



# Security Council

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## Implementation of resolution [2682 \(2023\)](#)

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2682 \(2023\)](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every four months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since his previous report of 25 January 2024 ([S/2024/96](#)) and the briefing to the Security Council by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI on 6 February 2024.

#### II. Summary of key political developments

##### A. Political situation

2. Local governments have been formed in 13 of 15 federal governorates following the certification of the final results of the 18 December 2023 Governorate Council elections by the Independent High Electoral Commission on 21 January 2024. Protracted negotiations among political blocs have delayed the formation of local governments in Diyala and Kirkuk Governorates.

3. In the first week of February, Governorate Councils convened in inaugural sessions to elect governors and other key posts. Subsequently, on 13 February, the President of Iraq, Abdullatif Jamal Rashid, appointed 12 governors by presidential decree, namely, for Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Basrah, Dhi Qar, Karbala', Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, Ninawa, Qadisiyah, and Wasit Governorates. On 18 March, President Rashid also appointed the governor of Salah al-Din Governorate, confirming the vote held by the Governorate Council on the previous day. Earlier, on 25 February, the governor initially elected by the Governorate Council in Salah al-Din had withdrawn his candidacy after the President of Iraq had declined to issue a decree confirming his appointment amid legal issues.

4. To facilitate dialogue in support of forming the Governorate Council in Kirkuk, the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, convened meetings with political stakeholders in Baghdad on 21 February and 3 March. In these meetings, the Prime Minister called for sustained dialogue among all political forces to promote



peaceful coexistence in Kirkuk and to reach partnerships in view of forming the local government. On 17 March, the Office of the Prime Minister announced that dialogue sessions were postponed indefinitely.

5. As part of the Government's efforts to implement its ministerial programme, in February and March, the Prime Minister met with the newly elected governors during meetings in Baghdad and visits to governorates, including Ninawa and Basrah. During these engagements, he highlighted the importance of strengthening the provision of public services, promoting economic development and supporting reconstruction and infrastructure projects, among other priorities. On 7 March, on the eve of International Women's Day, the Prime Minister also underlined his Government's efforts to promote the role of women in Iraqi society and government, including through the creation of the High Council for Women's Affairs, the first session of which he chaired on 2 March.

6. On 27 March, the Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the High Committee on Security Sector Reform, consisting of the heads of Iraqi security sector institutions, to review progress towards reform of the country's security sector in line with the ministerial programme. During the meeting, the Committee approved the national Security Sector Reform Strategy for 2024–2032, which outlines the Iraqi approach to security sector reform efforts, aligned with concurrent initiatives to reform the Iraqi economy, strengthen social cohesion and tackle the impact of climate change.

7. Political consultations continued on the election of the Speaker of the Council of Representatives after voting at a parliamentary session on 13 January ended with none of the candidates able to obtain an absolute majority. The leader of the Taqaddum party and former Speaker, Mohammed al-Halbousi, discussed the election process with Iraqi officials in separate meetings on 29 February with the President, the Prime Minister and the President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Fa'iq Zaidan and on 4 and 5 March with, respectively, the acting Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mohsen al-Mandalawi, and the President of the Federal Supreme Court, Jassim Abboud. Meanwhile, three Sunni political alliances, the Azm, Hasm and Al-Siyada alliances, issued joint statements on 2 and 24 March calling for completion of the Speaker election process with a vote limited to candidates whose names had been put forward at the 13 January session of the Council of Representatives, in order to prevent a "continuation of the constitutional vacuum". Four Members of Parliament announced their withdrawal from the Al-Siyada and Azm alliances on 14 March to form a new parliamentary bloc, Sadara, amid continued internal division within these Sunni blocs over the endorsement of a candidate for Speaker.

8. In an interview on 5 March, the President of the Federal Supreme Court stated that the Council of Representatives could proceed with the election of the Speaker despite pending cases that had been filed before the Court by parliamentarians in the aftermath of the 13 January session. Two of those petitions were filed in relation to the Taqaddum party candidate for the position of Speaker, Shaalan al-Kareem, who had garnered the highest number of votes in the first round of voting on 13 January; the Court dismissed one of these challenges on 28 February and postponed the hearing of the other case to 29 April. On 1 April, the Court declined to rule on a case that challenged the constitutionality of the 13 January session, citing a lack of jurisdiction. Meanwhile, parliamentary activities continued with the First Deputy Speaker, Mohsen al-Mandalawi, serving as acting Speaker.

9. The Independent High Electoral Commission continued preparations for the parliamentary elections for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which had initially been scheduled for 1 October 2022 but had subsequently been postponed multiple times. On 3 March, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani,

decreed that 10 June 2024 would be the new date for the election, thereby revising the previously announced date of 25 February 2024.

10. On 21 February, the Federal Supreme Court ruled on important provisions of the electoral law of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq based on legal cases filed in 2023 by a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and by a Christian member of the Sulaymaniyah Governorate Council.

