

# UNAMI Herald

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July - August 2020



## Facing pandemic, economic and political challenges, Iraq Government 'operating in the eyes of multiple storms at once'



**New York, 26 August 2020** - The COVID-19 pandemic is aggravating deep-rooted economic, social and political challenges in Iraq, but elections in 2021 – if credible - could open a new chapter for the Middle East nation after years of conflict and strife, the UN's top official in the country said Wednesday.

Briefing the Security Council via video-teleconference, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said that for important – and painful – reforms to take root, Iraq's political class must unite and put the nation's interests first in order to unlock a brighter future for all its citizens.

"As I've said before: an environment that promotes inclusive growth and employment remains the best remedy against unrest, conflict and external interference," said Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, who heads the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Presenting the Secretary-General's latest reports on UNAMI and on Kuwaitis and third-country nationals still missing since the 1990 Gulf War, she said that poverty in Iraq has grown by more than 10 per cent in recent months, with one in three Iraqis living below the poverty line.

Iraq in the 'eye of multiple storms'  
More than 11 million school and university students have seen their studies disrupted by the pandemic, while gender-based violence has doubled amid dwindling options for victims to seek assistance and shelter, she said.

Iraq's economy is meanwhile expected to contract by 9.7 per cent in

GDP terms as oil revenues – severely impacted by a global crash in oil prices – have been cut by nearly half. Corruption remains endemic and the private sector has been particularly hard hit by job losses and reduced income.

Dangers meanwhile persist for humanitarian workers in certain areas, as

seen earlier in the day when a UN World Food Programme (WFP) convoy encountered an improvised explosive device on the Mosul-Erbil road in Ninewa governorate, she said. One WFP staff member was injured in the blast.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert acknowledged that the Government – led by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi – is "undoubtedly operating in the eye of multiple storms at once," even if the pandemic has somewhat muted social unrest.

Early moves by the Government towards greater accountability, more robust support for freedom and assembly, and a tangible commitment to justice are encouraging, she said, adding however that more action is needed – including investigations into deadly attacks on activists and human rights defenders.

"Oblivious partisanship and short-sighted zero-sum politics continue to be major obstacles for progress, but to be clear, no party, person or entity must be allowed to hijack the legitimate demands of the Iraqi people," she said.

She also pointed out that the Government – operating in a challenging geopolitical environment – is giving priority in its foreign affairs to State-to-State dialogue and relationship building.

"I sincerely hope that Iraq will be given further room to focus on its domestic resilience, instead of being used as a venue for different power competitions," she added.

On elections, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert

– who is also the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq – said that 6 June 2021 has been announced as the date that Iraqis will return to the polls.

She stressed, however, that Parliament has yet to resolve crucial questions about the apportionment of legislative seats and the delineation of constituencies. Sorting out such details must be based on technical considerations, not partisanship, she declared.

Equally important, she said, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) must be strengthened and freed from the grip of political pressure, particularly in the selection of electoral personnel and developing voting procedures.

She added that UNAMI stands ready to help the Commission develop a comprehensive voter registry, a transparent and reliable elections results system and a judicious framework for handling electoral complaints.

"Restoring public trust is hard work, and within that context, free and fair elections will prove crucial," she told Council members.

"An electoral 'reset' could open a new and important chapter for Iraq – but for this to happen, the elections must be credible. This is the responsibility not only of the IHEC and the Government, but also of all Iraqi political actors and electoral stakeholders."

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert cautiously welcomed a recent agreement – "albeit tenuous" – between Baghdad and Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan region, on such issues as the payment of Kurdish public salaries, adding however that 15 years after the adoption of a fresh Constitution, it is time to clearly define the rights and obligations of both authorities.

Another concern is the recent escalation in Iraqi-Turkish border areas, she said, urging both countries to resolve their differences through dialogue, cooperation and full respect for national sovereignty.

By UN News.

## In this edition ...

### Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its videoteleconference

**New York, 26 August 2020** – On its videoteleconference convened on 126 August 2020, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. The text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on this meeting starts on page 3.

### Building a foundation for Iraq's recovery from COVID-19

**Baghdad, 20 July 2020** — With the support of donors and in coordination with the Ministry of Health, UNDP Iraq is committed to providing targeted support to ensure the critical needs of Iraq's most vulnerable people are addressed. *More on page 22.*

### UN: accountability for human rights violations during peaceful protests is key

**Baghdad/Geneva, 27 August 2020** – Despite promising steps by the current Government of Iraq concerning human rights violations and abuses committed in the context of recent demonstrations, accountability remains elusive, according to a UN report released on Thursday. *More on page 32.*

### Secretary-General appoints Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano of Germany as Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq



Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano assumed her responsibilities as Deputy Special Representative for Iraq, in the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and Resident Coordinator on 4 August 2020. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano of Germany will also serve as Humanitarian Coordinator.

Appointed by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on 2 July 2020, Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano brings to this position more than three decades of global expertise in migration and refugee issues, coordinating United Nations development and humanitarian responses, including as United Nations Resident Coordinator in Turkey (2016-2019) and Serbia (2013-2016). Since August 2019, Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano has served as United Nations Regional Director a.i. of the Development Coordination Office for Europe and Central Asia in Istanbul.

From 2010-2013, Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano was the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Director for Migration Management in Geneva, and served as IOM Deputy Chief of Staff in 2009. Prior to that, she served in senior IOM roles in Bangkok, Vienna, Geneva and Manila.

Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano holds a Diploma in International Economic Relations from the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, a Master's Degree in History, Geography and International Law from the University of Vienna, and a Bachelor's degree in History, Sociology, Geography and Political Science from the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano is proficient in English, German and Czech. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano succeeded Marta Ruedas of Spain, who retired from the United Nations in May. From May till her arrival in Baghdad on 4 August, Mr. Richard W. Dictus served as ad interim Deputy Special Representative for Iraq, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator.

### UNFPA in Iraq welcomes its new Representative, Dr Rita Columbia

**Baghdad, 1 July 2020** - Dr Rita Columbia, an American national, assumed her responsibilities as UNFPA Representative to Iraq on 1 July 2020. Previously, she served as UNFPA Representative to Moldova and Country Director for Albania.

Dr Columbia has more than 20 years of experience in the area of public health, sexual and reproductive health as well as programme management and advocacy. She worked in governmental institutions, non-governmental sector and UNFPA.

She holds a medical degree specialized in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, a Master's degree in Public Administration and a Master's degree in *Health Management*.

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PIO Director: Samir Ghattas  
Editor-in-Chief: Ivan Djordjevic

Editorial Board: Samir Ghattas, Khalid Dahab, Ivan Djordjevic, Laila Shamji, Celia Thompson, Sarmad Al-Safy.

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In the UNAMI Herald articles are sorted according to the topic and in a chronological order.

## Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 26th August videoteleconference

**New York, 26 August 2020** – On its videoteleconference convened on 26 August 2020, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. Here is the text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on this meeting:

Mister President,  
Distinguished members of the Security Council,  
No country or community has been spared the devastating impact of COVID-19, and Iraq is no exception. To the contrary: the pandemic has aggravated deep existing economic and social challenges.

A few salient numbers to illustrate humanitarian concerns:

- Poverty has increased by over ten percent in recent months. One third of Iraqis now live below the poverty line, and two out of five suffer multiple deprivations in accessing basic social services and rights.
- Food consumption is now insufficient for over three million Iraqis, due to reduced purchasing power rather than food scarcity.
- With regards to education, over eleven million school and university students across Iraq have seen their studies disrupted.
- And Gender-based violence has alarmingly doubled, amid dwindling options for victims to seek assistance and find shelter.

Now, in terms of our response to these challenges, I reiterate my earlier message with regards to humanitarian access on the ground: we need a simplified system that enables currently immobilized humanitarian actors and supplies to rapidly reach people in need. Positive discussions are underway with the government, and we now hope to receive a decision within days.

In terms of security, conditions for humanitarian actors are also hazardous in certain areas, as was starkly highlighted today by the IED explosion that impacted a World Food Programme convoy in Ninewa.

Mr. President,  
Economic trouble is never far from humanitarian concerns:

- Iraq is expected to experience a



9.7% decline in GDP. Oil revenues, severely affected by a steep crash in oil prices, have nearly halved.

- The private sector has been particularly impacted by job losses and income reduction, it also remains hindered by a lack of reforms. Non-oil GDP growth is decelerating in a country that is in dire need of economic diversification.
- And lest we forget: corruption remains endemic, and its economic cost untold as it continues to steal desperately needed resources from the everyday Iraqi, eroding investor confidence. Crucially, this scourge of corruption also drives many of Iraq's security issues.

Now, the Iraqi government recognizes these challenges and has made economic and financial reform a priority.

The Minister of Finance is expected to deliver a detailed economic reform plan to Parliament imminently.

But for important, painful reforms to take root within a historical context of perceived rights and entitlements, the political class must come together as one, prioritizing the country's interest and protecting the vulnerable. So far, however, we have seen too little of this spirit.

But let me emphasize: these reforms are of great importance to unlock a brighter future for all Iraqis, one in which the country can move from putting out fires to building sustainable solutions and domestic resilience.

As I've said before, many times,: an environment that promotes inclusive

growth and employment remains the best remedy against unrest, conflict and external interference.

Mr. President,

The Government of Iraq is undoubtedly operating in the eyes of multiple storms at once.

Unresolved, long-standing grievances have not disappeared. And Iraqis want their voices to be heard. In recent months, social unrest has continued throughout Iraq - albeit somewhat muted by the ongoing pandemic.

Of great concern is another spike in the killings and targeting of activists and human rights defenders. Now, the silencing of peaceful voices - by exerting pressure on activists and media, by confusing the scene or even worse, by shedding blood - this deliberate silencing of peaceful voices - is an affront against basic rights and dignity.

And let us also remember those still missing, the ones in need of medical care and those who had to flee the country, often living in difficult circumstances and unable to return because of grave threats and intimidation.

And yet, Mr. President, we do find reason to be cautiously encouraged by the statements and some early actions of the current government. Indeed, we are witnessing a move towards greater accountability, more robust support to freedom of expression and assembly, and also tangible commitments to justice.

These are certainly hopeful signs, but



## Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 26th August videoteleconference *(continued)*



further action is urgently needed to deliver true justice and accountability. Condemning the violence and announcing investigations are only a first step.

Now those who know (and love) Iraq recognize how puzzling the Iraqi context is, with too many parties pursuing their own narrow interests, weakening the State from within. Oblivious partisanship and short-sighted zero-sum politics continue to be major obstacles for progress. But to be clear: no party, person or entity must be allowed to hijack the legitimate demands of the Iraqi people.

Mr. President,

To my great regret, armed groups continue to recklessly flex their muscles, generally seeking to create an environment of blunt intimidation.

This means that, while Iraqi citizens are in desperate need of a stable, safe and secure environment, the sabre-rattling continues.

Surely, we all agree that Iraqis can scarcely afford another cycle of escalating violence. It is high time for these militant actors to take a long hard look in the mirror.

And benefitting from internal divisions, exploiting security gaps, Da'esh continues to claim lives.

Mr. President,

The Government of Iraq also operates in a uniquely challenging geopolitical environment. And I would like to salute and encourage Iraqi efforts to emphasize national independence and sovereignty.

The Iraqi government is determined to keep multiple channels of communication and exchange open, opting for state-to-state dialogue and relationship-building first and foremost.

I sincerely hope that Iraq will be given further room to focus on its domestic resilience, instead of being used as a venue for different power competitions. The recent escalation in Iraqi-Turkish border areas is also a matter of great concern. We continue to urge both countries to resolve their differences through dialogue and cooperation with full respect for national sovereignty.

