interviewing and special investigative measures.

Participants reviewed the draft SOP and made numerous recommendations to clarify roles and responsibilities. Participants agreed on an approach for its finalisation by late July, overseen by the Criminal Justice Committee, with support and feedback from UNDP, the Higher Judicial Council and the Ministry of Justice. The agreed document will then be presented to the Minister of Interior for final approval and to ensure its implementation.

UNDP’s Criminal Justice Adviser, Andreas Kirsch-Wood, emphasised that “police departments must take the initiative themselves and undertake the tasks assigned to them in the SOP, unless the investigating judge provides specific orders to expand, redirect or limit the investigations.”

Participants from MOI comprised heads and representatives of key police departments involved in conducting criminal investigations, including the police affairs agency, forensic evidence department, the anti-crime section, the counter-narcotics directorate, and the Federal Intelligence and Investigation Agency.

Major General Ziad, who heads the training and qualification directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, stated that his Ministry “will work to speed up crime investigations by improving investigation procedures as much as possible, and thereby enhancing the principle of justice and security.”

UNDP Rule of Law Programme supports a comprehensive programme on security sector reform in Iraq to assist the Government in advancing its Security Sector Reform Programme. The overall programme of work is implemented through collaborative partnerships with the Office of the National Security Advisor, Ministry of Interior, Higher Judicial Council, Ministry of Justice, Parliamentary Security and Defence Committee, Iraqi civil society and a range of International Partners.
Conflict prevention through security sector reform is a priority, UNODC Chief says at Crime Commission

Vienna, Austria, 18 May 2018 - On the side-lines of this week’s Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), UNODC organized a high-level event on “Security Sector Reform as a Tool for Conflict Prevention”. Sponsored by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Government of Slovakia, the event focused on the role of security sector reform and governance as a tool for conflict prevention, particularly in the context of transnational organized crime.

Speaking at the event, Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of UNODC, said: “Supporting conflict prevention through security sector reform is a highly relevant priority, which is fully in line with the UN Secretary-General’s vision.” Describing the event as an opportunity to discuss current efforts, challenges and future prospects for security sector reform, he said: “UNODC support prioritizes national ownership and regional approaches, both of which are critical for sustainability and effectiveness in addressing transnational threats.”


Also speaking at the event, Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations in New York, stressed: “A well-governed and accountable security sector is a pre-condition for addressing transnational organized crime effectively. Similarly, Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq, emphasized the need for ownership, partnership and an inclusive approach “in order to effectively reach a security environment”.

Also addressing the side event were Jabir Hemaidawi, Permanent Representative of Iraq to the UN in Vienna; and Masood Ahmad Azizi, Afghanistan’s Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. They called upon the international community to provide further support, which in turn, will help Afghanistan and Iraq effectively implement the reforms.

The panel discussion was organized in the context of the “Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace” as one of the goals of the security sector reform and restructuring of the UN’s peace and security pillar.

UNMAS in Iraq - supporting the safe and dignified return of displaced people

Baghdad, May 2018 - More than 5.8 million displaced people have fled their homes since the recent outbreak of conflict in Iraq in 2014. Military operations and heavy aerial attacks have resulted in explosive hazard contamination, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) placed during the ISIL occupation continue to hamper humanitarian access and pose a serious threat to the returning population.

The scale, complexity and density of explosive contamination is on an unprecedented and previously unseen scale. The explosive contamination encountered ranges from conventional ammunition that has been fired but has failed to function to complex IEDs that have been placed individually or as part of extensive belts. All represent great challenges for the teams carrying out survey and clearance.

Addressing the threat from explosive hazards in liberated areas saves lives and enables critical humanitarian, stabilization and development initiatives to support the Government of Iraq.

Delayed removal of explosive hazards compromises the ability for those who have been displaced to return, as well as for the Government of Iraq and the international community to undertake critical post-conflict interventions.

UNMAS Iraq was formally established in June 2015, at the request of the United Nations in Iraq, to lead the UN efforts in collaboration with the Government to mitigate explosive threats in the country, as well as to support capacity enhancement of national and regional mine action authorities. The work carried out by civilian operators complements the work already undertaken by the
UNMAS in Iraq - supporting the safe and dignified return of displaced people

Ministry of Defence Iraqi Security Forces, and the Ministry of Interior Local Police and Civil Defence. The UNMAS Iraq programme focuses on enabling humanitarian and stabilization interventions to support the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to areas previously under ISIL control. This specifically includes the following priority areas:

- Provide explosive hazard management response in support of humanitarian and stabilization efforts
- Deliver risk education at the community level and national/regional level
- Enhance Government entities’ capacity to manage, regulate and coordinate an explosive hazard management response.

Due to the nature of threats posed by explosive hazards, UNMAS teams are among the first responders allowing the humanitarian community and local authorities to intervene quickly and efficiently to help civilians.

Considering the levels of contamination reported in liberated areas, displaced people returning home require the Government of Iraq, UNMAS and mine action operators to continue to survey, mark and clear areas to enable rehabilitation of key infrastructure such as roads, power lines, water treatment plants, schools and hospitals permitting access to basic services.

Risk education has also been provided to IDPs and to displaced people who have returned home. UNMAS and its partners reach people through direct sessions and digital media campaigns to provide accurate information on the presence of explosive hazards and what to do if they encounter a suspected dangerous item. Risk education materials vary depending on the audience and time of year. During Ramadan, messaging was placed on water bottles and packages of dates to hand out to people on the move. UNMAS, in coordination with the Kurdish national authority, prepared a set of safety messages for Erbil International Airport targeting those who came from abroad during summer months to visit family.

Additionally, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Handicap International (HI) and UNMAS jointly developed three video clips to be used on screens within the camps, where available, and via digital media platforms.

Fallujah Response

When Fallujah, a city in the Iraqi province of Al-Anbar was officially announced liberated from ISIL, UNMAS deployed an emergency response capacity for removal of identified explosive hazards, including IEDs, in response to UN stabilization priorities.

The explosive hazard management activities have enabled the reconstruction and access to key infrastructure such as the Fallujah new bridge, which is used by thousands of commercial and private vehicles every day. This bridge was destroyed and 44 IEDs were found around the area, with a total of 380-400kg homemade explosives. The IEDs on and under the bridge were cleared, allowing it to be repaired.

This bridge is the only connection between Baghdad and Al-Anbar Province through Fallujah and is of high importance for the economy of the province. In a one-hour period in June 2017, 954 cars, 341 small trucks, 305 pick-up trucks, 219 commercial large trucks and 102 pedestrians crossed over the bridge.

Most recently, through clearance of areas that were suspected to have IEDs, UNMAS enabled engineers to safely access and repair the fibre optic cable that runs from East Fallujah towards Baghdad.

When the cable was initially accessed, the cable engineers introduced a lazer beam to determine the next break that required repairing. UNMAS then cleared a box around the location of the broken cable to allow mechanical excavation to take place in order for the engineers to examine the cable. The lazer was then re-introduced to determine the subsequent breaks in the cable.

On 15 October 2017, the Fallujah Communications Center opened, leading to the provision of 3,000 phone and internet services within the city of Fallujah, which was made possible through the repair of the fiber optic cable.

The fuel station near the entrance to Fallujah city was closed for three years due to the conflict and heavy IED contamination. 28 IEDs were neutralized and removed, and another five destroyed in-situ, with a total of 435 kg of homemade explosives.

One month after its clearance, the government-owned fuel station was able to operate again. Today, it services over 300 vehicles a day with 12 pumps, facilitating the safe journeys of hundreds of daily travellers. 10,000 litres of fuel and 21,000 litres of diesel are sold on average every day.

“We had almost lost all hope to return [to our jobs]. We expected that the station would be blown up because of how difficult it would be to clear all the contamination from it. You cleared it in a way that gave us our jobs back.” Mr. Ali, the Station Manager. Fifteen workers and five administrative staff are employed at the station, improving the living conditions of their families (totalling 220 individuals).
UNMAS in Iraq - supporting the safe and dignified ... (continued)

Mosul Response
As soon as areas in Mosul became accessible, UNMAS teams conducted explosive hazard assessments to provide safe access for humanitarian actors. When UNMAS first commenced work in western Mosul, assessment teams and implementing partners encountered unprecedented amounts of IEDs. They found hospitals, bridges, schools and water treatment plants contaminated with IEDs left behind by ISIL. The IEDs, until removed, prevented the rehabilitation of the facilities to provide clean water, electricity and health services to the community.