11. Notable aspects of the Federal Supreme Court decision included the invalidation of several amendments to the original electoral law of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which stipulated, inter alia, that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq was to be considered as one single constituency and that the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region was to comprise a total of 111 seats, with 11 seats allocated to minority components. The Federal Supreme Court ruling of 21 February noted that “the legislator had not relied on any objective criteria in determining the number of [parliamentary] seats” and had not used “approved official data” from federal ministries to establish its voter registry; this, the Court held, had produced “unfair electoral outcomes” and “inaccuracy” in the allotment of quota seats to minority components. The Court ruled that the Region should instead be composed of at least four constituencies and reduced the number of seats to 100, abolishing the 11 minority seats. The ruling also transferred responsibility for the adjudication of election appeals to federal institutions, among other measures. On 24 February, a coalition of Assyrian, Chaldean and Syriac Christian parties denounced the loss of the minority quota, insisting that they had “worked diligently in previous sessions to ensure the restriction of voting within the component and protect the quota from exploitation by ruling parties, but to no avail”.

12. In addition, in a statement on 18 March, the Political Bureau of the Kurdistan Democratic Party announced that the Party would not participate in elections under what it considered to be an “unconstitutional decision and a system imposed outside the will of the Kurdistan Regional Government”. In his meetings with the Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq on 17 April, the President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Masoud Barzani, affirmed the Party’s continued commitment to democracy and elections. On 18 March, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, through its spokesperson, expressed its commitment to holding the elections as scheduled, as have several other political parties.

13. On 10 April, Muqtada al-Sadr announced the formation of a political entity: National Shia Trend. Earlier, on 5 April, the Sadrist Movement issued a statement confirming that it had held the first meeting to revive communication with the Sadrist supporters.

## **B. Relations between Baghdad and Erbil**

14. Discussions on outstanding issues between Baghdad and Erbil continued. On 10 March, the President of Iraq called on political leaders to establish institutions enshrined in the Constitution, notably the Federation Council, and to adopt laws that serve all citizens. Budget-sharing arrangements and hydrocarbon management remained key issues between the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments, and delayed payment of salaries to civil servants in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq led to recurrent strikes and protests, notably in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, during the reporting period.

15. On 21 February, the Federal Supreme Court issued a ruling on salary payments to civil servants in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The ruling stipulated that the federal Government is to ensure that monthly salary, pension and welfare payments to civil servants and other beneficiaries in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are deducted from the Region’s share of the federal budget through bank accounts opened at federal

Government banks or banks licensed by the Central Bank of Iraq. It also reiterated the financial rights and obligations of the Kurdistan Regional Government under the Federal Budget Law, including the submission of oil and non-oil revenues to the federal Government. Following the 21 February ruling, federal institutions and the Kurdistan Regional Government expressed diverging views over its implementation, including on the amount and modalities of financial disbursements to beneficiaries in the Region.

16. On 11 March, the federal Ministry of Finance transferred funds to the Kurdistan Regional Government for the disbursement of the Region's civil servant and welfare payments for the month of February. On 3 April, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Masrour Barzani, announced that an agreement regarding the payment of salaries had been reached with Baghdad following "persistent effort and extensive collaboration" between Baghdad and Erbil, allowing for the payment of March salaries and benefits. On the same day, the federal Ministry of Finance also announced the transfer of 352 billion Iraqi dinars to pay the February salaries of security personnel of the Kurdistan Region, which had not been covered by the tranche disbursed on 11 March. In early April, the federal Ministry of Finance transferred funds to the Ministry of Finance and Economy of the Kurdistan Regional Government for its March payroll, and on 7 April the latter confirmed that it had received the total amount of funds requested. These transfers remained temporary measures while both sides continued to express divergent views on compliance with the Federal Supreme Court ruling of 21 February, notably regarding practical modalities for the disbursement of salaries through a digital payment system.

17. Oil exports from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq through the Iraq-Türkiye pipeline have remained suspended since 25 March 2023, affecting the implementation of the Federal Budget Law, in particular the provision mandating that the Region transfer all oil revenues to the federal Government. Delegations of the Kurdistan Regional Government travelled to Baghdad in January 2024 and proposed amendments to the Federal Budget Law that would "remove barriers". However, no amendments were tabled during subsequent sessions of the Council of Ministers. Similarly, the federal draft law on oil and gas was not tabled by the Council of Ministers during the reporting period.

18. On 6 and 7 April, the President of the Kurdistan Region visited Baghdad, where he met with the Prime Minister and President of Iraq and other political leaders. A statement from the Office of the Prime Minister noted that the two leaders discussed a wide range of issues, including progress in implementing the government programme, national reform efforts and opportunities for overcoming "administrative and executive obstacles". According to a statement from the presidency of the Kurdistan Region, they also discussed the way forward regarding the payment of salaries and benefits in the Region in compliance with the Federal Supreme Court ruling of 21 February, the resumption of oil exports from the Region and amendments to the Federal Budget Law. At a press conference on 7 April following his visit, the President of the Kurdistan Region described his meetings in Baghdad as "fruitful". Touching on the upcoming polls in the Region, he also urged all political parties to engage constructively to address election-related differences, stressing that the holding of these elections was "crucial".