Mr. President,

A central popular demand has consistently been the holding of early elections, and the date of 6 June 2021 has now been announced.

However, Parliament has not yet resolved the crucial questions of seat apportionment and constituency delineation. Now, technical considerations, not partisanship, must govern their finalization.

Equally important, IHEC - the Independent High Electoral Commission, must be strengthened and freed from persistent political pressures, particularly in personnel selection as well as the development and implementation of electoral procedures.

To address electoral challenges and build public confidence in its impartiality and technical capabilities, IHEC also needs to adopt workable measures such as:

- a comprehensive, inclusive voter registry,
- a transparent, tested and reliable election results system, and
- a judicious framework to handle electoral complaints and appeals.

And of course, UNAMI stands ready to assist.

Now, restoring public trust is hard work. And within that context, free and fair elections will prove crucial. An electoral 'reset' could open a new and

important chapter for Iraq. But for this to happen, the elections must be credible. This is not only the responsibility of IHEC and the Government, but also of all Iraqi political actors and electoral stakeholders.

Turning to Baghdad-Erbil relations: constructive negotiations are the only viable way forward, I have said it many times.

Now, the Iraqi Constitution was drafted under great time pressure in 2005. General principles were enshrined in the text, with their implementation left to be specified by subsequent supporting legislation.

But fifteen years later, this lack of specificity continues to shape the debate between the federal government and the KRG. Fifteen years without an agreement on the gradual enhancement of the federal system; fifteen years without a deal on natural resource distribution or disputed territories; fifteen years without laws enacted to clearly define the rights and obligations of both Baghdad and Erbil.

Instead, we are witnessing another instance of ad-hoc crisis management. I am certain we can all agree that it is past time for Iraq to become more than the sum of its components.

And yes of course, we do cautiously salute the agreement, albeit tenuous, recently reached by Baghdad and Erbil on issues including the payment of Kurdish public salaries.

Mr. President,

Earlier this month we commemorated the 6th anniversary of the horrific Sinjar massacre. I regret to report - yet again - that preliminary agreement on a unified administration and stable security structures has failed to materialize. A final agreement can (and must) now be reached without delay. Anything else is intolerable negligence. Something else, Mr. President:

In my most recent briefing in May I emphasized that, in the Kurdistan region, as elsewhere in Iraq, transparency, fighting corruption, freedom of expression and fundamental reforms are of critical importance. I must repeat that message today. Forceful responses to public criticism, protests, harassment or the shutting down of media outlets are surely not the way forward. In confronting complex challenges, governments must also (and always) continue to defend fundamental rights and freedoms.

If you allow me, Mr. President,

## Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 26th August videoteleconference *(continued)*

A few words on the rate of return for the remaining 1.4 million Iraqi IDPs, now at a three-year low.

Understandably, it is the desire of every Iraqi to live in a country without displacement camps, but these camps will not disappear until durable solutions are found.

We have initiated positive discussions with the government, but I would like to reemphasize that the wishes of the IDPs for return or integration must be prioritized. And this in turn requires the cooperation of receiving and/or host communities.

Mr. President,

I would like to turn to the issue of

missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

UNAMI is engaging with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities to repatriate Kuwaiti remains exhumed from a mass grave site in southern Iraq last January.

Despite severe travel restrictions imposed by the pandemic, I am optimistic that the transfer will take place in the near future. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti forensics continue their complex DNA analysis to identify those Kuwaiti remains already repatriated

last year. We look forward to the announcement of their results in due course.

Mr. President,

In closing, I would like to pay tribute to the courage, discipline and sacrifice of Iraqi women and men in confronting shared hardship.

It is essential that we maintain our support to the brave Iraqis who are not giving up, who continue to push for change.

I will end by emphasizing that time is a critical factor. So yes, it is high time for tangible results.

Thank you.

## Electoral

## UNAMI electoral experts participated in a briefing to the IHEC board of commissioners on defining electoral constituencies

**Baghdad, 6 July 2020** - UNAMI electoral experts participated in a briefing to the IHEC board of commissioners aimed at explaining the technical processes necessary in defining electoral constituencies at lower administrative levels of Iraq. UNAMI's Office of Electoral Assistance is imparting technical knowhow of defining electoral constituencies and distribution of constitutionally mandated women quota through a series of presentations to electoral stakeholders. Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, UNAMI experts contributed to the presentation through online participation.

Photo courtesy of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC).



Photo: Courtesy of IHEC

## Credible elections of great importance

**Baghdad, 31 July 2020** – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) welcomes the call by Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi for early elections to be held 6 June 2021. Early elections fulfil a key popular demand on the road to greater stability and democracy in Iraq. The United Nations is ready to provide support and technical advice as requested by Iraq to ensure free, fair and credible elections that win the public's trust.

“Properly conducted credible, free, fair

and inclusive elections can re-energize the political system and build public confidence, giving the people a voice and realizing their aspirations for better representation,” said the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert.

“It is the responsibility of the government, parliament, political parties and other stakeholders to jointly ensure free, fair and credible elections in a conducive environment

that places the interests of the country above all other considerations,” Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said.

“We are confident that all political forces wish to see Iraq emerge from its crises and thrive. As always, these elections will be Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned. The United Nations will continue to provide all the advice and technical support requested by the government and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), in line with its mandate.”

## UNAMI on Twitter

**Baghdad, 6 July 2020** - UNIraq SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: shocked by assassination of Dr. Hisham al-Hashimi. We strongly condemn this despicable act of cowardice. Our

heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones. I call on the government to quickly identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

## UNITAD on Twitter

**Baghdad, 7 July 2020**—Special Adviser Karim Khan was appalled and saddened to learn of the assassination of Dr. Husham al-Hashimi this evening. His work made invaluable

contributions to understanding the nature of Daesh and the crimes they committed in Iraq. Our heartfelt condolences and prayers for his family.



## UNICEF on Twitter

**Baghdad, 6 July 2020** - UNICEF has learnt with shock and sadness reports that a child was injured in the Al-Karrada area of Baghdad, on Sunday

as a result of violence. UNICEF abhors all acts of violence and calls on all parties to respect children's right to grow up in a safe and secure

environment. Children are the very foundation of Iraq's future, they deserve to live in peace, without fear of harm.

## UN Special Representative condemns IED incident on WFP convoy in Ninewa

**Baghdad, 26 August 2020** - An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detonated on Wednesday morning near Bartilla, on the Mosul-Erbil road in Ninewa Governorate, impacting a passing UN vehicle. One World Food Programme (WFP) staff member was hurt and taken to hospital in Erbil. The authorities have launched an

investigation into the incident. The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, strongly condemned the incident, which "hinders efforts to deliver much needed assistance to the people in Iraq."

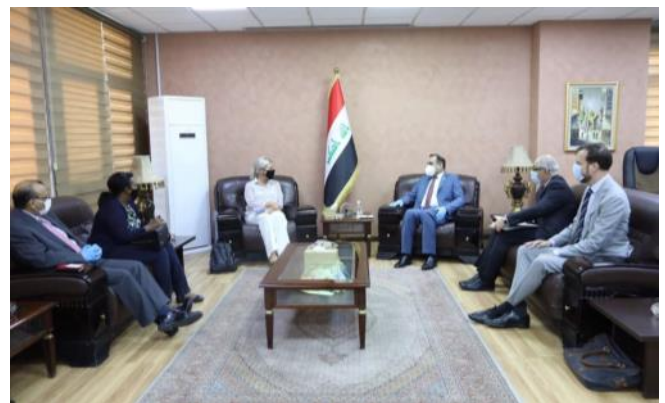
Ms. Irena Vojackova-Sollorano, Deputy

SRSG/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, said: "Humanitarian actors too often operate in hazardous areas as they do their utmost to reach people in need. This incident is a stark reminder of the dangers they face every day."

## Political Consultations



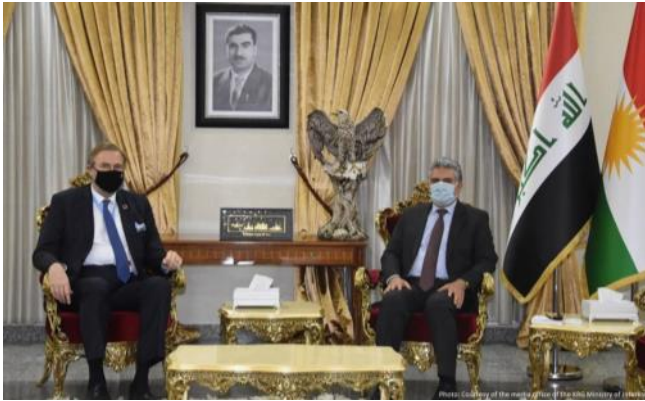
**Baghdad, 29 June 2020** - UNICEF country representative in Iraq, Ms. Hamida Ramadhani Lasseko, met today with the Minister of Education, Mr. Ali Hamid Khalif. They discussed future cooperation in the development and reprogramming of the educational system in Iraq. Ms. Hamida Lasseko highlighted UNICEF intention to develop a new protocol for remote teacher training, and to increase e-learning support for the protection and safety of teachers and learners. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Education.



**Baghdad, 1 July 2020** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Minister of Planning, Mr. Khalid Batal al-Najm. They discussed preparations for the national population and housing census, as well as the need to provide reliable data for the conduct of credible elections.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Planning.





**Erbil, 1 July 2020** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq a.i./Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator, Mr. Richard Dictus, met with Mr. Réber Ahmed, Minister of Interior in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). They discussed recent developments in the country, with an emphasis on the KRG preparedness and response strategy for Covid-19, as well as humanitarian response for the internally displaced and refugee populations in the region.

Photo courtesy of the KRG Ministry of Interior.



**Baghdad, 5 July 2020** – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Ammar al-Hakim, Head of the al-Hikma National Movement. They discussed the importance of setting aside partisan interests in order to support the national cause and the good of the Iraqi people.

Photo courtesy of the Al-Hikma NM media office.

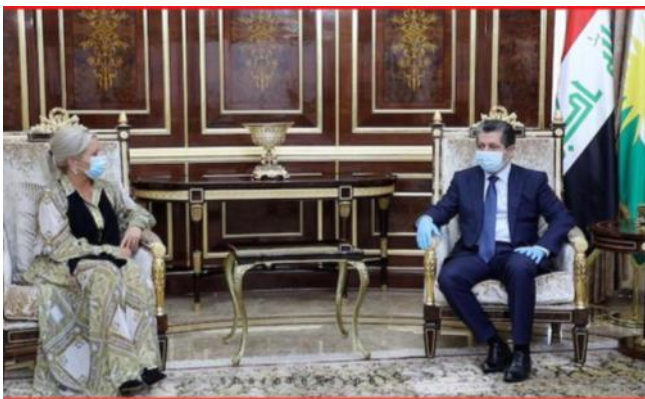


**Erbil, 6 July 2020** – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Secretary-General of the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), Mr. Ali Bapeer. They discussed the political and security situation in the country and the region, including Baghdad-Erbil relations.



**Erbil, 6 July 2020** – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Chief of Staff of the Kurdistan Regional Presidency, Minister Fawzi Franso Hariiri. They discussed the political and security situation in the country and the region, including Baghdad-Erbil relations.

Photo courtesy of the media office of the Kurdistan Region Presidency.



**Erbil, 7 July 2020** – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Masrour Barzani. They discussed the current political, security and health situation in the country and the region, with special emphasis on the Baghdad-Erbil relations.