One of the first infrastructures cleared by UNMAS teams was the Al-Shifa Hospital Complex in West Mosul. The hospital, which used to be one of the most modern hospitals in Iraq and dates back to the 1930s, is reported to have been used as ISIL’s headquarters in West Mosul and as a result suffered severe damage.

The complex includes a dozen hospitals (surgery, maternity, obstetrics, fertility, training and oncology), clinics and staff quarters, a blood bank, a burn and plastic surgery unit, and an X-ray unit. Other infrastructures are currently compensating for the loss of this hospital complex and the pressure on surrounding hospitals is enormous.

UNMAS found and cleared over 2,500 explosive hazard items ranging from improvised hand grenades to missiles. This intervention enabled the Ministry of Health to remove vital hospital equipment and relocate it to Al-Khansa hospital in East Mosul to prevent looting. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Health plan to fully rehabilitate and furnish the maternity section, burns unit, X-ray unit and the fertility centre within the complex.

UNMAS additional interventions include delivering training about explosive hazards to ‘cash for work’ contractors who will clear up. UNMAS also provides advice and information to UNDP’s engineers who visit the hospital to ensure they conduct their assessment safely.

Al-Khansa hospital, one of the largest hospitals in Mosul, was another key infrastructure site to be cleared from explosive hazards. The hospital was burned and looted, leaving it in need of much rehabilitation. At the same time, IEDs were suspected to be present in different parts of the hospital. The health facility has been made inaccessible to the population who was deprived from hospital cares for several months.

Following UNMAS intervention, UNDP has started rehabilitation work on the hospital. Al-Khansa serves as the main provider for maternity and paediatric care for the region. It is estimated that 500,000 women, girls, boys and men will benefit from improved healthcare services as a result of the rehabilitation of this facility.

The work of the Ministry of Justice is fundamental for building the foundation for long term stability and development in Iraq. Clearing the High Court in West Mosul from explosive hazards was a priority for the ministry and will benefit Ninewa province as well as the justice system in the country.

An explosive hazard assessment in August 2017 identified a significant number of explosive hazards, including 44 suicide belts and vests, nine IED charges and 64 switches, 231 mortar rounds, 48 rockets, 72 air-dropped improvised munitions, 220 fuses and 109 grenades.

UNMAS intervention enabled UNDP to begin rehabilitation. Access gained following the assessment led to land deeds being found, which has significant implication for the returning populations, providing them with legal proof of ownership of their property.

Following the battle for Mosul, Al Qaysoor Water Treatment Plant was not functional. More than 300,000 people were deprived from clean and safe water, which had dramatic health consequences for the people who voluntarily or involuntarily stayed during the conflict, as well as returning displaced. UNMAS was able to clear the land contaminated with explosive hazards, enabling engineers to safely access and rehabilitate the water treatment plant which is now providing safe water to 34 neighbourhoods in eastern Mosul, which represents 1/6 of the city.

In Mosul, more than 24 million square metres were searched and cleared allowing stabilization activities to begin, and enabling families to return home and resume their lives.

The Fine Arts school in eastern Mosul, which had been closed for several months, recently re-opened after being cleared of explosive hazards by UNMAS implementing partners. Approximately 900 students are currently studying at the university, but much of it is destroyed and needs to be rebuilt or have equipment replaced.

Challenges
The scale, scope and complexity of the explosive contamination in liberated areas is significant, and exceeds existing and available national explosive hazard management capacities. The complex IED fabrication in Iraq is unprecedented, with security forces and civilians suffering heavy losses as a result of the widespread use of these devices. This previously unseen scale and complexity of contamination requires a comprehensive explosive hazard management response as a first step to address the problem before full-fledged humanitarian, stabilization and development assistance efforts can proceed. UNMAS has been working with the Government of Iraq to create conditions to increase the number of civilian operators permitting for accelerated clearance in liberated areas. In western Mosul, UNMAS has already cleared over 25,000 items. As removal of explosive hazards accelerates, the issue of growing stockpiles becomes increasingly prominent as non-military entities are not allowed to utilize explosives, meaning they cannot destroy items as they clear them. Near Hawija, UNMAS was recently shown a stockpile of over 12,000 items of explosive remnants of war and IEDs that had been located and removed by the police and civil defense. We commend the Government of Iraq for their efforts to clear numerous dangerous items before people return home and call on the international community to provide training and resources to the Iraqi Security Forces to deal with the exponentially growing stockpiles of explosive hazards.
UNMAS in Iraq - supporting the safe and dignified ... (continued)

"The Iraqi children, women and men who are eagerly waiting to return home are our motivation. We know that they need UNMAS support to be able go back home. We keep that in mind in every effort we make, whether in mobilizing resources, providing training to the Ministry of Interior, issuing contracts and grants, providing risk education in IDP camps or removing IEDs.” - UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, Pehr Lodhammar.

Thank You UNMAS hard work and dedication to secure the environment and protect communities in Iraq would have not been possible without the strong support of the Governments of Australia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Portugal, Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom. Since inception, UNMAS has secured $104M of which $71M was secured in 2017. In 2018, UNMAS has $42.8M in secured and pledged funds and is seeking an additional $216M to support survey and clearance, risk education and capacity enhancement of Government as well as support the Recovery and Resilience Programme.

Denmark delegation visits Mosul

Mosul, 10 May 2018 - UNMAS, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organized the first visit to Mosul for the Government of Denmark. The Government of Denmark has provided multi-year funding to UNMAS since 2016, which has enhanced the ability of teams to appropriately respond and adapt to the rapidly changing environment in liberated cities, such as Mosul, in collaboration with the Government of Iraq, regional authorities, the international humanitarian community and mine action organizations.

Visit to Mosul by the delegation of the European Union

Mosul, 11 May 2018 - The mandates of UNMAS and UNESCO have been brought closer together following the deliberate destruction and booby-trapping of ancient sites by ISIL using explosives.

Security Council Resolution 2347 (March 2017) on “Maintenance of international peace and security: destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict”, is the first ever resolution adopted by the Security Council to focus on cultural heritage making specific reference to “the serious threat posed to cultural heritage by landmines and unexploded ordnance.”

On 2 May, UNMAS, UNESCO and UN Habitat organized a joint visit to the Old City of Mosul for the European Union. The process to rehabilitate culturally significant sites, such as those in the Old City of Mosul, will be lengthy and will require close collaboration within the UN Iraq family. Previous post-conflict rubble removal projects have relied on destroyed infrastructure being fed into rock crushing machines, which will not be possible for these historical sites. The cleanup will require manual labor with on-site explosive experts thus solidifying the relationship between UNESCO, UN Habitat and UNMAS specifically to work in the Old City of Mosul.

Mr. Esben B. Skivild, Senior Stabilization Advisor from the Government of Denmark, visited UNMAS implementing partner, Danish Demining Group (DDG), who highlighted the importance of a recently completed, ‘The Forest’ recreational park in eastern Mosul, a popular location for families to visit.

Mr. Skivild also received a briefing on clearance and rehabilitation activities at Al Shifa Hospital complex. Al Shifa Hospital complex is one of the biggest projects UNMAS and UNDP have been working on in western Mosul since the liberation of the city. During the visit, Mr. Skivild met with the UNDP cash-for-work employees who had received risk education from UNMAS prior to starting rehabilitation work at Al Shifa Hospital complex and Jamhouriya police station. The work at Qatheb al Ban and Ghizlani Water Treatment Plant was also highlighted, two sites previously cleared by UNMAS and currently being rehabilitated by UNDP.
UNMAS life-saving work in Iraq continues with support from the Government of Australia

Baghdad, 13 May 2018 - The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) welcomes the contribution of AUD 11 million (USD 8.6 million) from the Government of Australia dedicated to explosive hazard management in support of humanitarian and stabilization efforts.