### **C. Security situation**

19. Da'esh continued to conduct asymmetric attacks, primarily in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates, most of which targeted Iraqi security forces personnel or assets, while Iraqi security forces continued counter-terrorism operations in response to Da'esh activity. For the third consecutive quarter,

a slight increase in attacks attributed to Da'esh was recorded, with 69 attacks attributed to the group from 1 January to 15 April, compared with 54 attacks from 1 October to 31 December 2023 and 49 attacks from 1 July to 30 September 2023. Overall, Da'esh attacks continue to follow a pattern of low-level armed conflict, with occasional spikes in activity.

20. During the reporting period, attacks targeting United States military and international counter-Da'esh coalition facilities in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic continued until early February, with the self-proclaimed Islamic Resistance in Iraq claiming responsibility for approximately 59 attacks from 1 January to 4 February.

21. According to the United States Central Command press release issued on 28 January, a drone attack on the Tower 22 base in north-eastern Jordan resulted in the death of three United States service members. A statement released on 28 January by the President of the United States, Joseph R. Biden, Jr., attributed it to "Iran-backed militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq". The Government of Iraq, in a statement issued on 29 January by its spokesperson, also condemned the "ongoing escalation, [particularly] the recent attack on the Syrian-Jordanian border" and urged "an end to the violence".

22. In the wake of an attack on Tower 22, according to a press release dated 2 February of the United States Central Command, United States Central Command forces "conducted airstrikes in Iraq and Syria" that "struck more than 85 targets ... of militia groups and their IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] sponsors who facilitated attacks against U.S. and Coalition forces". On 7 February, the United States Central Command announced that its forces conducted a strike in Iraq targeting a "Kata'ib Hezbollah commander responsible for directly planning and participating in attacks on U.S. forces in the region". The United States air strikes elicited strong condemnations from officials of the Iraqi Government, political leaders and armed groups, as well as renewed calls for an expedited departure of United States and international counter-Da'esh coalition military personnel in Iraq.

23. Bilateral talks between Iraqi and United States officials, which began in mid-2023, culminated in the launch in late January of the Higher Military Commission. According to a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq on 25 January, the Higher Military Commission is tasked with evaluating the threat posed by Da'esh, as well as the requirements and capabilities of the Iraqi security forces, in order to formulate a "specific and clear timeline that specifies the duration of the presence of the Global coalition's advisors in Iraq" and transitioning towards "comprehensive bilateral relations" with coalition countries. The Prime Minister of Iraq presided over the first Higher Military Commission meeting in Baghdad on 27 January, with a series of working group meetings subsequently held in Baghdad in February and March.

24. On 8 April, the Chief of the General Staff of the Iraqi armed forces, General Abdul Amir Yarallah, and the Commander of the United States Central Command, General Michael Erik Kurilla, co-chaired the Commission's fourth round of talks and inaugural principals' meeting in Baghdad. A statement from the spokesperson of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Iraq noted that discussions highlighted progress in the fight against Da'esh and added that the Commission's working groups were continuing their efforts to identify a timeline for the transition from the coalition mission to a series of relationships based on bilateral security partnerships. A statement from the United States Department of Defense on 9 April similarly noted both sides' "commitment to a process toward an orderly transition from the [coalition's] mission ... to enduring bilateral security partnerships" and "to building broader security cooperation between the United States and Iraq".

25. Throughout the reporting period, the Ministry of Defence of Türkiye reported ground and air operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party targets in northern Iraq.

#### **D. Regional and international developments**

26. The Government of Iraq continued to promote a foreign policy focused on strengthening bilateral ties, including by fostering economic cooperation and promoting security coordination, while underlining the need to enhance stability in the region and pursuing balanced regional and international relations. Energy and counter-terrorism efforts were also prominently featured in the country's external engagements.

27. In the context of the conflict in Gaza, the Government of Iraq continued to issue statements that called for a cessation of hostilities, expressed support for the rights of Palestinians and urged the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.

28. On 13 April, the Prime Minister of Iraq embarked on his first official visit to Washington, D.C. On 15 April, he met with the President of the United States and separately with the Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, and the Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin. The Prime Minister also met with representatives of Iraqi communities based in the United States during his visit. In remarks delivered at the White House briefing room before his meeting with Mr. Biden, the Prime Minister underlined that his visit was aimed at discussing "the sustainable foundations for a 360-degree strategic partnership", while Mr. Biden described the partnership between Iraq and the United States as "critical". According to a joint statement from the White House and the Office of the Prime Minister, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the enduring strategic partnership between Iraq and the United States and discussed their visions for comprehensive bilateral cooperation under the 2008 strategic framework agreement between the United States and Iraq. According to the joint statement, discussions were focused on regional integration and political cooperation; economic and financial issues; the "enduring defeat" of Da'esh; the future of the international counter-Da'esh coalition; and the strategic long-term partnership of Iraq and the United States, notably through the Higher Coordinating Committee.