Photo courtesy of the media office of the Kurdistan Regional Government.



**Erbil, 8 July 2020** – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Erbil with the President of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani. They discussed the political, security and health developments, including Baghdad-Erbil relations.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the KR President.





**Baghdad, 9 July 2020** – Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert met today at UNAMI offices in Baghdad with representatives of Kirkuk’s Arab and Turkmen communities. Discussions centered on ways to advance the dialogue among Kirkuk’s components in the search for solutions to the province’s political problems.



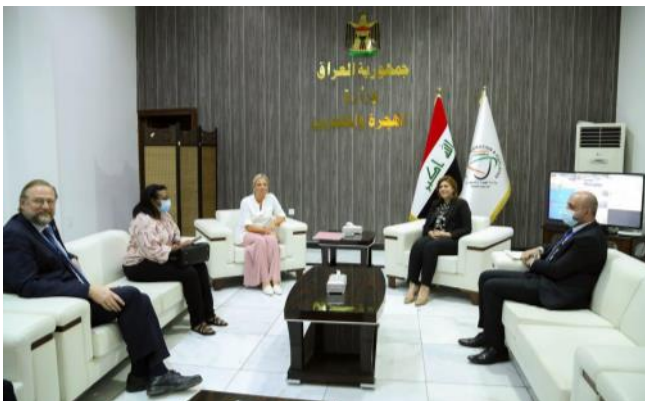
**Kirkuk, 13 July 2020** - Kirkuk Acting Governor, Mr. Rakan al-Jubouri, and UNAMI Kirkuk Head of Office, Ms. Laura Romanazzi, discussed political, security and health issues. UNAMI commended dialogue among Kirkuk components, which led to recent handover of Arab detainees from Sulaymaniyah, and encouraged continued cooperation.



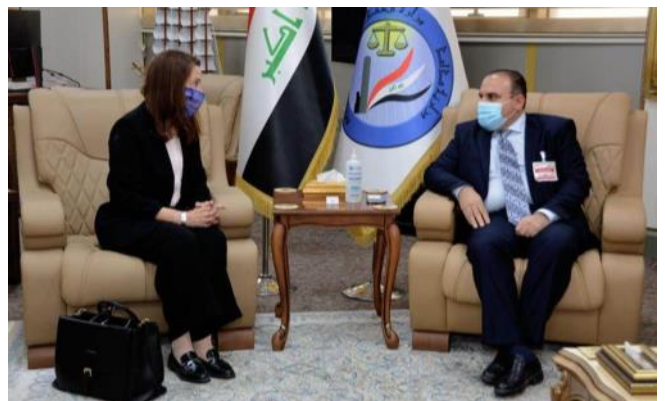
**Baghdad, 15 July 2020** – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Baghdad with MP Saeb Khidir. They discussed the importance of a unified administration and stable security structures in Sinjar.



**Baghdad, 19 July 2020** – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Baghdad with Mr. Hadi Al-Ameri, Head of the Fatih Alliance. They discussed political developments in Iraq and the region.



**Baghdad, 20 July 2020** – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy SRSG a.i., Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Mr. Richard Dictus, met today with the Minister of Migration and Displacement, Ms. Evan Faek Jabro. They discussed ways to address the needs of the internally displaced persons and refugees, and to ensure their dignified, voluntary, and safe return. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement.



**Baghdad, 21 July 2020** - UNAMI Human Rights Chief, Danielle Bell, and HE Salar Abdul Sattar, the Minister of Justice, discussed human rights in the administration of justice, human rights mechanisms and procedures and reporting in Iraq. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Justice.

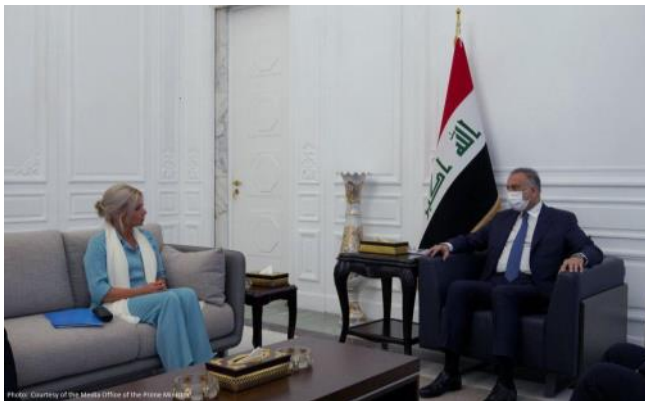




**Baghdad, 23 July 2020** - IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, Gerard Waite, met with the Iraqi Minister of Migration and Displacement, Hon. Evan Faeq Jabro, at the Ministry's headquarters in Baghdad. They discussed migration, internal displacement, voluntary returns to liberated areas, and the common objective of resolving obstacles to return. Mr. Waite expressed his thanks for this meeting and stressed that IOM Iraq will continue to support the Ministry and the Iraqi government.



**Baghdad, 23 July 2020** - UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, met with the Minister of Youth and Sports, Adnan Darjal, to discuss the continuous collaboration between the Fund and the Ministry and the youth vision 2030. Mr Darjal shared with the UNFPA Representative the Ministry's vision for young people which included the development of a five-year plan that prioritizes youth's needs. For her part, Dr Columbia reaffirmed UNFPA commitment to helping young people realize their full potential in life and places their needs, aspirations and ideals at the core of the Fund's work.

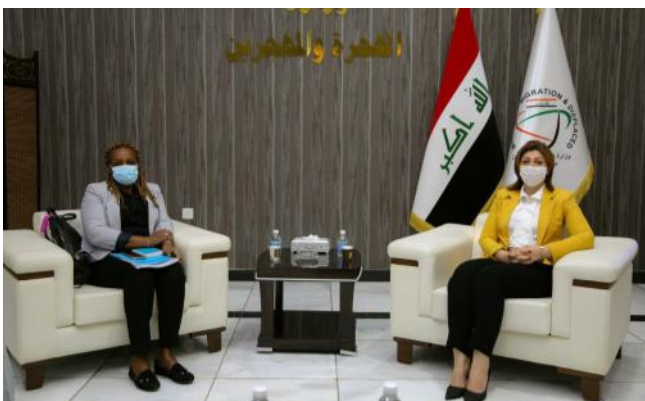


**Baghdad, 29 July 2020** - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi today. They discussed political and security developments in the country, including preparations for early elections as well as the situation in Sinjar and Kirkuk. They also discussed the recent demonstrations, emphasizing the right to peaceful protests, the need to protect them, as well as the importance of holding accountable perpetrators of violence.

Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Prime Minister.



**Baghdad, 10 August 2020** – The Minister of Trade, Alaa Ahmed Hassan Obaid, and the Ministry's Public Distribution System (PDS) directors met with World Food Program Representative, Abdurahman Meygag, and the WFP team leading the digitalization of the PDS. They discussed joint initiative to reform the PDS and the next steps, including the roll-out of the "Tamwini" app in Iraq.



**Baghdad, 11 August 2020** – UNICEF country representative in Iraq, Ms. Hamida Ramadhani Lasseko, met today with the Minister of Migration and Displacement, Ms. Evan Faeq Jabro. They discussed areas of cooperation between the ministry and UNICEF, including the conditions of displaced children in the camps, and ways to develop and strengthening them.



**Baghdad, 11 August 2020** - UNFPA Representative, Ms. Rita Columbia, visited the Minister of Planning, Khalid Al Najim, with whom she discussed UNFPA support to the Ministry's human development and livelihood projects. They also went over the Census and on-going preparations for conducting it as soon as the situation permits. Dr Columbia reiterated UNFPA support to the Government's priorities reflected in the UNFPA Country Programme Document in relation to the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus, emphasising on the pivotal role young people and women in the process.

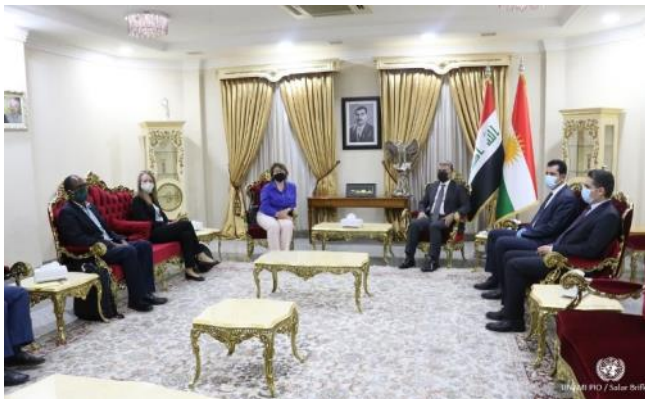




**Baghdad, 18 August 2020** - IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, Gerard Waite, met with the Iraqi Minister of Migration and Displacement, Ms. Evan Faieq Jabru, yesterday at the MOMD headquarters in Baghdad. IOM colleagues presented the organization's activities and the services it provides to IDPs and returnees (with a focus on common challenges and solutions). They also highlighted the strong cooperation between IOM, the Government of Iraq and MOMD. Mr. Waite expressed his thanks to Hon. Jabro for all the support that the Ministry provides to IOM Iraq.



**Baghdad, 19 August 2020** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met in Baghdad with the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Hamid Naim Al-Ghazi. They discussed, among other things, United Nations and Iraq cooperation on the implementation of joint strategies, projects and programs related to the development and humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq. They also discussed the importance of collaboration between the UN family and the Government of Iraq in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework as the primary tool to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



**Erbil, 23 August 2020** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by the OCHA representative in Iraq, met today with the Kurdistan Regional Government Minister of Interior, Mr. Reber Ahmed.

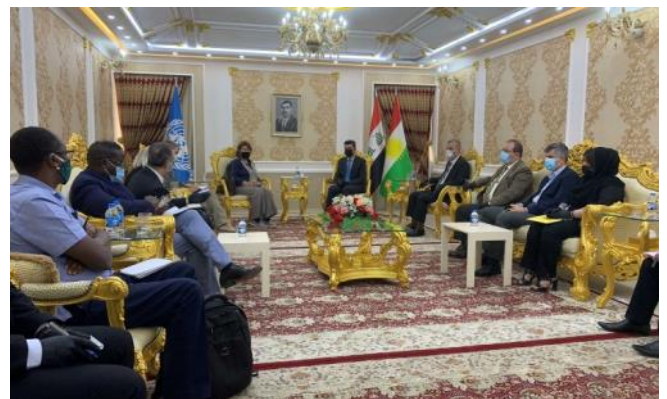
Among other issues, they discussed the humanitarian situation and especially access for humanitarian partners working in Kurdistan region. They also discussed the importance of working together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the benefit of the people in Iraq.



**Erbil, 23 August 2020** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by the OCHA representative in Iraq, met today with the Head of the Kurdistan Regional Government Department of Foreign Relations, Minister Safeen Dizayee. They discussed the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Country Team to support the Kurdistan Regional Government in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through improved social economic opportunities for the people in the Kurdistan region, counter the #COVID19 pandemic and address the issue of safe and voluntary return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their places of origin.



**Erbil, 23 August 2020** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by the UNFPA and OCHA representatives in Iraq, met today with the Kurdistan Region Minister of Planning, Dr. Dara Rashid Mahmoud. Present also were the Deputy Minister Mr. Zagros Fattah and the Director of Statistics Office, Mr. Sirwan Mohammed. Among the issues discussed include the efforts of UNAMI and United Nations Country Team to support the Kurdistan Region Government to enhance effectiveness of the private sector to contribute to economic development of the region, widen social economic opportunities for the people in the Kurdistan region especially women and youths. They also agreed that the UN family in Iraq, Federal government and the Kurdistan Region Government should work together to find a long term solution to the challenge of mass displacement.