Approximately 2.1 million civilians are still displaced due to the recent conflict and unsafe conditions to allow their return. A nation-wide intentions survey was carried out by REACH in partnership with the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster in internally displaced person (IDP) camps between 12 December 2017 and 14 January 2018.

52% of people interviewed were not planning to return home. Of the 52% that will not return, 21% stated this was due to the possible presence of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexplored ordnance. In effect, 1 in 10 IDPs in the camps surveyed who are not leaving the camp are not returning home because of the fear of explosive hazard contamination in or nearby their homes.

The Government of Iraq maintains explosive hazard management capacities within a number of government entities and established mine action authorities, though the demand for assistance far exceeds the resources available.

The three-year contribution from Australia, UNMAS will conduct survey and clearance of liberated areas suspected to be affected by explosive hazards. This is in direct support of the Government priorities as outlined in the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) “National Strategic and Executive Plan for Mine Action for 2017-2021” which highlights DMA’s aim to be able to survey, mark and render safe 50% of known explosive hazard contamination by 2021.

Simultaneously, in collaboration with DMA, risk education will be provided to those living in and returning to liberated areas, directly mitigating the threat posed by explosive hazards and IEDs. The efforts will specifically target affected communities known or suspected to have an explosive hazard or IED threat.

The Australian Ambassador to Iraq, Dr. Joanne Loundes said: “Australia is proud to partner with UNMAS and provide AUD11 million over three years towards critical demining activities in Iraq. Even though Iraqi territory has been liberated from ISIL, explosives remain hidden in homes, schools, hospitals and roads in former ISIL controlled areas. Unless these areas are cleared, people cannot return home, stabilisation and reconstruction efforts will stall and the human toll from this devastating conflict will continue.”

“Through this generous contribution, the Government of Australia will further enable UNMAS to respond to explosive hazards through survey and clearance and in turn enable safe and dignified returns” stated Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager.

Faces of Mine Action in Iraq

Baghdad, 30 May 2018 - From the legacy of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) left as a result of the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf War to the thousands of complex improvised explosive devices (IEDs) currently being found in areas liberated from Da’esh occupation, Iraq is considered as one of the most contaminated countries in the world.

Now the conflict is over, Iraq has entered a new phase and is putting all its efforts into stabilization and reconstruction. However, clearance of explosive hazards must come first before rehabilitation can commence and is crucial for the safe, dignified and voluntary returns of displaced people.

It is in this context that governmental entities, nationals and internationals, women and men, victims and professionals have gathered together for a common cause to create a safe environment and secure communities. They all have stories on mine action in Iraq to tell. These are some of their stories.

Omer Abdu Karem, 27 years old

Omer is from eastern Mosul and has been working in mine action for the past three months. He used to work in the perfume department at the local market. He lived in Mosul through the Da’esh occupation and during the nine-month battle for the city in 2017.

“This job is very important” Omer says. “I do this work for three reasons. First, because I want to help my country. Second, I know what this type of work is like and I know what Da’esh did before. And third, the money from this type of work is good.”

He is part of one of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) teams conducting clearance in the heavily destroyed Old City of Mosul.

Heam Fadhel, 28 years old

Heam is from east Mosul and part of a crew of 50 men and 150 women coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Funding Facility for Stabilization mechanism to help rehabilitate Al Shifa Hospital Complex, in west Mosul.

She was widowed after Da’esh killed
Faces of Mine Action in Iraq (continued)

Marwa Abdurazzaq, 30 years old
Marwa is from Basra in southern Iraq and has been working in mine action since 2015. She works in the human resources department for Norwegian People Aid (NPA) and used to work for Save the Children.

Her husband and was left to look after her four children alone. She has been working on the project for three weeks. “This is helping me feed my family” Heam says. “I am trying to work for my kids.”

This type of work makes me feel hopeful for my city. This is what I want for my city and my people.” The hospital was previously the largest center for healthcare in the city and was heavily damaged during fighting between the Iraqi forces and Da’esh during 2017.

Muayad Hassan, 37 years old
Muayad is from Baghdad and has been part of the UNMAS team for three months. “I see that it [this work] supports the hospitals and the schools in Fallujah and Ramadi” Muayad says. “We [UNMAS] support all the people of Iraq.”

He also likes how much learning is involved in his job and the equality between women and men in the programme.

Qusay Wesam, 35 years old
Qusay is from eastern Mosul and has been providing risk education for the past ten months. He lived under Da’esh in Mosul for a year before fleeing to Baghdad. He used to play football for the Iraqi national team and practices Mixed Martial Arts.

“I have two children and I see all these kids as my sons and daughters,” he said while standing in a classroom in western Mosul. “I have a master’s degree but there is no job in the career for me yet, but I am over here doing this to help the kids.”

Bilal Mustafa Ahmed, 45 years old
Bilal is from Soran in northern Iraq and has been working in the mine action sector for 18 years. In October 2016 he was injured when an anti-personal mine exploded. He severely injured his arm and has nerve damage in three fingers. Surgeons were able to take skin from his legs to graft into his damaged arm.

“I worked the third shift” Bilal explained. “At the beginning of my third shift it [the explosion] happened to me. I could not use a detector because of the excavation we were doing. I could not even see the mine and my small shovel hit it.”

Rahir Tofiq Farj, 37 years old
Rahir is a communications manager in the legacy mine clearance programme. He is married and has four children. His job entails keeping track of all the teams in the field, their attendance, and reporting findings for each day. He started working in 1999 and was a team leader for mine clearance teams. “I am very happy to be working here because we are able to serve our community” Rahir says. “I am very happy because I try to remove the effects of mines on our people and country. And I appreciate all countries...”

Muayad Hassan, 37 years old
Muayad is from Baghdad and has been part of the UNMAS team for three months. “I see that it [this work] supports the hospitals and the schools in Fallujah and Ramadi” Muayad says. “We [UNMAS] support all the people of Iraq.”

He also likes how much learning is involved in his job and the equality between women and men in the programme.

Qusay Wesam, 35 years old
Qusay is from eastern Mosul and has been providing risk education for the past ten months. He lived under Da’esh in Mosul for a year before fleeing to Baghdad. He used to play football for the Iraqi national team and practices Mixed Martial Arts.

“I have two children and I see all these kids as my sons and daughters,” he said while standing in a classroom in western Mosul. “I have a master’s degree but there is no job in the career for me yet, but I am over here doing this to help the kids.”

Marwa Abdurazzaq, 30 years old
Marwa is from Basra in southern Iraq and has been working in mine action since 2015. She works in the human resources department for Norwegian People Aid (NPA) and used to work for Save the Children.

Her husband and was left to look after her four children alone. She has been working on the project for three weeks. “This is helping me feed my family” Heam says. “I am trying to work for my kids.”

This type of work makes me feel hopeful for my city. This is what I want for my city and my people.” The hospital was previously the largest center for healthcare in the city and was heavily damaged during fighting between the Iraqi forces and Da’esh during 2017.

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Faces of Mine Action in Iraq (continued)

that help us with this mission.”

Rana Jasim Shirwani, 38 years old
Rana is from Baghdad and has been working in mine action for the past fifteen years. She is the head of the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA)'s Public Relations and Risk Education departments. She is a mother to two girls and a boy. She went to college for media with a background in public relations and wanted to do something useful with her degree. DMA's programming had just started when she graduated and she applied, thinking it would be the perfect place to learn more about her country and work with internationals.

“I get to go to the field and speak with people in person and change their perspectives and hopefully help save some lives” Rana says. “I want everyone to know they should stick to the safety rules and regulations, people really need to pay attention because the instructions we give out will saves their lives.”

George Tan, 38 years old
George is from Singapore and has eighteen years of experience in mine action. He first received Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) training whilst in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and was in the EOD unit for about ten years. It was years later in Liberia where he made first contact with UNMAS, and was offered a job as an Operations/Quality Assurance Officer in Gaza, Palestine. Based on the experience gained - clearing explosive hazards from conflict destroyed urban areas - he was asked to go to the Iraq Programme to bring lessons learnt to the clearance of Mosul.

“I think the biggest challenges facing the local populations are the sheer expanse of Iraq that hinders UN outreach, as well as stakeholders taking time in appreciating the extent and severity of the destruction caused by the civil war. Through the work we are doing I am hopeful that we restore stability to the population through UNMAS intervention, and provide much needed hope that may be the only thing keeping the population looking towards a better tomorrow, and worth working hard for.”