29. On April 15 and 16, the President of Iraq visited Jordan, where he was received by King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, as well as by high-ranking government officials. The 13 April visit of the Prime Minister to Washington, D.C. had been announced on 22 March, when the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Fuad Mohammad Hussein had begun a five-day visit to Washington, D.C., where he met with Mr. Blinken and the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, among other officials. Prior to his visit to the United States, the Minister for Foreign Affairs had visited Canada from 20 to 22 March, where he had met with his Canadian counterpart, Mélanie Joly; the Minister of National Defence, Bill Blair; the Minister of International Development, Ahmed Hussen; and other senior officials. Earlier, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government had visited Washington, D.C. from 25 February to 5 March, where he had met with Mr. Blinken and other United States officials.

30. On 5 February, the Prime Minister of Iraq received the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ali Akbar Ahmadian, to discuss efforts to strengthen bilateral security cooperation. In addition, the Chief Justice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i, visited Baghdad on 13 and 14 February and met with Iraqi officials and political leaders. According to subsequent statements, topics of discussion included enhancing judicial cooperation, preserving Iraqi sovereignty, the implementation of the March 2023 bilateral security agreement between Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran and the stabilization of Iraq. On 2 March, the President of Iraq met with his Iranian

counterpart, Ebrahim Raisi, on the margins of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum in Algeria. According to a statement from the Iraqi presidency on the same day, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran had expressed his support for advancing the security and stability of Iraq. In the speech he delivered at the Forum, President Rashid touched upon the need to strike a balance between energy security and the reduction of emissions, while pointing to the progress made in exploiting gas resources in Iraq. On 3 April, the Prime Minister of Iraq spoke with the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran by telephone and offered his condolences for the 1 April air strike that had targeted the Iranian Consulate in Damascus.

31. On 14 March, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, Hakan Fidan, met in Baghdad for bilateral talks. The first round of these talks had been held in Ankara on 19 December. The talks were focused on regional security and bilateral issues. A subsequent joint statement released by the Ministries stated that the Kurdistan Workers' Party "represents a security threat to both Türkiye and Iraq" and that the "presence of this organization on Iraqi territory represents a violation of the Iraqi Constitution". The statement added that the National Security Council of Iraq had taken a decision to "consider the PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party] a banned organization in Iraq", and that both parties had "consulted on the measures to be taken against the organization".

32. Iraq was represented at various international conferences and forums. The Prime Minister of Iraq, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, among others, attended the Munich Security Conference held in Germany from 15 to 17 February. On the margins of the Conference, the Iraqi leaders met with officials from Armenia, Bahrain, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Monaco, Qatar, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Holy See, in addition to officials from the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations. Discussions revolved around enhancing bilateral relations, addressing economic and environmental challenges, enabling the swift delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and regional security developments.

33. Iraqi officials also participated in regional forums. From 1 to 3 March, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the National Security Adviser, Qasim al-Araji, participated in the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, held in Türkiye, where the Iraqi officials reiterated their commitment to enhancing regional economic and energy-based integration. On the margins of the Forum, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq met with the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to discuss economic cooperation and regional stability. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq also participated in the ministerial meeting of the League of Arab States in Cairo on 6 March, during which he highlighted the decision of the Council of Ministers of Iraq to allocate \$25 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

34. Iraq also hosted international conferences in Baghdad. The thirty-third session of the Executive Committee of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, chaired by the acting Speaker of the Council of Representatives, was held on 13 February and were focused on enhancing parliamentary relations and supporting Palestinians amid the ongoing hostilities in Gaza. On 24 February, the sixth Baghdad International Dialogue Conference was organized by the Iraqi Institute for Dialogue to discuss enhancing regional connectivity, with both the President and Prime Minister of Iraq addressing the Conference.

35. On 22 April, the President of Türkiye visited Baghdad with a high-level delegation and met with the President and Prime Minister of Iraq and other government officials. According to the presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, President Erdoğan, speaking at a joint press conference with the Prime Minister of

Iraq, noted that his visit would be a “new milestone in the Türkiye-Iraq relations”. According to the Office of the Prime Minister of Iraq, the Prime Minister noted that President Erdoğan’s visit was a “clear expression of the depth of the relationship” between the two countries. The Prime Minister added that the security of Türkiye and Iraq is “indivisible” and that cooperation between the two countries is important. According to the media office of the Prime Minister, various memorandums of understanding and agreements had been signed, including on the strategic framework, water cooperation, the Development Road project, security cooperation and economic and trade partnerships, among other areas. The President of Türkiye also travelled to Erbil and met with the President and Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, as well as with the President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and other senior officials. According to the presidency of the Kurdistan Region, the meetings were focused on security issues, the fight against terrorism and economic and trade issues.

### **III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team**

#### **A. Political activities**

36. Throughout the reporting period, the Special Representative continued to meet with government officials, judicial actors, political party leaders, electoral stakeholders, civil society representatives, women’s rights activists and youth, among other interlocutors.