**Dohuk, 24 August 2020** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by the OCHA and UNHCR representatives in Iraq, met today with the Governor of Dohuk, Mr. Ali Tatar Tawfic Nerway. Among other issues, they discussed humanitarian situation and especially access for humanitarian partners working in the Governorate. On behalf of the United Nations, DSRSG Vojáčková-Sollorano expressed gratitude for the generosity of the people of Iraq and Dohuk in particular in supporting the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the governorate. She assured the Governor of the United Nations' continued commitment in finding durable solutions to the challenge of mass displacement in the country.



## UNESCO experts led young media influencers to promote COVID-19 awareness campaign for community safety and fighting disinfodemic

**Baghdad, 25 June 2020** - The community has an urgent need to raise awareness related to the pandemic. The UNESCO Iraq office have engaged various sources of media to prevent misinformation circulating across different social media that exist in the world today.

The CI sector led 93 young media leaders from different institutions and governorates of Iraq to work hands-on as a team. Their mission is to provide the community with important information needed for their overall health and safety related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to show them how to use the Fact-Checking Tool (FCT) for information related to COVID-19.

“Misinformation among social media users and the public is rising as fast as the COVID-19 cases, and therefore, journalists and developers play a critical role in helping to bring evidence-based facts to light,” Ayad Khudiar, head of Media Monitoring Institution, said.

This training course developed by UNESCO aims to enhance the safety of journalists and equip them with new techniques and measures to prevent the pandemic and to find better ways of identifying misinformation.

“Through this online training, we



gained better insights on pandemic basics, and learned vital information related to the fact-checking learning module. A similar strategy was quickly adapted for the second training-learning module on COVID-19 awareness,” Hathim Hasan, head of Baghdad Youth and Sport Directorate, said.

Trainees were introduced to different aspects of COVID-19, including its virology, epidemiological principles involved in its transmission, prevention, and a special focus on the disinformation around this phenomenon. Participants were

required to take initiatives to help educate the community via media outlets and social media projects.

Ali Jabar, one of the young social media influencers, said, “I will share a social understanding of with what I have learned from UNESCO about the pandemic via my 60K Facebook page, so people could understand it in the best way possible.”

Mena Saad asserted that she has learned a lot about the severity of the coronavirus, and she now feels more informed and aware of what she can do to play her part as an employee in the Ministry of Sport and Youth.

## Finland supports Iraq’s fight against COVID-19 in new contribution

**Baghdad, 30 June 2020** –The Government of Finland has committed €2 million (US\$2.2 million) to support the Government of Iraq’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.

The funds will be used to support UNDP Iraq’s COVID-19 response package, which is being implemented under the umbrella of UNDP Iraq’s Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), established to repair critical infrastructure and services damaged by ISIL.

Measures to combat the virus under the COVID-19 response package include increasing the testing capacity of laboratories, providing personal protective equipment to healthcare workers, increasing the number of isolation wards, and undertaking assessments to establish post-COVID-19 recovery strategies. Focusing on the

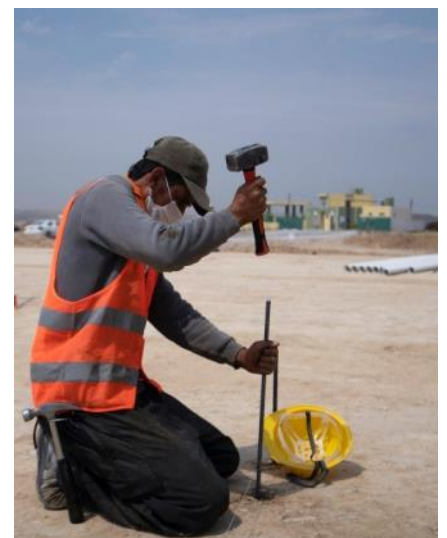
most vulnerable communities in Iraq, activities will be rolled out in hospitals selected by local authorities in the underserved areas of Anbar, Basra, Diyala, Dohuk, Karbala, Kirkuk, Najaf, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din.

“While the entire country is impacted by the emergence of COVID-19, it’s the vulnerable communities – including displaced communities, people living with a disability, women, and the elderly – who will carry most of the burden. We’re extremely grateful for Finland’s support which will help us target these vulnerable communities,” says UNDP Iraq’s Resident Representative, Zena Ali Ahmad.

“Iraq is facing a multitude of challenges as it recovers from a long conflict. Finland wants to support the stability of Iraq and to strengthen its preparedness and response to COVID-19 emergency. UNDP is in the frontline supporting Iraq’s national healthcare system in tackling the outbreak”, says

Finland’s Ambassador to Iraq Mr. Vesa Häkkinen.

Finland is one of UNDP Iraq’s key partners, providing more than \$12.1 million to UNDP Iraq’s FFS since 2015.



## USAID donation will strengthen Iraq's national COVID-19 response

**Erbil, 1 July 2020** — As of 30 June 49,109 confirmed cases of COVID-19 had been reported in Iraq, representing a more than tenfold increase in cases since early May. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently confirmed more than 1 million cases of COVID-19 in the 22 countries of its Eastern Mediterranean Region, calling this a “very concerning milestone”.

The Iraqi health care system has been weakened by years of conflict, sanctions, and low investments in health; it still lacks the capacity to respond to COVID-19. The crisis threatens to exacerbate vulnerabilities among Iraq's large Internally Displaced Person (IDP), refugee, returnee and migrant communities.

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) is supporting the International Organization for Migration's efforts to halt further transmission of COVID-19 in Iraq. Funding received from BHA will boost IOM Iraq's ongoing programming in camps and informal settlement sites across five governorates: Anbar, Baghdad, Erbil, Duhok and Ninewa.

This project aims to enhance Government of Iraq and the community's capacity to respond

effectively to COVID-19, especially within vulnerable groups; strengthen disease surveillance during the outbreak; and improve health care facilities' capacity to effectively identify and manage suspected cases.

“The Government of Iraq and IOM will need to maintain a flexible approach to keep vulnerable populations safe during this evolving pandemic,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “We thank BHA for its continued support to address the challenges of displaced persons, returnees and host communities during and after periods of crisis.”

In April 2020, IOM Iraq appealed to the international community for USD 20.4 million to limit the humanitarian and socioeconomic effects of the pandemic and support affected communities in preparing for longer term-recovery. Under its COVID-19 Strategic Response Plan, IOM Iraq is leveraging its wide network of staff and offices across all governorates, experience working in difficult operating environments and its strong ties with government counterparts at national, governorate and local levels, to employ a multi-sectoral, whole of government and society approach.



Areas of focus include Coordination and Partnerships; Tracking Mobility Impacts; Risk Communication and Community Engagement; Disease Surveillance Systems; Public Health Capacities at Points of Entry; Infection Prevention and Control; Case Management and Continuity of Essential Services; Camp Coordination and Camp Management; Protection; and Addressing Socio-Economic Impacts of The Crisis. The organization's Communicating with Communities, protection and disability inclusion teams will provide essential support and guidance across all interventions.

## WHO bridging the shortfall in oxygen supply in Iraq

**Baghdad, 2 July 2020** - In light of the increasing number of Covid-19 infected cases and the severe shortage of oxygen in Iraqi hospitals, the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq has succeeded in securing 300 oxygen concentrators to be used in Iraqi hospitals according to the Ministry's distribution plan. The concentrators were airlifted from the WHO's warehouses in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and delivered to the Iraqi Ministry of Health.

The 300 oxygen concentrators came at a time in which COVID-19 case management hospitals are suffering from severe shortage in oxygen supplies, which are greatly needed in treating COVID-19 moderate and severe cases with respiratory difficulties.

“The new donated Oxygen Concentrators will surely save more lives,” said WHO Iraq Representative Dr Adham Ismail, “Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO was fighting the pandemic with every tool at its disposal to save lives and support countries with limited response capacity, including Iraq.” Ismail Added.

On June 24, Video clips posted on Social media showed a state of panic, fear and chaos in one of the largest hospitals in the city of Thi-qar, southern Iraq after reports of severe oxygen shortages that caused casualties among COVID-19 cases. This was coupled by other reports from different governorates showing the lack of oxygen supplies in their healthcare facilities. All of these incidents and reports have prompted WHO to act urgently and immediately to help Iraqis meet the shortfall in oxygen supplies.

Since mid-May, Iraq has been recording increasingly higher numbers of new COVID-19 infections and deaths. Official statistics from the Iraqi Ministry of Health reported on 1 July 2020 a total of 51,524 COVID-19 infected cases, 2050 deaths and 26,267 recoveries.

During the period from March to June 2020, WHO Iraq handed over 1.6 Million USD in the form of diagnostic kits, equipment and furniture, personal protective equipment (PPEs), health kits and supplies to the Federal Mistry of Health and the Ministry of Health in

KRG.

WHO and the Iraqi health authorities proactively coordinated a comprehensive response to the pandemic as early as January 2020. The organization, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, is currently engaged in a major awareness campaign targeting people living in 10 heavily affected areas in Baghdad. More than 250 community volunteers were mobilized to deliver educational and preventive messages for 4 weeks from 29 June to 28 July 2020.

WHO would like to extend its thanks to Kuwait and ECHO for their generous donations to support the efforts of fighting COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq.





## New report from FAO, IFAD, WFP and the World Bank reveals complex impact of COVID-19 on food security in Iraq

**Baghdad, 2 July 2020** - As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank have collected and analyzed new data on the impact of the crisis on food security, and made corresponding joint recommendations in the first report of a new regular series, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security in Iraq."

Many people have been unable to work during the current crisis. Around 4.8 million people (12% of the total population) are using negative coping strategies to meet their food needs, and a large stimulus package will be required to re-start the economy, beyond the current measures to mitigate the impact on households and businesses. On the other hand, food availability has been stable overall, with above-average cereal production in

the 2019/2020 season, and the government of Iraq taking a proactive role to keep the food system open despite lockdowns. Food imports have continued, with global trade largely uninterrupted.

Humanitarian, social protection and development responses have stepped up, both from the government (such as "Minha" – "Grant") and supporting partners. However, global trends have had a cascading impact on Iraq. The fall in oil prices and the slow recovery of the global oil market have had negative implications for the domestic budget, and may affect the government's ability to continue to fund social protection programmes and agriculture subsidies. With assistance from Food Security Cluster partners and the Cash Consortium of Iraq, FAO, IFAD, WFP and the World Bank analyzed food availability and access, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations, and jointly made policy

recommendations.

"With initiatives to work towards a regional trade integration framework, create an enabling environment for increasing domestic production, invest in productive infrastructure, enhance social protection and monitor food security, vulnerable households can continue to have access to nutritious food. All possible efforts will be made to support the government of Iraq and implement the proposed recommendations," said FAO Representative in Iraq Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, IFAD Representative for Iraq Tarek Ahmed, WFP Iraq Representative Abdirahman Meygag, and World Bank Iraq Representative Ramzi Neman, in a joint statement.

The new publication builds on the partners' weekly reports on COVID-19 and food security, which launched in April and continue to be released.