“Each day in my work I try to contribute towards building a firm foundation on which a new Iraq will be built upon. I am hopeful that based on experience and lessons learnt, Iraq will be the proving ground that the methods and policies developed by UNMAS will be implemented swiftly and efficiently in other post conflict areas, like Syria.”

Photos: Cengiz Yar

France donates 700,000 Euros to UNMAS

New York, 20 June 2018 - France gave 500,000 euros to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) for the clearance of liberated areas of Daesh in Iraq and 200,000 euros for the destruction of explosive stocks in Gaza. UNMAS Director, Agnès Marcaillou, and François Delattre, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations in New York, signed the agreements in New York.

DSRSG Walpole tests UNMAS Virtual Reality goggles

Baghdad, 21 June 2018 - The Deputy UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, test tried the Virtual Reality (VR) goggles which the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) was employing in Iraq to raise awareness of the scourge of unexploded remnants of war, and also to generate empathy and support among international donors. It shows, in astonishing detail, scenes from demining operations in northern Iraq.

“The use of this modern technology will certainly boost understanding of the UN operations,” Ms. Walpole said enthusiastically. “It gives this viewer, sitting in the comfort of her office, the opportunity to take part in the story, get the sensation of being present, for example, in the field among the sappers clearing the mines. It creates an experience for us to be at the scene without actually being there.”
Mosul, 27 June 2018 - A delegation from the Government of the Netherlands visited Mosul today where UNMAS, UNDP and UNICEF are currently implementing projects in their field of expertise. UNMAS provided an extensive briefing on explosive hazard contamination to Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development, Ms. Birgitta Tazelaar, Director of MENA Department - Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Fatimazahra Belhirch, Private Assistant and Mr. Herman Van Gelderen, Spokesperson at Al Shifa Hospital complex located in West Mosul.

The clearance of Al-Shifa Hospital started in August 2017 and when completed, it will be UNMAS longest running task in Iraq. In the past three months, search and clearance teams, with the help of armoured mechanical assets, have removed approximately 10 improvised explosive devices, 10 suicide belts and 110 explosive remnants of war as well as large amounts of debris. Clearance is still ongoing and required before any UNDP rehabilitation works can start. The delegation also met with UNMAS community liaison officers before continuing onwards to UNDP and UNICEF sites.

The Government of the Netherlands is the largest donor providing core funding to UNMAS, which supports its Headquarters and gaps in field programming. UNMAS would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Netherlands for its continuous support.

Explosive Hazard Awareness trainings held in Iraq by UNMAS

Baghdad, 30 June 2018 - UNMAS Iraq organizes bi-weekly Explosive Hazard Awareness trainings for humanitarian organizations in Erbil and Baghdad. To date, five sessions have been provided to over 60 humanitarians!

A surgeon's dedication saves lives in Mosul, Iraq

Mosul, 3 May 2018 - “Whenever the ambulance pulled up to the hospital and I ran out to treat the patients, I would wonder: will someone from my family be inside?”

Dr Omar Amouri, an orthopedic surgeon, is doing his morning rounds in Hamam al-Alil field hospital, south of Mosul. During peacetime, the Mosul native used to work in one of the city’s main hospitals as a doctor. All of that was upended by the recent conflict, when his daily rounds had to be done under terrifying conditions.

Today he is wearing his ‘lucky’ navy blue scrubs—the ones he had on the day that fighters came to the hospital, held staff and patients hostage, and threatened repeatedly to kill them. He managed to escape and sought shelter in a mosque.

“I was reborn that day,” he says. “I felt reborn.”

But his ordeal was by no means over. As the Iraqi Army entered Mosul during the battle to retake the city last year, militants tried to capture him.

“They were hunting me. They came to my house, so I ran to my parents’ house. They jumped over the fence with a big tank of gas, threatening to burn the house.”

Once more he eluded their grip and, after two and a half years of living in fear in Mosul, in 2016, he escaped the city. He left for Baghdad with the intention of continuing his studies.

Most people would consider what Omar lived through in Mosul quite enough danger for one lifetime. Yet despite all he endured, when he was asked to return to the area, Omar did so without hesitation. In 2017 he began work at the Hamam al-Alil field hospital.

“For me it was mandatory. I need to help injured people,” he says.

The field hospital, one of four established and supplied by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the early months of 2017, played a critical role in saving lives during the military campaign to retake Mosul. The hospitals received patients from WHO-coordinated trauma stabilization points on the frontlines. Thousands of lives were saved because patients were triaged within the first hour of injury. “WHO did a great job in this and other field hospitals. Honestly, if this hospital was not here, who would receive the...
A surgeon's dedication saves lives in Mosul, Iraq

casualties of the war? We needed that.
Mosul needed that."
The caseload at the Hamam al-Alil field hospital is lighter these days, about 10-15 operations a day, mostly elective. The hospital is treating the so-called ‘third wave’ of war, such as those with neglected fractures. It also receives patients from inside Mosul, where most hospitals are heavily damaged. Dr Amouri is proud of the hospital’s success treating serious burns, even without a specialized burn unit.

WHO continues to support Hamam al-Alil, and is helping to relocate two other field hospitals located in Athba and Haj Ali to West Mosul, which lost most of its major medical facilities during last year’s military campaign.
The contrast with the early days of the Mosul battle—the despair and the desperation—is stark. Dr Amouri remembers an older man who had lost his right arm.
“I approached him to examine him and he told me not to do anything for him. He said, ‘I lost all my family; my daughters and my grandsons. I have nothing left to live for, so please leave me, I want to die’.”

Dr Amouri was born, raised, and educated in Mosul. Much of the city is now in ruins. He grieves for it, and fears for its future.
“Mosul has become unrecognizable. All the things that I loved and knew, they are all gone. I’m happy to see people trying to rebuild their lives, but the city is destroyed. It’s not there anymore.”
Yet he works on; his commitment to his fellow Iraqis unwavering.
“I believe it’s my responsibility. Even when I’m not on call, I’m not on duty, I hear the ambulance and I feel I need to go and help. It’s a part of my life. I need to help injured people. If I don’t do it, who will?”

Midwife describes working under ISIL, taking a dangerous stand for women

Al-Qaim City, 14 May 2018 - Um Qassem was working as a midwife in Al-Qaim City, in Iraq’s Anbar Province, when the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da’esh) swept into the country in mid-2014. Seemingly overnight, her life became a nightmare, she said – especially when the group tried to recruit her. ISIL constantly threatened me, my husband, and my family, as well as other doctors and nurses. We were working under fear,” she described.
“I was emotionally devastated, but I had to put on a brave face for my patients who were bringing in life in such a challenging environment.”
Taking a dangerous stand
The militants turned the maternity ward of Al-Qaim Hospital into an emergency room for its fighters. Maternal health personnel were relegated to a small room to perform deliveries.
And women were suddenly charged for childbirth services, care that had previously been free. Women were expected to pay about $40 to give birth.
“One woman walked in without money,” Um Qassem remembered. “She was in critical condition and needed to go into the delivery room immediately. The head midwife that ISIL had appointed refused to let her in, so I threatened to quit if we did not admit the woman.”
It was a dangerous stand to take.
“I knew that I was risking my life by such action, but the woman and her baby would have died if I had not spoken up,” she said.
Hospital set ablaze
The challenges did not end when ISIL left to Raqqa last October. The militants stole all the hospital’s equipment, and then set fire to the building. The damage was extensive.
“I felt as if my world had just fallen apart. This hospital was my home. I had been working here for 15 years,” Um Qassem said.
UNFPA has been supporting Al-Qaim hospital since early December 2017, helping to rehabilitate the operating theatres and delivery room. UNFPA also provided financial and logistical support to the hospital’s reproductive health team, and covered the cost of generators and waste management.
Still, the delivery room needed equipment to become fully operational. UNFPA provided a well-equipped mobile delivery unit, able to manage uncomplicated deliveries as well as Caesarean sections. UNFPA also helped to establish a referral system to transfer more complicated cases to specialized care.
With this support, childbirth services are once more free of charge.
Midwife describes working under ISIL...