37. In her engagements, the Special Representative underscored the importance of strengthening and preserving domestic stability to further progress on the path to stability, preserve the achievements made to date and establish Iraq as an arena for dialogue and foreign investment. She cautioned all actors to exercise maximum restraint following the situation in Gaza.

38. During her visits to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Special Representative met with Region officials and party representatives to discuss ways of resolving outstanding issues in the Region as well as between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, emphasizing the need for regular and structured dialogue with clear timelines.

39. To support the finding of a solution following the repeated postponement of parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Special Representative met with political, legal and other stakeholders. In line with these efforts, the Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq frequently engaged with the Chair of the Independent High Electoral Commission and authorities and parties of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

40. On 10 January and 18 March, to follow up on commitments made by the Special Representative in her meetings with authorities and representatives of the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Region and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Deputy Special Representative visited six camps for Iranian Kurdish opposition groups in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. During and after his visit, he held meetings with representatives of those groups, as well as with senior federal and Kurdistan Region authorities and officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the aim of consolidating security arrangements between Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran whereby these groups would disarm and commit to civilian status in order to de-escalate regional tensions.



41. In meetings with federal and Kurdistan Region authorities, and in further consultation with the Sinjar community, the Deputy Special Representative continued to call for a unified administration and stable security structures. A survey of local community views, conducted by UNAMI and published in March, confirmed the existence of continuing social divisions among the communities of Sinjar, as well as of widespread concerns about insufficient services and security, accountability for human rights abuses by Da'esh and compensation.

42. On 29 January, the Deputy Special Representative, together with the National Directorate of Iraqi Women, launched a report outlining progress and challenges related to women's participation in political and electoral processes, including the recently held Governorate Council elections.

## **B. Electoral assistance**

43. UNAMI engaged with the authorities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission in furtherance of the discussions on determining the election date and in moving forward with the preparations for the parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

44. On 20 February, UNAMI attended a meeting of the representatives of the presidency and vice-presidencies of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Region's Council of Ministers and members and senior officials of the Commission regarding the electoral operational timeline and election date. UNAMI also engaged with electoral stakeholders in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq following the Federal Supreme Court ruling of 21 February declaring unconstitutional several articles of the Kurdistan Region Parliamentary Election Law, including those pertaining to the number of constituencies, the number of seats in the parliament, the minority quota provisions, the voter list, the election management body and the authority for the adjudication of electoral challenges.

45. On 3 March, the Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance met with the Commission's Board of Commissioners, which briefed him on the Commission's electoral timeline and its readiness to hold the elections. He also reiterated the continued provision of United Nations electoral support in line with the UNAMI mandate.

46. Following the setting of the election date for 10 June 2024 by the President of the Kurdistan Region, UNAMI worked with Commission counterparts in updating the electoral timeline to reflect the new election date. Preparatory activities included the registration of political alliances, political parties and individual candidates intending to participate in the elections. The Commission set the period of 13 to 22 March for the submission of candidate lists, which was later extended to 28 March and then to 31 March. A total of two alliances, 10 political parties and 57 independent candidates were officially registered as participants in the elections. The Kurdistan Democratic Party, which held the highest number of seats during the previous term of the Region parliament, did not submit its list of candidates by the 31 March deadline. Almost all Turkmen and Christian political parties stood firm on their decision not to participate in the elections, with only the Iraqi Turkoman Front submitting a list of candidates. On 8 April, the Commission proceeded with the ballot lottery process to determine the order in which competing political entities would appear on the ballot paper.

47. Upon the Commission's request, UNAMI provided support to the committee tasked with overseeing the implementation of the electoral operational plan. UNAMI electoral advisers also engaged with the Commission's legal officers in preparing regulations and instructions, including those pertaining to the registration of alliances and candidates; the attendance of observers and party agents; polling and counting;

media; and the processing of electoral complaints and appeals. UNAMI also supported the Commission in preparing a public outreach plan, finalizing the voter list and developing the election results management system. On 10 March, the voter registration update process ended with a total of 2,890,387 registered voters in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The Commission subsequently started the process of printing and distributing the biometric voter cards.

48. As after previous elections, the Commission held a week-long “lessons learned” workshop in February 2024 to review and harness lessons from the Governorate Council elections held on 18 December 2023. Commission officials and UNAMI electoral advisers discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the electoral process and recommendations for further improving processes for upcoming elections.

### **C. Human rights and rule of law developments and activities**

49. From 1 January to 15 April, UNAMI documented 20 conflict-related incidents resulting in at least 54 civilian casualties (15 dead, including 4 children and 1 woman, and 39 injured, including 10 children and 3 women). The majority of these civilian casualties were caused by indirect fire, followed by explosive remnants of war and aerial attacks.

50. From 1 January to 15 April, the country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in armed conflict verified 16 grave violations against 16 children (14 boys and 2 girls), including the killing and maiming of 14 children (12 boys and 2 girls) as a result of explosive remnants of war (3 killed and 8 maimed) and air strikes (1 killed and 2 maimed), and the abduction of 2 boys.