Download a copy of the new report at: <https://bit.ly/2VDbH3a>

## Children make up the majority of up to 4.5 million Iraqis at risk of falling into poverty and deprivation due to the impact of COVID-19

**Baghdad, 6 July 2020** – There is now a global consensus that the socio-economic impact of the unfolding COVID-19 crisis is devastating. Iraq is no exception, with losses of jobs and rising prices causing growing poverty. Furthermore, disruptions to basic services increase households' deprivations and vulnerability. Children and adolescents, who make-up more than half of the population in Iraq, are prone to bear the highest cost of rising poverty, service disruptions, and growing family stresses as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

In a newly released assessment, the Iraqi Ministry of Planning with the support of UNICEF, World Bank, and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, found that an additional 4.5 million (11.7%) of Iraqis risk falling below the poverty line as a result of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. This sharp increase would bring the national poverty rate to 31.7% from 20% in 2018 and the total number of poor to 11.4 million. Children and adolescents face the highest increase in poverty. Before the pandemic broke, one out of five children and adolescents were poor. This is now set to double to over 2 out of every 5, or 37.9% of all children.

"The results capture a worrying situation especially for the most

vulnerable segments of the population. This is situation which requires a more effective response and one that focuses on social protection and cash transfers to the poorest while at the same time continuing and increasing our investments into services such as health and education, and to support poor families, especially the younger members, to find employment," explained His Excellency Prof. Dr. Khaled Battal Al-Najem, Iraq's Minister of Planning.

Disruption to education, rising malnutrition, and violence are all realities that poor children currently are facing in Iraq. Poverty as experienced by the poor, especially children, is a multifaceted phenomenon that can't be captured solely in monetary terms. This is more so during a crisis impacting social services and families in ways that increase their risk to COVID-19 as well as to losses in wellbeing. The assessment found that 42% of the population are vulnerable; facing a higher risk as they are deprived in more than one dimension of the following education, health, living conditions, and financial security. For children 1 in 2 (48.8%) is at higher risk suffering deprivation in more than one of the four dimensions. Deprivation in school enrolment and access to improved water source are leading

contributor to households and children's vulnerability.

"We need to respond, and we need to do so quickly. We at UNICEF are calling for our partners in government to step-up policies aimed at protecting children from poverty and promoting children's access to quality basic services with emphasis on addressing the learning crisis and violence against children on the short, medium and long term. As much as COVID-19 represents a big challenge, it can also bring opportunities for strengthening partnerships with Government to respond effectively and accelerate reform to protect children and preserve their well-being. An investment in children today is an investment in the future of Iraq, said Ms. Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF's Representative to Iraq.

### Did you know?

Children under 18 in Iraq are the ones most impacted by the consequences of COVID-19  
#EndPoverty2020



## Despite compounding challenges, women in Iraq play vital roles in the country's COVID-19 response

**Baghdad, 6 July 2020** - The coronavirus pandemic is one of the biggest challenges facing Iraq, but it is not the only one. In addition to fighting the deadly virus, the country has been grappling with popular protests in several regions, a challenging reconstruction process for large parts of the country recently liberated from terrorist groups, and dwindling state revenues from oil, which experienced a sharp fall in price as a repercussion of the pandemic.

Furthermore, Iraq's health sector lacks resources. The sector's budget, just 2.5 per cent of the USD 106.5 billion state budget (2019), represents a small fraction of spending compared to neighboring countries in the Middle East. Underfunding of the sector has led to a shortage of hospitals, medical equipment, and supplies, as well as specialized doctors and medical staff.

Combined, these challenges have placed onerous demands on front-line workers in Iraq. Women workers in particular are shouldering a disproportionate burden, faced with additional responsibilities in their households and communities.

"Iraqi women have shown a great deal of resilience in the various sectors in which they work," said Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative for Iraq and Yemen. "UN Women is in close cooperation with partners to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on women and to ensure that women are able to carry out their roles in service of their communities and country."

Zorba also highlighted that, as in many parts of the world, measures to reduce the spread of the virus, such as lockdowns and curfews, have exacerbated pre-existing inequalities for many women; the country has seen a rise in cases of domestic and gender-based violence since the onset of the pandemic.

"UN Women, alongside its partners, is focusing its attention on fighting domestic and gender-based violence and minimizing repercussions of the situation on women, particularly those most in need of help," says Zorba.

Despite the unprecedented challenges, Iraqi women are playing vital roles in the country's COVID-19 response, serving as leaders, health and social workers, and responders to domestic and gender-based violence.

Here are five Iraqi women's stories of how the coronavirus crisis has impacted their lives.

### Navigating the pressures of work and home as an essential health worker



Mariam Taha is a 36-year-old technical assistant at the Central Public Health Laboratory in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Since the first COVID-19 cases were detected in Iraq in February 2020, Taha's life has changed drastically.

Taha, who normally works eight hours every day, now logs an 11-hour shift.

The nature of her work has shifted too; the laboratory has become entirely dedicated to testing suspected COVID-19 cases. Taha is now in constant fear that she might contract the virus at work and spread it to her family.

"No matter how much I try to pretend that the situation is normal, what is happening makes me worry," said Taha. "I wash and sterilize my hands all the time. I avoid crowded places and try to keep my distance from patients and colleagues," she shared.

Although no COVID-19 cases have been recorded at the centre she works in and she takes every precautionary measure, including donning a face mask, gloves, goggles and suit while at work, anxiety about contracting and spreading the virus has become a part of Taha's daily life.

"Every time I leave work, I feel anxious and stressed that I might infect my family. Before leaving the centre, I take off my disposable personal protective gear, and I sterilize myself using medical sterilization. As soon as I arrive home, and before physical contact with anyone in my family, I shower and wash the clothes I was wearing," Taha explains.

While the demands of her work have been difficult during the pandemic, Taha is dealing with challenges on other fronts as well.

She notes that her responsibilities as a wife and a mother have increased, especially after school closures. "My four children are now staying at home without schooling, except for one who is receiving distance learning online and requires my time to follow up on his homework."

### Providing for others, despite personal loss



Ten years ago, Fayza Elias Rashu and her family, who belong to the Yazidi minority group, left their home in Sinjar in the Nineveh Governorate in northern Iraq in a bid to improve their living conditions. They settled in the Sharya complex for displaced persons in the Duhok Governorate, northwestern Iraq, where Rashu, using her previous sewing experience, found work as a dressmaker for the Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development.

The position enabled Rashu to support her family, and she excelled at the job, training many women and girls on sewing.

"I love my work very much. I've always loved sewing and with the training opportunities that I've received from many organizations, I have fulfilled my childhood dream of becoming a professional dressmaker," Rashu shares.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, Rashu dreamed of expanding her small shop into a large workshop, but the situation has forced her to close the business.

Despite the loss, Rashu continues to sew for others. With the support of the Dak Organization, one of UN Women's partner organizations, Fayza has sown more than 500 and distributed them, free-of-charge, to her community.

"I wanted to do something of value for my community, especially those suffering from forced displacement. This is something I have wanted to do for so long," she says proudly.

### Pushing for improved resources for survivors of violence

Kajhal Nayef Rahman is a judge at the Public Prosecutor's Office in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Like many public officials, Judge Rahman and her office have been shouldering a heavy workload since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis.

She says that there has been a noticeable rise in the number of



## Despite compounding challenges, women in Iraq play vital roles in the country's COVID-19 response *(continued)*



domestic violence cases in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) since the pandemic hit and containment measures were put in place, closing businesses and public offices across the country.

"The lockdown and the curfew have severely impacted the ability of women facing abuse at their homes to communicate with us and to seek help," she explains.

Despite the security measures available in the area, such as shelters and safe housing for violence survivors, women in abusive situations still do not have adequate means to communicate with authorities, Judge Rahman says.

### After fighting the virus on the front lines, a dentist in Baghdad battles the disease herself

Shahd Al-Jawari, a dentist working in the capital city of Baghdad, recently contracted the virus, most likely through her clinical practice or while participating in a public awareness campaign about the novel coronavirus.

Like others in the healthcare sector, Dr. Al-Jawari worked longer hours following the virus outbreak, as she fought to curb the spread and protect the health and safety of others.



"Due to the current situation, doctors have to be in hospitals for longer hours regardless of their specializations," Dr. Al-Jawari said in an interview with the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum, one of UN Women's partners, in early May, before contracting the virus.

Dr. Al-Jawari also stated that there are more women working in the health sector in Iraq than men, estimating that 60 per cent of all health workers across Iraq are women. She says this statistic is "a testimony to the capabilities of women in addition to their dedication, commitment, and patriotism."

Despite all her precautionary measures, Dr. Al-Jawari contracted the coronavirus and was recently moved to an intensive care unit in a Baghdad hospital. A breast cancer survivor, Dr. Al Jawari continues to fight the virus

with optimism, determination and hope.

### Leading the way in the fight against coronavirus

"Resolute, persistent and courageous," this is how colleagues of Wasan Aref Al-Tamimi describe her. Dr. Al-Tamimi is the Director of the Public Health Department of Al-Muthanna Governorate, in the southernmost part of Iraq.

In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, ensuring food safety is critical. Along with her team, Dr. Al-Tamimi examines all foodstuff that comes into the governorate for sale and public consumption and conducts inspections at local markets to make sure that food supplies meet the health standards.

She is also the only female member of the Government's Crisis Cell in Al-Muthanna Governorate, She follows up on the implementation of coronavirus response plans in her community and liaises with all relevant actors – medical staff, crisis teams and public health officials.

Like many other women on the front line, her work doesn't end when she goes home. A single mother of three, she juggles long hours of paid work and parenting: "I am trying to make sure that ...I am spending time with [my children], listening to them, and discussing any problems they face."

## Battling Coronavirus: France prioritizes critical medical equipment in southern Iraq

**Baghdad, 16 July 2020** – The Government of France has committed EUR 300,000 (US\$334,448) to support the Government of Iraq's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The funds will be used to purchase ventilators – a life-saving piece of equipment for Coronavirus patients – for Basra Teaching Hospital in southern Iraq.

"The emergence of COVID-19 has exacerbated the many challenges experienced by communities in Basra, who are struggling to access basic infrastructure and services. We are very grateful for this contribution from France which will alleviate the extreme pressure currently placed on under-resourced health facilities in Basra. As

the pandemic has unfolded globally, we have seen how important ventilators have been in saving lives," says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

In addition to ventilators and other life-saving equipment provided to the hospital, UNDP Iraq is also building isolation units, providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to healthcare workers to stop the spread of the virus, and boosting the testing capacity of labs to increase the detection of cases. It also supports an online awareness-raising platform, Corona in Iraq which outlines symptoms and risks of COVID-19, dispels rumors about the virus, and tracks symptoms to encourage people to seek medical advice.

"France is fully committed to actively

support the Government of Iraq to meet the needs of the Iraqi population. This medical equipment will contribute to help medical teams in southern Iraq to face with this urgent situation and allow them to save more lives. We welcome all the efforts made by UNDP to coordinate the help of international donors in order to combat the spread of the disease in Iraq", says the Ambassador of France, Bruno Aubert." In addition to Basra, UNDP Iraq's COVID-19 response package extends to Anbar, Babel, Dhi Qar, Diyala, Dohuk, Karbala, Kirkuk, Missan, Najaf, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din.

With this latest contribution, France has provided US\$7.8 million in support to UNDP Iraq since 2015.

## Refugees deliver mental health services to locked down camps in Iraq

*Trained community workers – many of them refugees themselves – are providing vital mental health support during the COVID-19 outbreak in northern Iraq.*

By Rasheed Hussein Rasheed, UNHCR, in Duhok, northern Iraq

**Dohuk, 08 July 2020** - Falak Selo knows what the sudden loss of home, country and loved ones can do to a person's mental wellbeing. She was studying philosophy at the University of Damascus in 2013 when Syria's civil war reached the area where her mother and sister were living.

She abandoned her studies to flee with them to the town of Akre in northern Iraq where a former prison for political dissidents during Saddam Hussein's administration had been turned into a shelter for over 1,000 Syrian refugees.