Today, Um Qassem’s greatest professional trials are those that normally come with the job: “The biggest challenge is to get these women through the delivery and promise them a beautiful, healthy baby,” she said.

In the first quarter of this year, the UNFPA-supported medical team at Al Qaim Hospital assisted in 378 normal deliveries. UNFPA is also working with the Government to expand the availability of maternal health care, including through a countrywide midwifery training programme as well as pre-service trainings and in-service trainings for nurses.

By Salwa Moussa, UNFPA Iraq

WHO prioritizes the delivery of health care to communities in areas of return

Baghdad, 21 May 2018 – The World Health Organization is prioritizing the delivery of primary health care services for people returning to their homes in Ninewa governorate. Guided by a health needs assessment, 2 health facilities were constructed in 2 separate locations in Shandokha village near Al Kasak junction and Al Wahda sector inside Talafar City.

In Shandokha and other surrounding villages, the primary health care centre will serve an estimated catchment population of 30 000 people, while in Al Wahda the centre is expected to serve an estimated population of 10 000 people. In both sites, facilities will offer services such as consultation, laboratory, as well as pharmacy and emergency sections for critical patients who may require secondary health care.

Zahara Hussein, a resident of Shandokha, who recently returned to the area from Hamam Al Alil internally displaced people’s camp, said, “This health facility will make access to health services for people in my community easier and faster, not being able to access services quickly was challenging for us”.

After surviving the world’s most complex crisis, the last thing that people in Shandokha village wish for is lack of access to basic medicines when ill”.

“Establishing this health centre is a big blessing for us, because until now we were moving 25 kilometres to the nearest health facility to access health services. We thank WHO and the Ninewa Directorate of Health for this support,” added Zahara.

The two centres have jointly been staffed and equipped by WHO and the Ninewa Directorate of Health and targets have been established to serve the most urgent and critical health needs of returnees in the area of Talafar. Both health facilities will be run and managed by Ninewa Directorate of Health with support from WHO. In addition to operational support that will be provided to the health facilities, WHO is committed to providing the needed essential medicines, support supervision and disease surveillance and reporting.

Many health facilities, including 6 major hospitals in West Mosul, remain damaged and closed, therefore moving essential and key health facilities and services closer to the people will ensure accessibility to good health care. The support has been made possible with a generous contribution from the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA).

The Iraqi Ministry of Health meets with IOM to discuss cooperation

Baghdad, 27 May 2018 - A joint meeting was held at the Iraqi Ministry of Health with an IOM delegation and representatives from the Ministry of Health. Some issues have been discussed in support of TB programs, facilitating the Ministry’s framework and enabling the completion of tasks with regard to the provision of medicines, laboratory equipment, training courses and application of the joint plan.
Intensive care in Iraq: difference between life or death for 1.5 million people

Tikrit, 5 June 2018 - Pale and speaking breathlessly, Jenan Sabea describes the horrific pain she felt in her stomach 2 weeks ago which prompted her being rushed to hospital. “I was screaming, crying. I was kicking on the floor, kicking hard,” she says. Jenan called an ambulance which transferred her to the Salaheddin General Hospital in Tikrit, Iraq, about 90 minutes away. There, she was immediately attended in the 5-month old intensive care unit (ICU).
Jenan was fasting and she had been suffering from ureter-related pain in the past. Dehydration caused the severe complications leading to the unbearable pain she has had to live with for 2 weeks, before being admitted to the ICU.
Opened on 30 January 2018 with a US$ 112 000 donation by Germany, the 5-bed ICU is the only such available to about 1.5 million residents in the Salaheddin governorate.
“To date, we have treated 67 patients, including 15 children ranging from just a few hours to 15 years of age,” says Dr Nawfal Hadid who heads both the hospital and the ICU.
WHO has supported the 200-bed Salaheddin hospital with expansion of wards, medical furniture and other specialized equipment necessary for the ICU. As military operations in Iraq raged in 2016, WHO provided $200 000 worth of medical equipment to the hospital.
Although one ICU for a governorate of 1.5 million residents might seem like a drop in the ocean, for patients like Jenan, its presence makes a life-and-death difference. Dr Hadid adds proudly, “We now receive referrals from Baghdad, Diyala, Mosul and Samarra. They call us to check for availability of beds and we help out.”
Ever since the ICU opened in January, a steady stream of patients has come and gone, including many with severe trauma from violence that still is a brutal reality for many in Iraq.

Be there for someone else. Give blood. Share life.

Baghdad, 14 June 2018 - Every year, on 14 June, countries around the world celebrate World Blood Donor Day. The event serves to thank voluntary, unpaid blood donors for their lifesaving gifts of blood and to raise awareness of the need for regular blood donations to ensure the quality, safety and availability of blood and blood products for patients in need.
Transfusion of blood and blood products helps save millions of lives every year. It can help patients suffering from life-threatening conditions live longer and with a higher quality of life, and supports complex medical and surgical procedures. It also has an essential, life-saving role in maternal and child care and during the emergency response to man-made and natural disasters.
A blood service that gives patients access to safe blood and blood products in sufficient quantity is a key component of an effective health system. An adequate supply can only be ensured through regular donations by voluntary, unpaid blood donors. However, in many countries, blood services face the challenge of making sufficient blood available, while also ensuring its quality and safety.
In 2017, 3310 blood units were provided to the 4 field hospitals in the Mosul area, thanks to donors who showed up in droves at the Erbil Blood Transfusion Center. Thanks to 100’s of blood donors, WHO was able to transfer blood & blood products to help those in need during some of the fiercest fighting in Mosul.
In 2018, WHO Iraq worked with the Ministry of Health to re-establish the blood bank in Mosul with equipment, kits and supplies.
**Healthcare**

20 new ambulances to strengthen referral pathway in under-recovery areas in Mosul, Anbar, and Kirkuk

Baghdad, 19 June 2018 - The provision of health care in the conflict-torn governorates of Anbar, Ninewa, and Kirkuk, has recently been augmented by additional 20 ambulances procured by the World Health Organization (WHO) to support the referral pathway and ambulatory services in the mentioned governorates. The ambulances were handed over to the Ministry of Health in Baghdad to be distributed according to a priority plan suggested by a recent assessment conducted by WHO.

“An average of 1200 to 1500 patients a month are expected to benefit from this service in each targeted location,” said Hameed Ali, an ambulance service director in the Ministry of Health.

“The new donated ambulances will surely save more lives,” said Majeed, a paramedic who worked in one of WHO’s field hospitals in Mosul. “Ambulances staff has some pretty interesting stories to tell from Mosul response operations. You find out they saved a life of a family in Hamam Alil, raced time to get a shot-injured child to the closest trauma stabilization point in Bartella, or even helped a hard labor at a late hour amid clashes and exchange of fire. At least it helped emergency response succeed to a remarkable degree in places like Mosul.”

The ambulances were procured with the funds received from the United States Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) early this year and will be part of the overall referral pathway that WHO has been keen on strengthening to make it more responsive to the needs of the IDPs and returnees in affected governorates.

Analyzing the emergency and trauma referral pathway during the Mosul crisis, WHO identified the urgent need to strengthen the referral pathway and ambulatory services by deploying a network of new ambulances equipped with basic to advanced medical intervention services.

As of now, WHO has handed over more than 140 ambulances to support trauma referral services in Baghdad, Anbar, Ninewa, Salah Aldin, Kirkuk, Erbil, and other in need locations.

The 20 new ambulances come in a time where the federal ministry of health has lost hundreds of its ambulances during the fight against the armed groups in the aforementioned governorates.

“In April 2017, we were called out to a pediatric trauma,” said Saif Abdul Rahman a paramedic in one WHO donated ambulance in Mosul. “When we got there we found unaccompanied 4-year old girl that had a sniper bullet in her left leg while fleeing the fight with her family in West Mosul. In no time, IV fluid was administered and we head east very fast as she started to lose conscious. We brought her to Athba Trauma Field Hospital, but I still can’t get the image of her un-equal eyelids, and unfocused look out of my head."