51. On 27 April, the Council of Representatives adopted the new Anti-Prostitution and Homosexuality Law, which amended Anti-Prostitution Law No. 8 of 1988 by criminalizing homosexuality, “effeminacy” and other forms of private consensual behaviour. The new law notably introduced sentences of 10 to 15 years’ imprisonment for establishing a “homosexual relationship” and a minimum of seven years’ imprisonment and a fine of at least 10 million Iraqi dinars for promoting “homosexuality”.

52. From 7 to 11 January, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict visited Iraq at the invitation of the Government of Iraq. During her visit, the Special Representative met with senior government and United Nations officials, civil society representatives and members of the diplomatic community. In a statement issued at the end of her visit, the Special Representative welcomed the Government’s signing in March 2023 of an action plan for the prevention of use and recruitment of children by the Popular Mobilization Forces and commended the progress achieved in its implementation. The Special Representative encouraged the Government to further institutionalize the protection of conflict-affected children by developing preventative frameworks, prioritizing demining and explosive risk education, ensuring legal documentation for all children, strengthening reintegration and rehabilitation and addressing the challenges faced by children detained due to their or their families’ actual or perceived association with armed groups.

53. On 1 March, at its seventy-fifth session, the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights adopted its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Iraq. In its concluding observations, the Committee set out detailed recommendations to the Government for legislative and policy reform aimed at improving the country’s implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These included strengthening the protection of human rights defenders, enhancing climate change mitigation measures, strengthening the legal framework on non-discrimination, providing accountability for corruption and improving access to

the rights to education, health, food and adequate housing. In its concluding observations, the Committee welcomed the accession of Iraq to a significant number of international instruments and expressed its appreciation for the constructive dialogue with the delegation of Iraq during the session, including with representatives from the Kurdistan Regional Government. It also reiterated its previous recommendation that Iraq fully incorporate the economic, social and cultural rights contained in the Covenant into its domestic legal order, and that it raise awareness of them and of their justiciability.

54. On 7 March, UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a joint public report entitled “Accountability for domestic violence in Iraq: promoting justice and non-discrimination”. The report’s findings were based on a review of 100 domestic violence court cases in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul, as well as observations of trial hearings, examination of court judgments and meetings with judges, lawyers, prosecutors, government officials and survivors and their families. The report acknowledges the steps already taken by the Government of Iraq to address domestic violence and provides concrete recommendations aimed at strengthening the legal framework, facilitating the reporting of domestic violence cases and promoting accountability by improving investigations and court processes.

55. As part of United Nations support under the Joint Communiqué on Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, on 6 March, the Coordinator for International Advocacy of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the UNAMI Human Rights Office co-chaired a multi-stakeholder round table meeting to discuss the implementation of the Kurdistan Region human rights plan for the period 2021–2025, with a focus on conflict-related sexual violence. The forum will reconvene every eight weeks to review progress.

56. On 2 March, UNAMI and the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum jointly organized a one-day regional symposium entitled “The reality of women journalists in conflict areas: challenges and solutions”. The symposium was attended by media professionals representing international and national media institutions from their respective countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, as well as by the Prime Minister’s Adviser on Women’s Affairs, Members of Parliament and representatives of civil society. Participants discussed the role of women journalists, digital media reporting and measures to strengthen the legal and policy framework to improve their protection and safety.

57. Journalists, activists, civil society representatives and political commentators continued to face restrictions on their freedom of expression, including arrest and prosecution, under broad provisions in the Penal Code that prohibit defamation and public insult. On 5 February, a civil activist was convicted of insulting public officials and sentenced to one year of imprisonment following a television interview in which he had highlighted corruption by State institutions. On 20 February, the Communication and Media Commission issued an instruction to media outlets banning interviews with a well-known political analyst following his public criticism of a senior government figure.

#### **D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development**

58. As at April 2024, the number of internally displaced persons who had returned stood at 4.9 million, whereas 1.12 million remained internally displaced in formal and informal settlements across the country.

59. On 23 January, the Council of Ministers decided to close the 22 remaining camps for internally displaced persons throughout Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, by 30 July 2024. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR), the 22 camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq host 31,793 families, comprising 156,408 internally displaced persons. Further to the Government's decision, on 20 March, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement closed the Tazade internally displaced persons camp in Sulaymaniyah. According to UNHCR, 120 families, comprising 566 individuals (298 of them women), were in the camp before its closure; 83 of these families returned to their areas of origin in Diyala and Salah al-Din Governorates. The remaining families were resettled in other districts in Sulaymaniyah, Diyala and Anbar. Each returning family received a grant of 4 million Iraqi dinars from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement in addition to relief aid. Moreover, the federal Ministry of Education decided to close its representation offices in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq by 30 July 2024. These offices have been supporting schools in the internally displaced person camps through the provision of teachers and education materials for the Arabic curriculum since 2014. When implemented, the decision will affect the education of an estimated 160,000 students, both inside and outside of the camps, enrolled in 329 Arabic schools in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