"It was difficult, to cross borders and come to a country that is completely strange," recalls Falak, who still lives in "the Citadel", as Akre camp is locally known.

Accommodation in the fortress-like structure is cramped, with little natural light, but Falak has learned skills to help her cope, and, since 2017 she has been sharing them with other refugees at Akre through her role as a community worker with the UN Refugee Agency's mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) unit.

That support and intimate knowledge of the mental distress facing refugees in the camp are needed now more than ever. UNHCR has been receiving alarming reports of a surge in mental health issues among refugees and forcibly displaced people across the Middle East region, and beyond, since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

"While many refugees and internally displaced people are remarkably resilient... their capacities to cope are now being stretched to the limit," warned UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in a statement last month.

For refugees in Akre and eight other camps scattered across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the elevated levels of anxiety and depression stem less from fear of the virus itself than from the loss of income resulting from strict curfew measures that have prevented them from leaving camps to work in nearby towns and cities, community workers say.

"Most of the camp residents are daily

workers and after years of displacement some of them felt that they had gained control of their lives," explains Kawa\*, a community worker and Syrian refugee living at Domiz 1 camp, near the city of Dohuk. "Now, with the loss of livelihoods, it feels for many people that they are passing through the same problems and shocks over and over.

"Living in the camp, I can see how the situation is," he adds. "Stress, worry and fear are widespread. I won't be exaggerating if I say that everybody is afraid."

The lockdown has also meant that psychiatrists and counsellors working for the MHPSS unit have had little or no access to the camps and have had to shift to providing counselling through helplines and phone consultations. Fortunately, community workers who live in the camps are still able to hold impromptu mental wellness sessions on their neighbours' doorsteps, drawing on their training on psychological first aid. Hivine Ali, a mental health and psychosocial support officer with UNHCR who coordinates with the team of 19 community workers, says their presence in the camps has helped the MHPSS unit continue delivering much needed mental health support during lockdown.

"We knew they were important before, but now the role of the community workers is even more important," she says.

While group activities at schools and community centres have had to stop, the community workers are still running awareness sessions at primary health care centres, where they also put on personal protective equipment (PPE) to do one-on-one counselling. Their work does not stop there, says Falak.

"I'm following up on cases that need further care on a personal basis, because we are all neighbours in here. I am doing this during working hours and after working hours when the neighbours visit, and we chat over tea."

People with pre-existing conditions that have become more severe since the onset of the pandemic, such as obsessive compulsive disorders, often need to be referred to psychiatrists and psychologists for more specialised care. But the community workers are able to help those suffering from stress, anxiety or depression through their training in a psychological intervention developed by the World Health



Organization called Problem Management+ (PM+).

"We ask them what they did in previous times to cope," says Hivine. "Refugees really have gone back to the previous coping mechanisms they had. They experienced being restricted to the camp when they first arrived, and now they're trying to deal with this."

When the main source of distress is a loss of income and inability to put food on the table, the community workers can refer cases to NGOs and UN agencies who can help with food or cash assistance.

For those the community workers cannot reach during lockdown, UNHCR has turned to a radio station based in Domiz 1 camp that broadcasts to local communities, including camp residents and internally displaced people. Every Wednesday, a clinical psychologist from UNHCR goes on air to share mental health tips and take calls from listeners.

Kawa says it is the only local programme he knows of that is dealing with the mental health consequences of the pandemic rather than its threat to public health.

Help is also available for the community workers themselves to ensure they are not over-burdened.

"We're in contact with them on WhatsApp groups so we can see how things are, how they are," says Hivine. "We make it clear that whenever they feel they need someone to talk to, we're available."

Kawa confirms that the self-care tips are "extremely helpful".

"We need to help ourselves to help others," he says.

\*Asked that his last name not be used

Additional reporting and writing by Kristy Siegfried



## UNESCO provides sterilizing materials for students during the examination period

**Erbil, 16 July 2020** - UNESCO in coordination with the Ministry of Education in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, provides sterilizing materials for students during the examination period to contain the spread of COVID-19 virus. There are 2,375 exam centers hosting 154,414 Grade 12 students in Dohuk, Erbil and Suleimaniyah.

This activity is funded by the EU under "Access to Inclusive Quality Primary and Secondary Education for Refugees, IDPs, Returnees and Remainees in Crisis Affected Areas in Iraq" project and has been implemented by Wadi Organization.



## How can data help fight a health crisis?

**Baghdad, 17 July 2020** - UNDP supports Karbala Governorate to track and trace COVID-19 using modern geographic information system (GIS) Technologies.

As the fight against COVID-19 continues across the world, the critical role that contact tracing must play, has become strikingly evident.

In Iraq, a country under lockdown, steps have been taken to slow transmission by limiting travel, quarantining citizens and cancelling large gatherings. But this week in Karbala, a new innovative and collaborative platform has launched - could it be the key to stopping the pandemic in its tracks?

"The Karbala 'Spatial Data Infrastructure' (SDI) system will provide decision makers with situational analysis tools and an operational dashboard that will enable a complete analysis of new cases and recovery, helping them to make faster decisions and respond with the appropriate measures. It displays data geographically to give a complete picture of the situation on the ground," explains Ahmed Mamour, Senior Engineer from Karbala Governorate's GIS team. "Information will be available through the web platform and phone application, enabling easy access for the Karbala Crisis Cell, researchers and academics and the general public." Initially conceived in 2016, the Karbala SDI system was intended to create data harmony, engaging NGOs, UN Agencies, Government and the Private Sector to aggregate existing data sets available for geographic and demographic information, standardize and unify them - to increase accuracy, encourage cooperation, and simplify access.

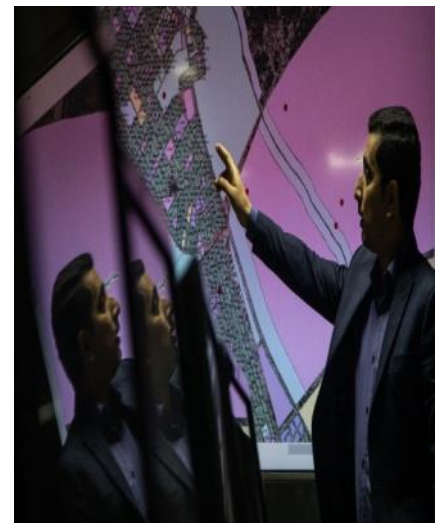
"The system works in a way that provides an integrated infrastructure for the exchange of geographical and spatial information between entities across various sectors, enabling the government to build clear development strategies through high-quality and accurate data. This data is necessary for the government's planning, analysis and follow-up processes, using a decision-making approach that can help to develop more sound policies," says Mahab Madani, Head of Governance and Economic Diversification Pillars for UNDP Iraq. UNDP has worked with Karbala Governorate over the past four years to obtain and unify data on community infrastructure and facilities, services and projects, as well as health and demographic data, for use in daily planning and operations by the relevant line ministries and departments.

"The GIS system helps the government to better invest resources, improve plans and raise the quality of services, as well as help the government sector and the private sector to generate more precise and informed development plans," confirms Senior Engineer Ahmed.

"What's more, the GIS infrastructure provides a communications functionality through the Smart Karbala Application, enabling the voice of citizens to be heard and considered when decisions are being made. Karbala citizens can record audio and photos and upload it with geo-tagging, so that government can hear their concerns," added, Ali Kamouna, Head of UNDP office in Karbala.

Following the spread of COVID-19 the Karbala GIS project moved quickly to adapt their platform to provide vital

data on the location and status of each case in Karbala Governorate. "The team added two functionalities to the platform, one of them is an application for mobile devices to monitor and record all COVID-19 cases, with hospitals and clinics able to send data in real time to a central database, and the other functionality is a web interface that reflects the most important analysis of the cases, segregated by age, gender, and with the ability to show its progression," describes Ali. "It has become possible for the decision maker to take advantage of real time information, to study the COVID-19 spread and then provide the necessary precautionary measures, such as prioritizing locations for random surveying to determine if transmission has taken place," he adds. Ultimately, it is hoped that this platform will support Karbala to join a global network of 'Smart Cities', providing a package of advanced digital services that facilitate improved daily life for Karbala Citizens.



## New U.S. funding helps WFP scale up its COVID-19 response in Iraq

**Baghdad, 20 July 2020** – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) received a special contribution for its COVID-19 humanitarian response in Iraq from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). The generous funding of US\$6.25 million will help provide food assistance over three months for nearly 80,000 internally displaced Iraqis and 22,000 Syrian refugees, whose needs have grown as a result of the global pandemic.

Many people have lost their jobs during the crisis and no longer have an income. Through monthly cash transfers, mostly via mobile phone, the new U.S. contribution will help WFP support vulnerable internally displaced and refugee families in camps. Markets and camp stores are still open and functioning, so people can redeem their cash entitlements and buy the food they need.

In response to COVID-19, WFP has scaled up its assistance in Iraq, to



reach 76,000 refugees and 280,000 displaced people.

“During the crisis, we have stepped up our support for families who are no longer able to put food on the table and are relying more on humanitarian assistance,” said WFP Iraq Representative Abdirahman Meygag. “As our most generous contributor so far in 2020, WFP is grateful to USAID and the American people for enabling WFP to support families through these uncertain times.”

As part of WFP's approach to cash assistance, new “cashless payments” are being introduced in camps in three governorates so far, in Diyala, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din. This allows people to buy food at camp shops directly through their mobile phones, in a “contactless” manner. Cashless transactions reduce the risk of contracting or spreading the virus as well as avoid people's unnecessary movement outside the camp.

## WHO mobile clinics prove value in serving the vulnerable in Mosul amid fight to contain COVID19 spread



**Baghdad, 20 July 2020** - The COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq has challenged the fragile health infrastructure weakened by decades of unrest and internal conflict. It most impacted the vulnerable population of over 1.3 million Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs) and over 4.7 million returnees[1] sheltered in poor living settings in many parts of the country. Ninawa Governorate, northwest Iraq, hosts the highest number of returnees living in severe conditions. These conditions were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent containment measure of the lockdown which impacted the living of over 270,000 returnees and increased

their struggle for accessible health services including COVID-19 infection prevention and control.

During the Mosul crisis in 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) deployed a network of Mobile Medical Clinics (MMC) to deliver a wide range of first-line health care services to the most remote areas and battle frontlines in Ninawa and several other conflict-affected governorates. These MMCs never stopped their devotion to health care service delivery after Mosul liberation and have, again, proved value amid the strive of health actors to contain the fast spread of the new coronavirus infection in the country.

“WHO was concerned about the health of the vulnerable population in Ninawa and other conflict-affected areas which are still suffering from severe living conditions,” said Dr. Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq.

“We have been in close cooperation with the local health authorities and health cluster partners to coordinate sustainable access to essential health care services in these locations, in addition to spreading COVID-19 prevention messages and awareness material as possible. We believe that the spread of the pandemic in delicate settings like displacement and refugee camps or returnee shelters could lead

to dramatic and uncontrollable infection consequences,” Dr. Ismail added.

The WHO supported network of MMCs has been managed by implementing partners in north, west, and northwest Iraq. DARY NGO is one of the health partners running 18 WHO-supported mobile clinics in the governorates of Anbar and Ninawa, where the highest vulnerable and in-need for health care service population is located.

“During the current COVID-19 pandemic, the mobile clinics became significantly important in providing primary health care services in under-recovery areas,” said Dr. Ahmed Riyadh, a Medical Officer working in one of the MMCs operating in Mosul. The health services delivered by the mobile clinics during COVID-19 response operation have been rescheduled to cover outreach locations and neighborhoods where the in-need population is unable to access primary health care facilities due to the country-wide imposed lockdown.