WHO has supported the national health authorities in conflict-affected areas in 2016-17 with a network of about 96 ambulances mobilized to serve the trauma response activities as well as ambulatory services in IDP camps and far to reach areas. The ambulances played a remarkable role in the response to trauma right at the battle frontlines in Mosul and other conflict areas.

WHO is thankful of the generous contributions from the United States Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), The European Commission Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), The Government of Germany, and The Government of Japan for funding the purchase of the ambulances.

**Education**

UNICEF thanks the Government and people of the Netherlands for their support to education for vulnerable IDP, refugee, and host community children in Iraq

Baghdad, 15 May 2018 – Today, UNICEF Iraq and the Government of the Netherlands have signed an agreement of US$ 6.2 million to support Education for children of refugees, IDP’s and families returning home after the war. The agreement forms part of the new Government of the Netherlands policy to provide targeted support for refugees and displaced persons in the affected locations, including decent education for children in displacement.

Over three years, the Government of Netherlands and UNICEF will enable 150,000 displaced, refugee, and host community children living in camps or returning to retaken areas have access to education.

Due to conflict, two million Iraqi IDPs and nearly a quarter of a million Syrian refugees are still not able to return home. Violence has disrupted learning for more than 3.5 million children who are estimated to be out of school, attending irregularly, or to have lost years of schooling. The programme will improve access to education for IDP and refugee children focusing on areas most affected by conflict and violence such as Al-Anbar, Dohuk, Kirkuk, and Ninewa by establishment or rehabilitation of schools. It will also support improvements in quality of learning by encouraging a participatory School
UNICEF thanks the Government and people of the Netherlands ... (continued)

Based Management approach that engages teachers, parents, and local communities more directly in children's education, equipping them with skills to identify and implement positive changes in their local schools. Further, at least 5,000 teachers will be trained in updated teaching methods, life skills, citizenship education, and psychosocial support.

“Helping children to access improved quality education will not only ensure recovery today but support a better future for all children” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

Ms. Marielle Geraedts, Deputy Ambassador of the Netherlands Embassy to Iraq recently visited schools in IDP and refugee camps as well as for returning families in Mosul and the host community in Dohuk: “I have seen with my own eyes how big the burden is that schools carry. Schools sometimes run at double capacity to provide education to returning or still displaced families. Furthermore, it is really concerning that approximately half of the Syrian refugees in Iraq are currently not able to go to school. The new Dutch government is proud that through this contribution we can support better access to learning for some of the most vulnerable children in Iraq.”

The devastating conflict in Iraq has damaged education infrastructure and weakened local capacity to deliver quality services. This has led to chronic shortages of schools, trained teachers, and learning materials, and has magnified children's deprivations, making the right to education a dream for many.

Self-defence workshops are run by UNHCR Iraq in Kurdistan to help women defend themselves

Erbil, 24 May 2018 - Too many women and girls experience brutality and violence. Self-defence workshops are run by UNHCR Iraq in Kurdistan to help women defend themselves. Participants at this workshop will train vulnerable women in Iraq, including refugees and IDPs.

UNICEF promotes positive teaching methods

Erbil/Mosul, 24 May 2018 - In Iraq, UNICEF is working with parents from the Syrian refugee community to promote “positive discipline” so that parents know how to support children and young people in their development using positive teaching methods. 3-year-old Ahmed attended the training with his mother in the small town of Qushtapa, northern Iraq.

“We learned new things about raising children. There are a lot of wrong habits we followed,” said the mother. This is made possible by the generous funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

In partnership with UNICEF, Elwyia Hospital in Baghdad launched the first Kangaroo Mother care in the new-born unit. Kangaroo care encourages skin-to-skin contact with a parent immediately after birth to keep the baby warm and support early breastfeeding.
UNHCR provides skills training and psychosocial support to women and girls in Iraq

Mosul, 29 May 2018 - Sahar Amin, 23, came to the Sakina women's centre in Mosul to learn sewing. Sahar hopes to learn the skills she needs to support her family. Her husband collects scrap metal and his income is barely enough to support their family. Sahar also finds the centre an opportunity to meet women from the neighbourhood who are in a similar situation. Her children play in the child-friendly space while she takes her class.

The Sakina centre run by Human Appeal - UK with the support of UNHCR provides skills training and psychosocial support to women and girls in Mosul. Staff also teach language and physical fitness, and raise awareness on issues such as early marriage and gender-based violence.

“I was one of the first women in Arbat camp to open a hairdressing salon,” says Nada, smiling. “I feel very proud of myself. People warned me that I may lose my savings, but I took the risk. Now my business is flourishing and turns a profit.”

Nada is the sole breadwinner for her large family and feels confident about the future. “My children attend school at the camp. While I cannot see what the future holds, things are better now. Life is better than before.” Shaza Fawzy is in charge of daily activities at the Sakina women's centre in Mosul. When the centre opened in April, 350 women from the neighbourhood registered immediately. Most women at the centre want to learn vocational skills to contribute to their household income. After three years of conflict and displacement, psychosocial services are among the centre’s most critical activities. “Many women and girls who come here need psychosocial support,” says Shaza. “We want them to know that they are not forgotten.”

Thousands visit the UNFPA - supported Women and Youth Centres in Iraq for self-development and advice

Baghdad, 1 June 2018 - Thousands of women visit the UNFPA -supported Women Centres in Iraq for self-development and advice. To provide them with the quality advice, services, and activities, UNFPA builds the capacity of staff working in these centres through continuous trainings and workshops.

The most popular course at the UNFPA-supported women centres across Iraq is the sewing course. Women explain that learning this new skill gives them a sense of accomplishment and allows them to give comfort to their children through sewing their torn clothes. Illiterate women struggle to find employment and help their children with homework or read instructions on a bottle of medication or a package of food. To help facilitate their daily activities, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Iraq supported women centres provide literacy courses to more than 650 women per month. The women in Qorato refugee camp, in Kalar located in Germiyan region of Iraq, can access a small kitchen and oven in the UNFPA-supported women centre and prepare sweets for their families and friends free of charge.

“Coming to the women centre is like a breath of fresh air. We learn new skills that will allow us to support our families. My favourite is the beautician course; I can now straighten ladies’ hairs in my neighbourhood and this is a new form of income,” says Lubna, 29, Sulimaniyah.

“As young people living in refugee camps, we feel that our options are limited in terms of development and learning. Having access to the youth centres and the peer educations sessions gives us a sense of normalcy” says Hassan Al-Ali, 20, refugee from Qamishli, northeastern Syria.

“Sport promotes cooperation and creativity, brings out positive energy in people, breaks deadlocks and develops innate talents and skills. The activities that I participate in at the youth centre help me make new friends & become more confident,” Fatima, 27, from Dhi Qar, Iraq.
UNICEF and partners build new schools

Erbil, 1 June 2018 – Approximately 3 million children across Iraq don’t have regular access to education. If these children are not back in the classrooms, Iraq could lose a generation.

“I can’t read and write in Arabic. I don’t think about the future” said Jaffar, 12. Both Jaffar and his cousin Kathem have never been enrolled in school. Poverty forces these two boys to work in order to support their families.

With the support of the Bavarian Federal government, UNICEF completed 4 unfinished schools in Erbil. Over 1,700 children (including 986 girls) from IDPs and the host community in Erbil will be using the facilities to further their education. Dr. Cristoph Hoffmann, a German MP, visited a school in Erbil that was built, in part, by the generous contribution of the Bavarian state in Germany.

“With support of UNICEF and their partner, I completed a course in barbering and now I can support my family,” Qassem Samir, Diwaniya.

Breaking all barriers: 8 million children sit end-of-year exams across the Middle East and North Africa

Amman, Jordan, 11 June 2018 – An estimated 8 million school children across the Middle East and North Africa are sitting their year-end school exams.

Children in the region face a host of challenges to stay in school and complete their national exams. Families increasingly face poverty, child labour, inability to afford transportation to school, overcrowding, lack of teachers and school space, and low-quality education.

“Wherever they live across the region, nothing should stop children from finishing and certifying their education through national exams,” said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

One in five children across the region lives in conflict-affected countries:

To reach national exam centres in Syria, children risk getting stopped and questioned at checkpoints. The seven-year long war has forced 2.1 million children out of school[1]. There have been 347 verified attacks against schools and education personnel since the conflict started in 2011[2].