60. During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq focused on the return process of its nationals from Hawl camp in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic, increasing coordination between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations. Since May 2021, 2,070 households, comprising 8,183 individuals (including 4,747 women and girls), have been registered in the Jad'ah Rehabilitation Centre in Ninawa Governorate. Of these, 1,427 households, consisting of 5,510 individuals, have since left for their areas of return. On 9 March, and as part of the fourteenth round of organized returns led by the Government of Iraq, 157 Iraqi families, comprising 625 individuals, returned from Hawl camp to the Jad'ah Rehabilitation Centre in Ninawa Governorate. As of the end of March, 709 households remain in the Centre, consisting of 2,673 individuals (1,557 of them women). UNHCR and partners continued to support the Centre's residents in obtaining civil documents prior to their departure to areas of return. Since January 2024, 49 Iraqi nationality certificates were issued for residents with the support of a mobile mission of the Directorate of Civil Affairs of Ninawa. Currently, 19,516 Iraqi nationals (5,482 families) remain in Hawl camp.

61. Through its stabilization programme aimed at the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to implement infrastructure rehabilitation projects in 41 areas across Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. By mid-April, UNDP had completed 23 projects with an impact on 919,067 individuals, including 443,536 women. In addition, by mid-April, UNDP had provided short-term employment opportunities to 530 individuals through its cash-for-work initiative.

62. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through its flagship initiative "Revive the spirit of Mosul", completed the reconstruction of the Saa'a convent in February 2024. The reconstruction of the Nuri mosque and its minaret (known as the Hadba' minaret) and Al-Tahirah church are expected to be completed by the end of 2024. Through these endeavours, UNESCO generated nearly 6,500 local jobs. Also in Mosul, UNESCO is supporting the recovery and digitization of ancient manuscripts in the Mosul University Library, benefiting over 60,000 students.

63. The Mine Action Service cleared 45,570 m<sup>2</sup> of explosive ordnance in Ninawa Governorate. Following advocacy efforts aimed at mine action authorities, life-saving explosive ordnance risk education messages were integrated into the 2023–24 school curriculum to raise awareness and protect children from the threat of explosive remnants of war. The Service continues to advance localization efforts through partnerships with national mine action organizations. Currently, two accredited Iraqi non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are implementing explosive ordnance

clearance, survey and risk education funded through direct grants. The focus is on enhancing the capacity of national operators to autonomously survey and clear complex explosive devices placed by Da'esh.

64. The United Nations country team has been focusing on the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2025–2029) in close coordination with the Government of Iraq. The first joint technical committee meeting between the Government and the country team convened in March. Additional consultations were held with civil society organizations, development partners and youth groups. The Framework will serve as a common planning document for the United Nations in Iraq.

65. In April, in consultation with the Government of Iraq and the international community, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq and the Minister of Environment launched the Environment and Climate Change Policy Advisory Group. This Group, comprising governmental entities, partners, NGOs, academia, young people and the private sector, is expected to serve as an informal platform to provide guidance and policy support to the Government of Iraq on a range of environmental and climate change-related issues. It is also expected to provide evidence- and science-based policy guidance and to engage on advocacy matters related to climate change. It will support the implementation of the country's climate and environmental priorities, serving as an accelerator for environmental and climate efforts.

66. On 19 and 20 February, the International Trade Centre (ITC) organized the second Iraq National Trade Forum jointly with the Ministries of Trade and Agriculture, with support by the European Union. The Forum facilitated connections between more than 180 companies through 240 business-to-business meetings, resulting in a potential deal value of \$5.8 million. It also facilitated discussions on topics relevant to economic development in Iraq, including accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). In support of accession, Iraq submitted its initial offers on goods and services to WTO in March 2024, which WTO has reviewed and provided feedback on. Meanwhile, ITC coordination with the Ministry of Trade resulted in the establishment of a unified tariff system between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

67. The World Food Programme (WFP) continued to support the Government in establishing a single registry to enhance social protection and food security in Iraq by creating an interoperable platform among all social protection systems. The design phase of the project was finalized in 2023, and implementation started in 2024 for hardware and software installation.

68. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued its efforts to modernize farming practices and boost productivity in the agricultural sector in Iraq. It introduced innovative technologies and machinery, conducted training and delivered equipment to enhance the resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable communities. Jointly with the Government of Iraq, FAO launched a training programme on the formulation of sustainable land management policy, empowering decision-makers to effectively advocate for and implement sustainable land management policies, in a commitment to advance environmental sustainability in Iraq.

69. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continued to support the Ministry of the Interior in combating drug trafficking through the provision of strategic guidance on legislative reforms, tailored to include special investigative techniques, and plans to implement training programmes for police personnel. UNODC also continued the development of regional legal frameworks to strengthen mutual legal assistance. Meanwhile, in its efforts to provide essential services to children in detention and to promote the rehabilitation of children deprived of their

liberty due to association with terrorist and violent extremist groups, UNODC established four dental clinics in rehabilitation schools and observation houses in Baghdad and Mosul.