WHO support to health services was made possible by the generous contribution of The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and The European Commission Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).



## Seven messages of hope: unity in Iraq during COVID-19

**Baghdad, 20 July 2020** - Iraq has been in a state of lockdown since March, and the novel coronavirus continues to spread through the governorates of one of the world's most resilient nations.

Physical distancing has been touted as key to mitigating the spread of COVID-19, but connection to others, who are also experiencing the same circumstances and feelings of isolation, is vital. Phone calls, social media feeds, video chats, and following the news can increase feelings of connectivity.

During the continued food distribution campaign by UNDP Iraq's Local Peace Committee members and Kurdistan Human Rights Watch, residents of Ramadi, Anbar Governorate, were interviewed. One question led to seven different responses from people of various ages and backgrounds.

What message would you like to share during this difficult time?

These responses are a reminder of the power of hope, the importance of health, and proof that above all, the people of Iraq desire peace.



**Rabeha**, 69 years old, is raising her two grandchildren: "I consider myself a mother to all Iraqis, and I hope that God preserves our

people and our country. I also ask God to grant success to those working in our province to assist the poor. The Iraqi people are a generous and helpful people, and they always stand together and unite during adversity."



**Akram**, 50 years old, is a laborer who lost his job due to the curfew: "Please follow the health instructions during these difficult circumstances in

order to maintain public safety. I ask all members of society to join hands and help each other to overcome this crisis and establish peace in all of Iraq."



**Sajaad** is a 15-year old who lives with his uncle: "I advise all Iraqi children to wear masks to keep them healthy. Soon the pandemic will pass, and all

children will return to playing and having fun."

**Jumaa**, 49 years old, is a laborer who lost his job due to the curfew: "Please remember hygiene practices and physical distancing in order for us to pass this dangerous stage. I hope that

peace will prevail in Iraq."

**Suaad**, 43 years old, is the matriarch of her household: "I hope that communication and harmony between people will return, as it has been in the past."



**Hakim**, 62 years old, is unemployed: "My hope is that this very serious crisis will be resolved, and that life will return to normal. Inevitably, this crisis will end like previous crises.

Hope is our goal."

"Everyone must help the poor and the needy in these difficult circumstances. I hope that everyone will promote tolerance and peace will prevail," said **Noora**, 38 years old.

The distribution of food boxes, also known as life support packages, started in late April by Local Peace Committee members supported by UNDP in partnership with Kurdistan Human Rights Watch and with generous contributions from the governments of Denmark and Germany.

During distribution in Anbar Governorate, 2,300 families received life support packages. The goal of the campaign is to support 25, 000 vulnerable people.

## New report from FAO, IFAD, WFP and the World Bank reveals complex impact of COVID-19 on food security in Iraq

**Baghdad, 22 July 2020** - As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank have collected and analyzed new data on the impact of the crisis on food security, and made corresponding joint recommendations in the first report of a new regular series, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security in Iraq."

Many people have been unable to work during the current crisis. Around 4.8 million people (12% of the total population) are using negative coping strategies to meet their food needs, and a large stimulus package will be required to re-start the economy, beyond the current measures to mitigate the impact on households and businesses. On the other hand, food availability has been stable overall, with above-average cereal production in

the 2019/2020 season, and the government of Iraq taking a proactive role to keep the food system open despite lockdowns. Food imports have continued, with global trade largely uninterrupted.

Humanitarian, social protection and development responses have stepped up, both from the government (such as "Minha" – "Grant") and supporting partners. However, global trends have had a cascading impact on Iraq. The fall in oil prices and the slow recovery of the global oil market have had negative implications for the domestic budget, and may affect the government's ability to continue to fund social protection programmes and agriculture subsidies. With assistance from Food Security Cluster partners and the Cash Consortium of Iraq, FAO, IFAD, WFP and the World Bank analyzed food availability and access, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations, and jointly made policy

recommendations.

"With initiatives to work towards a regional trade integration framework, create an enabling environment for increasing domestic production, invest in productive infrastructure, enhance social protection and monitor food security, vulnerable households can continue to have access to nutritious food. All possible efforts will be made to support the government of Iraq and implement the proposed recommendations," said FAO Representative in Iraq Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, IFAD Representative for Iraq Tarek Ahmed, WFP Iraq Representative Abdirahman Meygag, and World Bank Iraq Representative Ramzi Neman, in a joint statement.

The new publication builds on the partners' weekly reports on COVID-19 and food security, which launched in April and continue to be released.

Read the new report at: <https://bit.ly/2VDdBH3a>

## Building a foundation for Iraq's recovery from COVID-19

*Creating a space for recovery through the rehabilitation of Iraqi healthcare facilities*

**Baghdad, 20 July 2020** - The continued growth of the COVID-19 crisis in Iraq could result in long-lasting health, security and economic implications for the nation's most vulnerable people.

A country already recovering from decades of conflict, and with the added shock of plummeting oil prices in 2020, the risk of infection is but one of many concerns for the Iraqi people.

But, with the support of our donors and in coordination with the Ministry of Health, UNDP Iraq is committed to providing targeted support to ensure the critical needs of Iraq's most vulnerable people are addressed.

Since April 2020, UNDP has identified 13 healthcare facilities across 12 governorates (Anbar, Babil, Basra, Dohuk, Diyala, Karbala, Kirkuk, Misan, Najaf, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din and Thi Qar) that require critical support to improve their capacity to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Each facility will benefit from the rehabilitation of infrastructure and establishment of isolation rooms.

Once rehabilitation and establishment are complete, each healthcare facility will also receive delivery of critical medical equipment, including ventilators, patient monitors, suction machines and defibrillators.

In addition, central laboratories in Anbar, Dohuk and Erbil, will be provided with critical testing equipment which will enable the processing of COVID-19 tests, relieving the burden on Iraq's central lab in Baghdad and expediting testing times. Following technical assessment by UNDP Senior Engineers, designs for the rehabilitation and establishment of isolation rooms have been finalized and construction work is well underway.

In total, 180 airborne infection isolation rooms will be established across eleven facilities in Iraq. Each room will be completed with separate access and ventilation systems to ensure prevention and protection against the spread of infection to health care providers and other hospital patients.

Fallujah Teaching Hospital is one of the largest hospitals in the district, and the primary hospital in the city – serving more than 275,000 residents. Since 2017, with support from UNDP Iraq, significant damage sustained under ISIL, has been repaired and critical equipment replaced.

Now, the hospital is also equipped with a 10 single bed airborne infection isolation rooms and is awaiting delivery of essential medical equipment.

Once each facility has completed construction, UNDP will deliver one ventilator, one patient monitor and one suction machine for each single bed room, and one defibrillator for each facility. This medical equipment is necessary to ensure quality care can be provided to individuals experiencing more severe COVID-19 symptoms.

UNDP Iraq will also support the provision of critical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in all 12 facilities, including respirators, gloves, goggles, scrubs, hand sanitizers and face shields. Frontline healthcare workers are the heroes of the global COVID-19 response, and their safety is essential to the fight against the pandemic.

All workers' completing rehabilitation works across Iraq are provided with Personal Protective Equipment, including disposable gloves and face masks. The health of every Iraqi is critical to the nations' recovery.

At the beginning of each project, workers also receive training on COVID-19 safety and health guidelines.

Sterilization of hospital facilities is ongoing throughout the rehabilitation and establishment works, to ensure the safety and health of existing patients.

UNDP Iraq's support for the rehabilitation and establishment of isolation rooms, and delivery of critical medical equipment is complemented by on-going support to the Government and community through community advocacy campaigns and digital information platforms, community cohesion activities (such as food delivery), and economic recovery, through the assessment and analysis of COVID-19 on business and livelihoods in Iraq.

UNDP Iraq, with the generous support of the Governments of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States, is supporting the Government of Iraq's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### UNDP's COVID-19 Response in Iraq

UNDP Iraq, along with the generous support of a number of donors, is supporting the Government of Iraq's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All activities are designed in line with UNDP's Global Integrated Response, the WHO Iraq Country Strategic

Preparedness and Response Plan Against COVID-19, and in coordination with other UN agencies and the Ministry of Health of Iraq and respective Directorates of Health at the governorates level.

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In Ninewa, the construction of fully equipped isolation wards inside Mosul is underway to assist COVID-19 patients. Since the health sector in this governorate has been severely impacted by the ISIL occupation, UNDP has restored critical infrastructure and provided medical equipment, helping to alleviate the increased pressure on health infrastructure resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak.



In Diyala, UNDP Iraq is rehabilitating a 20-room Isolation Unit in Baqubah General Hospital. This isolation ward, the first of its kind in the region, will provide critical medical support for COVID-19 patients once completed.



In Anbar, the rehabilitation of isolation wards inside Fallujah Teaching Hospital was recently completed to assist COVID-19 patients. Life-saving medical equipment including ventilators, patient monitors, and a defibrillator will be also delivered shortly. This support is critical as the number of COVID-19 patients in Anbar increases. Fallujah Teaching Hospital provides health services for 750,000 persons in Fallujah. The Hospital was



## Building a foundation for Iraq's recovery from COVID-19 *(continued)*



rehabilitated by UNDP after damage from ISIL.

To support COVID19 patients, UNDP in Iraq has established the Al-Humaiyat Isolation Unit, as part of Ramadi General Hospital. Once rehabilitation work is finalized, this unit, which was damaged during ISIL's occupation, will provide 10 beds for COVID19 patients in critical conditions. Critical medical equipment including 10 ventilators and 10 patient monitors, 1 defibrillator will also be provided.

Construction to develop an Isolation Centre in Dohuk is well underway! UNDP Iraq just cast the foundation for

the Isolation units located in Dohuk city. The specialized centre comprises 20 rooms with a capacity of 2 beds each for COVID-19 patients. We're also providing critical medical equipment to help patients make a quick and safe recovery. The centre will not only help the local residents of Dohuk, but also facilitate access to health services for the thousands of IDPs and refugees who live in the region's camps.



To support the Government of Iraq's COVID-19 response, UNDP Iraq is establishing a 20-room Isolation Unit in Al-Fyhaa Al-Taaleemy Hospital.

UNDP in Iraq recently restarted the rehabilitation of Ibn Al Atheer Hospital

in Mosul. As the only pediatric hospital in Mosul and with an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 children in Ninewa Governorate, many families rely on this critical facility. Twenty-five workers recommenced work, maintaining preventive health measures to fight COVID-19. This hospital, which was badly damaged during the liberation of the city, will employ some 500 medical staff to take care of patients' needs, once fully rehabilitated.

In Kirkuk, Acting Governor Rakan Saeed al-Jabouri recently conducted a stone laying ceremony to commemorate the building of a new Isolation Unit. In close collaboration with Kirkuk health directory, UNDP in Iraq is establishing this unit, the first of its kind in the region. 20 isolation wards will be prepared to assist COVID19 patients, fully equipped with a capacity of 2 patients per room. After liberation from ISIL, UNDP has continuously supported the health sector through the rehabilitation of hospitals in this region.

## The University of Karbala produces locally made hand sanitizer and disinfectant for health facilities, in first of its kind UNICEF-supported project

**Baghdad, 19 July 2020** - In the first of its kind project since the corona virus outbreak, graduate students in the pharmaceutical department of the University of Karbala have produced 14,500 locally made hand sanitizers and 10,000 large products to disinfect surfaces, with the support of UNICEF and its partner the Karbala Directorate of Health.