Nearly 20 percent of schools in Yemen can no longer be used because they are destroyed, damaged, sheltering displaced families or used for military purposes. Since the conflict escalated in 2015, half a million children have dropped out of school, bringing the total number of out-of-school children to 2 million. Teachers have not been paid in over a year.

In Iraq, where one in four children live in poverty, half of the schools need rehabilitation after years of fighting and violence. Many children are forced to travel for hours in scorching heat to reach the exam sites.

In the State of Palestine, over 8,000 children and 400 teachers need protection to safely access school in some areas of the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, only five hours of electricity a day means children study in extreme heat and rely on phone light and candles to revise at night. Two out of three schools operate on double or triple shifts.

In Sudan, children from conflict-affected areas or who have been displaced by violence must travel long distances just to sit their exams.

An estimated 489 schools have been affected by the conflict in Libya, affecting the education of an estimated 260,000 students. Recent violence in the eastern city of Derna and Sabha in the south west, have forced many schools to close.

Over half of all Syrian refugee children in Lebanon are not in school because they have to work to make ends meet, their families are on the move or because they can’t afford transportation to school.

“School children across the region deserve praise and admiration for their determination to overcome challenges and sometimes risk their lives just to sit for their exams and continue their schooling. We wish them all the best of luck!” said Cappelaere. “UNICEF reiterates its call on education authorities to facilitate children’s access to exams: a fundamental and potentially life-changing milestone for their future and the future of the region.”
Dutch Minister Kaag visits school in Mosul

Mosul, 27 June 2018 - After years of conflict, children in Mosul, Iraq go back to school. Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Sigrid Kaag, visited today some schools in Mosul and talked why education and psychosocial support are so important for children. “The only worry children should have, is if they will pass their exams”, says Minister Sigrid Kaag from the Netherlands during a visit to a school in Mosul, Iraq with UNICEF Iraq.

Europe Day celebrated in Erbil

Erbil, 9 May 2018 - It’s Europe Day today and the European Union (EU) Delegation to Iraq is hosting events in Baghdad and Erbil. The Erbil event is organized in cooperation with the Local Area Development Programme (LADP), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the EU.

UN Special Representative Kubiš extends Ramadan greetings

Baghdad, 16 May 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, extends his greetings to all Muslims, to all the people of Iraq, on the onset of the Holy Month of Ramadan. “This year’s Ramadan is the first after Iraq’s nationwide liberation from Daesh’s terrorism. Those displaced by the conflict are gradually returning to their homes to resume their normal lives. Elections have just been held in a largely peaceful manner. All these are indications that the country is steadily moving forward,” Mr. Kubiš said.

UNAMI hosts Kurdistan students, visits Universities in outreach effort to explain its work and foster mutual understanding

Erbil, 17 May 2018 - Reaching out to the public in Kurdistan Region to explain the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and its activities, UNAMI is arranging a series of engagements with the younger generation to foster mutual understanding and outline its socio-political activities, and to hear from the communities at the grass roots level their ideas and concerns. As part of the effort with its diverse public, the UNAMI Kurdistan Region Office hosted a group of students from the International Relations Department at the Istik University (Erbil) on 18 April 2018. Head of Office Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez gave the students an overview of the work of the UN in Kurdistan Region. Together with Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Mr. Bedrelidin Mahmoud, and Human Rights Officer, Mr. Zito Siany, they explained the Mission’s mandate, activities and general UN-related topics such as political, human rights and humanitarian affairs. Twenty-four students (nine males and 15 females) accompanied by Dr. Dilshad Hamad, head of International Relations Department at Istik University, were given a field tour of the UNAMI Erbil Regional Office.
compound and saw firsthand the staff, national and international, at work to deliver the mandate.

Mr. Rodriguez said UNAMI already has good cooperation from the Regional authorities and its institutions. Mission leadership frequently visit Kurdistan and meet with senior officials. Relevant UNAMI sections are delivering trainings to NGOs on human rights and gender, for example, while the political office engages with various political parties and actors and with the minorities to hear their opinions. In addition, Human Rights Office in Erbil have conducted series of seminars on fundamentals of human rights at Kurdistan Region universities such as Kurdistan University-Hawler, Salahaddin University-Erbil and Cihan University in Erbil. Several seminars are planned to be delivered at other universities and Kurdistan Region institutions in the near future.

Mr. Rodriguez pointed out that such visits will serve not only to explain what UNAMI does but also UNAMI will learn from the people their thoughts and concerns.

“This was an interesting occasion for me to meet with Ishik University teachers and students. We had lively discussions on the role of the United Nations and perceptions by the public in Kurdistan Region,” Mr. Rodriguez said. “And it was an occasion to learn also from you. University students like you will be among those shaping the future of your communities and country,” he said at the meeting with the students.

Dr. Hamad, of Ishik University, highlighted the learning experience for his students.

“These visits are very important as they assist students in translating the theoretical intake at university into practical experience in the real world. It was a great opportunity for our international relations students to meet the UNAMI team in the Kurdistan Region and engage in constructive discussions around the work of the UN and UNAMI.”

UNAMI also is taking its outreach campaign to university campuses. On 9 May 2018, Mr. Rodriguez visited the University of Kurdistan-Hawler, and interacted with students and lecturers, talking about the mandate of UNAMI and its activities in the Kurdistan Region. The 15 male and 10 female students and lecturers had the opportunity to ask questions ranging from the UN stance during the recent Kurdistan Referendum to financial support.

Responding to their questions and concerns, Mr. Rodriguez highlighted the different roles of members of the UN Family in Iraq. UNAMI being primarily a political Mission and other UN Agencies tasked with humanitarian mandates, even though they all fall under the One UN umbrella. On UNAMI’s political activities, he said the Mission continues to engage with the parties in Baghdad and Erbil and encourages dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues.

Sara Salahaddin Mustafa, a lecturer at the Politics and International Relations Department, said that “the meeting was very informative and practical … Students and Faculty liked it very much. We look forward to future collaborations.”

World Bee Day commemorated in Iraq

Baghdad, 20 May 2018 - Did you know that the honey bee visits four million flowers to produce one kilogramme of honey? Or that Iraq produces around 1,000 tonnes of honey while it consumes around 2,480 tonnes? Dr. Fadel El-Zubi, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Iraq, tells us that “Without pollinators the world would have been without food diversity and suffering from food insecurity on the long term. Without bees it would be impossible for FAO to achieve its main goal of eradicating hunger in the world”.

Learn more in this video message marking the first-ever World Bee Day in Iraq
https://youtu.be/Cx3mZEEOYwA
Baghdad, 7 June 2018 - The FriendsofUNICEF voluntary youth group gathered at Al-Zawra Park in Baghdad for an Iftar meal and an evening of fun where they also played Mheibes - a traditional game played across Iraq during Ramadan. Advocacy for peace, reconciliation and coexistence among Iraq's communities lies at the core of UNAMI’s work and volunteer groups like FriendsOfUNICEF who participate in activities are stark example of youth working for a better future for their country.

UN’s Kubiš Eid-ul-Fitr Greetings to Iraqis

Baghdad, 14 June 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, extends his warmest greetings and wishes for peace and prosperity to all Muslims and to all the Iraqi people on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. “Eid-ul-Fitr is a time of joy and celebration as Muslims are marking the end of their fasting during the holy month of Ramadan,” Mr. Kubiš said. “My best wishes to all Muslims in particular and to all the people of Iraq, in general, on this joyous occasion. Eid Mubarak,” he concluded.

International Day of Yoga commemorated in Baghdad

Baghdad, 21 June 2018 - The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), in cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), today hosted a peaceful yoga session bringing together staff at the United Nations compound in Baghdad, Iraq. Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India. The word ‘yoga’ derives from Sanskrit and means to join or to unite, symbolizing the union of body and consciousness. The International Day of Yoga aims to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga. The theme for the 2018 celebration is ‘Yoga for Peace’.