70. In February, the Council of Ministers endorsed the draft law on arbitration, to which UNDP had provided policy and advisory assistance. The legislation has been forwarded to the Council of Representatives for review and adoption and is poised to establish efficient dispute resolution mechanisms, fostering an environment conducive to economic growth.

71. In February, in collaboration with the UNAMI Human Rights Office, UNDP concluded the trial monitoring report and presented it to the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq. The report is the outcome of the trial monitoring programme conducted for the past two years and addresses the challenges and needs of the Iraqi judiciary system with respect to bolstering its capacity to adjudicate corruption cases. An agreement was reached to develop a strategic plan to implement the report's recommendations.

72. During the reporting period, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided technical support to the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to develop the strategic framework and methodology to implement the population census in 2024. It also supported technical assistance to establish a methodology to calculate and estimate indicators of youth development, the contribution of the indicators of youth development to the modernization of the methods to estimate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and national indicators related to the development agenda.

73. In partnership with the Office of the National Security Adviser of Iraq, the Office of Counter-Terrorism continued to support the members of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of Iraq to incorporate human rights considerations in counter-terrorism operations, focusing during the reporting period on monitoring and reporting on human rights in counter-terrorism.

## **IV. Security and operational issues**

### **A. Update on security arrangements**

74. To enable United Nations operations, the Department of Safety and Security continued to carry out its monitoring and analysis activities, adjust security measures and contingency plans, liaise with host Government authorities and disseminate safety and security alerts and advisories to inform staff of emerging threats or developments in the security environment.

75. The Department supported an average of 35 field missions per day across the country in areas where the present risk is assessed as medium or high. Close coordination with the Government continued to ensure the necessary security support for United Nations operations.

### **B. UNAMI facilities, logistics, aviation, financial and legal issues**

76. The solar energy project, which is aimed at increasing the share of renewable energy to half of total consumption in the United Nations compounds in Baghdad, Erbil and Kirkuk, has reached a 97 per cent completion rate across all sites. The project is expected to be fully operational by the end of April 2024. The initiative to upgrade wastewater treatment plants in these locations, undertaken by UNAMI in partnership with UNICEF, has reached a completion rate of 98 per cent.

## V. Observations

77. I commend the commitment of the Government of Iraq to advancing regional stability through dialogue and diplomacy. I appreciate its continued support to the work of the United Nations in Iraq.

78. The timely formation of 13 out of 15 local government administrations following the successful holding of the Governorate Council elections is welcome. I encourage all stakeholders in the two remaining governorates to work towards swift solutions in the larger interest of the local communities.

79. It is concerning that the position of Speaker of the Council of Representatives has now remained vacant for more than five months. I hope that political leaders will soon agree on a constructive solution to this consequential leadership vacuum. An effective legislature is vital for enacting key legislation, exercising oversight and building stronger State institutions.

80. A constructive, stable and trusting relationship between federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is critical to the country's stability. I call on both federal and Kurdistan Region political leaders to redouble their efforts in search of mutually beneficial solutions on outstanding issues based on the Constitution of Iraq.

81. The holding of the long overdue Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections is critical for the legitimacy of the institutions of the Region as well as for the stability of the Region and all of Iraq. I call on all parties to work in the interest of the citizens of the Kurdistan Region and thus avoid another prolonged impasse.

82. It is imperative to adopt a clear national legal framework criminalizing domestic violence and to strengthen related investigative and judicial processes. I welcome positive steps taken by Iraq – including the adoption of the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women and Girls – while urging for more efforts to create a safe and supportive environment for survivors of domestic violence, including by improving their access to justice and ensuring accountability.

83. The adoption of the Anti-Prostitution and Homosexuality Law by the Council of Representatives, criminalizing consensual same-sex relations, runs contrary to several human rights treaties and conventions ratified by Iraq, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

84. Durable solutions for internally displaced persons are crucial for the long-term stability and prosperity of Iraq. I take note of the Council of Ministers' decision to close the displacement file in Iraq and underscore that this decision should be complemented by the provision of solutions to prevent secondary displacement and include displaced persons outside camps and vulnerable returnees.

85. I reaffirm the support of the United Nations to the Government of Iraq in its efforts to repatriate its citizens from Hawl Camp in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. While I encourage the Government to accelerate the pace of Iraqi returns, I also appeal to all Governments with nationals in Hawl to repatriate them without further delay.

86. The complex repercussions of climate change and water scarcity in Iraq must be urgently tackled. While timely assistance is required from the global community, collaborative efforts are also needed regionally, considering the interconnected and transnational nature of these challenges. The United Nations stands ready to support the Government of Iraq in developing practical and sustainable solutions in this regard.

87. Finally, I would like to thank my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and the United Nations staff in Iraq for their continued dedication to implementing the Organization's mandate in the country.