On 26 June 1945, Iraq signed the United Nations Charter

Delegates of fifty nations met at The San Francisco Conference between April 25 and June 26, 1945. Working on the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, the Yalta Agreement, and amendments proposed by various Governments, the Conference agreed upon the Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the new International Court of Justice. The Charter was passed unanimously and signed by all the representatives. It came into force on October 24, 1945, when China, France, the USSR, the United Kingdom, and the United States and a majority of the other signatories had filed their instruments of ratification. Mohammad Fadhel Jamali, Director General of Foreign Affairs of Iraq with the rank of Minister, member of the Delegation from Iraq, signed the UN Charter at a ceremony held at the Veterans' War Memorial Building on 26 June 1945, in San Francisco, United States.
Games, often referred to as the 'UN Olympics', brought together more than 1,450 United Nations staff, retirees and supporters, representing 60 UN Agencies in the City of Montecatini-Terme, Italy, 2–8 May.

“...challenging this year,” said Martijn Dalhuijzen, the sole runner from UNAMI. “I prepared myself for a 10K by running laps around the UN Compound in Kirkuk with the UNGUs”. Despite challenging conditions in the mission, the bronze boys from UNAMI defeated last year champion team from Vienna in a dramatic match to win their first medal.

Montecatini Terme, Italy, May 2018 – Athletes from UNAMI successfully participated at the 45th United Nations Inter-Agency Games, thanks to strong performances in basketball, tennis, athletics and chess. Members of the UNAMI team won gold medal in tennis (as part of the Geneva team) and bronze medal in basketball.

Team Captain Louis Best is pleased with the results. “UNAMI was represented for the first time in its history at the Inter-Agency Games in Malaga, Spain in 2016. The 2018 edition of Games in Montecatini Terme, Italy, was the third time UNAMI participated. We did very well, all things considered”, said Mr. Best, who acts as the Official Registrar for the Inter-Agency Games in Iraq next to his responsibilities of Security Officer in the Special Investigations Unit in Baghdad.

The Secretary-General opened the games (via video link) in a packed opera house. H.E. António Guterres said that sports are an important tool for peace and development. “The Inter-Agency Games contribute to cooperation, development and teamwork across the entire United Nations family”. The 45th edition of the Inter-Agency Games were a great success. The Games, often referred to as the ‘UN Olympics’, brought together more than 1,450 United Nations staff, retirees and supporters, representing 60 UN Agencies in the City of Montecatini-Terme, Italy, 2–8 May.

“The race was quite challenging this year,” said Martijn Dalhuijzen, the sole runner from UNAMI. “I prepared myself for a 10K by running laps around the UN Compound in Kirkuk with the UNGUs”.

Despite challenging conditions in the mission, the bronze boys from UNAMI defeated last year champion team from Vienna in a dramatic match to win their first medal.

Sights and sounds of Iraq

Baghdad celebrates International Jazz Day: Where words fail, music speaks

Baghdad, 30 April 2018 - Nestled in a corner of an old street in Karrada, in the capital city Baghdad, lies a magnificent traditional Iraqi home, and from it emanates the beauty of Jazz. Home for the newly opened IQ Peace Community Youth Centre, the talented young women and men of Baghdad tuned their cellos, violins and guitars, oiled their saxophone keys, and cleared their throats as the youth gathered around the room to celebrate International Jazz Day on Monday, 30 April 2018. Against a backdrop of somber lights, deep jazzy sounds from the band filled the room with earthy tones - a fusion of modern jazz with the soothing effect from the traditional Oud, Iraq’s favourite and trademark string instrument, lending an Iraqi flavour to the notion of jazz.

International Jazz Day is intended to raise awareness of the virtues of jazz as an educational tool, and a force for empathy, dialogue and enhanced cooperation among people. Many governments, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and private citizens currently engaged in the promotion of jazz music will embrace the opportunity to foster greater appreciation not only for the music but also for the contribution it can make to building more inclusive societies.

Ali Nidal, a passionate self-taught saxophonist, embraces jazz wholeheartedly and feels it “carrying him to another world; outside the norms that Baghdad offers”. Guitarist Hussein Samah echoes Ali’s sentiment saying that “Jazz allows me to express my emotions; playing my guitar alongside Ali and the band brings me much peace and happiness. The music we make reminds us that where words fail, music speaks”.

Their passion for jazz is starkly displayed when the group initiated a campaign during the event polling the audience on their opinion whether Baghdad or the IQ Centre should have a jazz club. This was manifested by notes and comments the audience pinned on the wall expressing hope that a jazz club in Baghdad would come to be.

As the great Louis Armstrong once said, “Jazz is played from the heart. You can even live by it. Always love it”. See more at https://bit.ly/2JGFUWM
Seeds of hope: Chelsea Flower Show inspires refugee gardeners

By Laura Padoan

London, England, 23 May 2018 - As the world’s largest flower show blooms into life this week in London, hundreds of Syrian refugees in Iraq are reaping the benefits of seed packets sent to them recently by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS).

The 2,000 seed packets have been delivered to the Domiz Camp in Northern Iraq, which is run by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. The camp was the inspiration behind the Lemon Tree Trust Garden, one of the most striking installations at this year’s Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show.

Created by garden designer Tom Massey, who collaborated with UNHCR in 2016 on the award-winning Border Control garden at the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show, the garden aims to reflect the hidden beauty that can be found within refugee camps and highlights the vital lifeline that gardening can provide to people who have been displaced by war.

In March this year Massey visited Domiz Camp, which is home to over 40,000 Syrians, to see how refugees are using the power of plants to improve their environment, and their sense of well-being.

His Chelsea garden makes use of materials that are available in the camp, such as concrete and steel, and an ‘innovation wall’ is filled with tin cans and plastic bottles used as containers for vertical planting, ideal for gardening in limited spaces.

Channels of water radiate from the Islamic-influenced star-shaped fountain, representing the importance of grey water reuse in the camps and the many improvised fountains refugees have built in their own gardens.

“I was continually amazed by the ability of the camp’s residents to create gardens in such a harsh environment and with very limited resources,” said Massey. “It was fantastic to see the individuality people express in their personal spaces. The atmosphere in the camp was friendly and positive, and people I met were strong, resilient and inspiring individuals.”

UNHCR is working with the UK-based not-for-profit organisation Lemon Tree Trust by providing water and drainage systems for the makeshift gardens that residents have begun to plant in the small plots of arid land surrounding their shelters. There are also plans to create a fresh marketplace that has the potential of providing a small income for refugees from the sale of surplus vegetables grown from the seeds.

For many refugees, simply having a small patch of garden around them is a way to put down new roots and a means to help feed their family.

Aveen Ismail fled Damascus with her family and now lives in Domiz Camp. “Syria is green,” she said, “but here it was like a desert until we started growing plants and trees. Creating a garden was a way for us to heal and remind us of home. When we learned about the donation from the RHS, we were thankful not only for the seeds but also for a feeling of friendship with other gardeners across the world.”

“For those displaced by war, gardening gives individuals and families a sense of peace and purpose”

The RHS’s seed donation to refugees this year marks the centenary of a striking historical parallel. In 1918, around the end of the First World War, the RHS sent cases of seeds to British prisoners of war in the Ruhleben internment camp in Germany. Both the POWs and the refugees had similar requests of the RHS: a mixture of cut-flower seeds, including marigolds and sunflowers, to bring colour and revive memories of home, along with vegetables such as peppers and cucumbers.

The similarities show that, for people suffering from the trauma of conflict, gardening has the ability to provide sanctuary, and the potential to heal. In Iraq and elsewhere, UNHCR is helping refugees to establish small gardens and growing schemes for the positive practical and psychological benefits they bring to the displaced.

In parallel with the Chelsea Flower Show, this week the Lemon Tree Trust is running flower competitions in five camps in Northern Iraq, to be judged by UNHCR, as a way of encouraging the budding gardeners.

The Trust’s founder, Stephanie Hunt, explained why it was important for the organisation to support gardening initiatives: “For those displaced by war, gardening gives individuals and families a sense of peace and purpose, allowing them to take pride in nurturing a favourite rose bush or adding garden-grown herbs to meals that remind them of home.”

At Chelsea, Massey’s garden has won a Silver Gilt medal in recognition of its innovative design and creative use of planting, which includes plants found in Syria such as pomegranate trees, roses, alliums, dazzling blue anchusa and of course, a magnificent, flowering lemon tree.