Over the course of the month of June, the bottles were distributed to primary healthcare centers in Karbala and Baghdad, both which have been hard hit by covid19.

"We have been distributing hand sanitizer and soap to some of the most vulnerable communities since the beginning of the outbreak. To now be able to support Iraqis as they themselves produce items they need to protect their communities from COVID-19 is something we are proud of and that lives up to our commitment to empower local communities who are driving positive change," said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq.

The sanitizer is produced according to the highest global standards and with

locally sourced raw materials. The gel is then bottled into 250 milliliters containers that are labelled and include instructions on how to use. The production cost of one bottle amounts 2 US dollars, a third of the average selling price of one hand sanitizer bottle (6 dollars) on the market.

There are already plans to produce at least 10,000 more bottles that will be distributed in the two governorates, as well as in Basra and Najaf. The production process takes up to three weeks. Once ready, youth volunteers who are trained in hygiene promotion by UNICEF distribute the bottles to public health clinics and centers. To date, the hand sanitizer bottles, and disinfectant solution have been given to 34 main Primary health care centers in Karbala and Baghdad.

"I heard so many people say that COVID-19 does not exist, which is not true. Someone in my family came into contact with the disease and transmitted it on to others. I wanted to work on this project. It makes me feel I am giving something to my community," explained 22-year old Zainab Hussein, one of the volunteers

from Karbala who participated in the distributing.

With access to hand sanitizer, patients and health workers alike can practice hand hygiene, thereby enabling health centers to continue providing communities with essential services such as immunization and maternal health despite COVID-19. The project was made possible with generous support of the Department of International Development (DFID UK).



## IOM Iraq supports Hawler Teaching Hospital in responding to COVID-19 challenges

**Erbil, 27 July 2020** - IOM Iraq's Health Unit visited Hawler Teaching Hospital to discuss the challenges they face responding to COVID-19, especially as they relate to the implementation of infection prevention and control (IPC) measures. The hospital recently started admitting COVID-19 patients into the respiratory

care unit which has 10 beds. IOM Iraq provided an initial package of IPC supplies such as disinfectants, as well as supplies to facilitate screening (such as no-contact thermometers and alcohol-based rub). These activities were funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



## Protecting communities from COVID-19: Canada commits funds to tackle growing pandemic in Iraq



**Baghdad, 27 July 2020** –The Government of Canada has contributed US\$1.85 million (CAD 2.5 million) to support the Government of Iraq's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in

Iraq.

The funds will be directed toward two critical areas of work; \$1.85 million will support UNDP Iraq's immediate response to COVID-19, which supports 12 governorates, and includes increasing the testing capacity of laboratories, providing personal protective equipment to healthcare workers, increasing the number of isolation wards, and undertaking assessments to establish post-COVID-19 recovery strategies. An additional \$75,000 will be used to provide local police engaged in Iraq's COVID-19 response with personal protective equipment including masks, gloves and hand sanitizer, largely focusing on officers in Baghdad, which has seen the highest number of cases in the country. "The emergence of COVID-19 has

presented yet another challenge for Iraq – which is still reeling from the devastating effects of the ISIL conflict, and is now faced with an economic crisis due to the decline in oil prices. This generous contribution from Canada will ensure the health and safety of communities through access to improved health services and infrastructure, and protect those serving local communities in the line of duty," says UNDP Iraq's Resident Representative, Zena Ali Ahmad.

The funds have been repurposed from existing agreements under UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization, and the Security Sector Reform/Rule of Law programmes. As one of UNDP Iraq's key partners, Canada has provided approximately \$27 million to the two programmes.

## EU Humanitarian Air Bridge delivers educational materials and personal protective equipment for UNICEF's coronavirus response in Iraq

**Baghdad, 27 July 2020** – A European Union chartered air flight arrived in Baghdad yesterday carrying 27 tons of essential relief items for UNICEF. The flight, which took off from the French city of Lyon in the morning and landed in Baghdad International Airport the same evening, transported educational kits for vulnerable children acquired with the support of the Governments of Germany and the Netherlands, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers with support from the Government of Japan.

"The EU set up a Humanitarian Air Bridge to Iraq to ensure that essential supplies reach vulnerable children and frontline health workers in these difficult times," said Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management. "The coronavirus pandemic is hitting the country hard, increasing vulnerability of those most at risk. The EU's humanitarian air flights and additional

funding are a tangible expression of EU solidarity with the people in Iraq in their hour of need."

In addition, the EU has also released an additional 1 million to support UNICEF's relief work for vulnerable people, bringing the EU's total contribution to UNICEF Iraq this year to over 5.6 million Euros. These latest funds will be used to improve sanitation facilities and help maintain a clean environment through waste management, water quality monitoring and hygiene promotion for children and their families for an estimated 50,000 residents of internally displaced camps in the northern part of the country. This is crucial amid the coronavirus outbreak and within the context of Iraq where only 39 % of the population has access to safe and clean water. In addition, the new funds will go towards protection services for children who are in contact with the law, including case

management, issuance of identity documents, legal assistance and psychosocial support. Many vulnerable children, living both in camps and outside of camps, continue to need protection and assistance. Iraqi or non-Iraqi, thousands of children are victims of violence, abuse and exploitation.

"We are highly appreciative of the support that our EU partners are providing us so that we are able to keep children healthy and safe and help them get back to learning as quickly as possible. And at this time of critical need of supply of Personal Protective Equipment to help combat the spread of COVID-19 in Iraq, UNICEF appreciates the continuing partnership with the EU, through which we can share resources and quickly bring the supplies that are so badly needed into the country," explained Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.



## COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign targets more than 6 million people in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 28 July 2020** - A one-month campaign, which began on 29 June, targeted more than 6 million people in 10 heavily populated and COVID-19-affected districts in Baghdad with health promotion and awareness messages to limit transmission of COVID-19 following an increase in the number of cases reported in the country. The campaign dubbed "Your health is important" was conducted in each of the 10 districts for a period of 3 days and was organized by WHO and the Ministry of Health, in partnership with the United Iraqi Medical Society, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and community police.

Two hundred and fifty (250) volunteers used booths, mobile screens and mobile clinics to display educational videos and play audio messages on a variety of protective measures. They also distributed face masks, hand sanitizers

and flyers, and informed the public of the importance of wearing face masks, practicing physical distancing and washing hands frequently. The campaign included support from the media, religious leaders, athletes, artists and other professionals.

"In the past month since the start of the mass awareness-raising campaign in Baghdad, we have noted a significant decrease in the daily number of recorded cases from the most affected districts." said Dr Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. "Partnership and community engagement are critical components in the fight against COVID-19 and the success of this campaign would not have been possible without the generous financial support of our donors and partners, the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and the

Government of Kuwait," added Dr Ismail.

The campaign will be extended to Sulaymaniyah, Basra, Missan, Thi Qar and Wasit on 9 August 2020 and target areas reporting a high number of cases. To date, 115 332 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Iraq; 81 062 people have recovered, 4535 people have died and 29 735 remain in treatment centres.



## IOM Iraq provided technical assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Health

**Erbil, 31 July 2020** - As part of preparations to reopen the Erbil International Airport for commercial flights, IOM Iraq provided technical assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Health (MOH). IOM Iraq, MOH, and airport authorities discussed health measures that should be implemented at the arrival and departure terminals to reduce the risk of disease transmission at the airport.



## UNFPA distributed dignity kits in Sulaymaniyah

**Sulaymaniyah, 29 July 2020** - Medical staff are our superheroes! During these difficult times, they have proven to be up to the challenges, facing all risks to ensure women and girls receive the best care possible!

UNFPA, with thanks partner SWEDO - The Swedish Development Aid Organization and with the support from Canada in Iraq, distributed 195 dignity kits to women medical workers at the blood bank, the Emergency Call Service Centre and the Shahid Hemin hospital in Sulaymaniyah, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

"Thank you for thinking about us in such times where all our focus is on other women! It is nice to feel appreciated," said Yasmin, one of the field workers at the hospital.



## UNFPA supports heathy pregnancies and victims of domestic violence

**Babel, 1 August 2020** - Pregnant women might fear that they increase their risk of catching COVID-19 if they go to the clinic for their check-up. However, staying at home in their case is not necessarily the best way to ensure a safe pregnancy.

Nahid, a 32-year-old, pregnant mother in her third trimester, suffers from anemia. Nahid visits Canada in Iraq supported UNFPA health clinic in Babel to have regular antenatal check-ups.

Getting regular medical check-ups

while following the prevention method for COVID-19, is the best way for her to ensure a healthy pregnancy.

In times of crisis, women and girls may be at higher risk of violence.

The risk is likely to grow due to containment measures, falling household incomes or fear and stress related to COVID-19.

UNFPA teams are working to ensure women and girls unable to reach UNFPA centres for psychosocial support, have someone they can confide in through home and outreach visits.



## WHO and the Ministry of Health, Iraq launch the second phase of the COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign

**Baghdad, 9 August 2020** – Today, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health, Iraq kick-started the second phase of the COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign in high-risk areas of Thi Qar and Missan south of Baghdad. Later in the month, the campaign whose theme is “Your health is important” will be rolled out to other governorates of Basra, Wasit, and to Sulaymaniyah, north of the capital Baghdad.

In Misan and Thi Qar, the campaign will run for 4 days starting from 9 August to 12 August 2020 and later in other governorates from 16 to 10 September 2020 in intervals of 4 days each of the southern provinces and for 9 days in Sulaymaniyah. Six hundred and fifty (650) community volunteers, including the community police working under the supervision of WHO’s implementing partners, United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS), and Ministry of Youth and Sports, will support the campaign. These teams will distribute more than 360 000 Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials, and personal protective equipment to approximately five million people in the five governorates. Others supporting this campaign are influential figures such as religious leaders, athletes, Iraqi artists, and journalists.

Together with our partners, we aim to reach as many people as possible in COVID-19 high-risk areas of Iraq with awareness messages on the pandemic. The five governorates were selected because of the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in these areas. WHO and its partners want to see these numbers come down drastically; however, this is only possible when



communities are aware of how the disease spreads and can be prevented,” said Dr. Adham Ismail, WHO Representative for Iraq.

Dr Ismail added that “Being armed with knowledge is essential, but having the tools to prevent the disease is another critical component, that’s why WHO and our partners will also give away facemasks, gloves, and sanitizers to ensure that the information is accompanied with the tools required to prevent this deadly virus.

Mobile screens, booths, and mobile medical clinics will be used to display educational videos and audio messages at selected community points. Television and Radio stations under the leadership of the Iraqi Communication and Media Commission CMC run daily messages on COVID-19 for one month. Personal protection packages containing masks, gloves, COVID-19 flyers will be distributed to people in public places, main streets, and

markets.

On 16 July, the Government of Iraq reopened its borders, including airports and malls, for commercial activities and trade. This community sensitization campaign goes a long way to reinforce earlier messages of how people can stay safer as border interactions resume. It also serves as a reminder to the population that COVID-19 is still a serious health problem.

This campaign is supported by the Government of Kuwait and the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO). “WHO is thankful to these donors for their continued generosity in keeping the people of Iraq safe. We call on the population to do their part of regular handwashing with soap, frequent hand sanitizing, and wearing facemasks, avoid mass gatherings, and observe social distancing in all public areas,” concluded Dr Adham.



## Addressing Iraq's fragility crucial to recovery from COVID-19 pandemic

**Baghdad, 11 August 2020** – Failure to address Iraq's multi-faceted fragility could lead to an increase in extreme poverty across the country, according to a new report released today by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.

Impact of the Oil Crisis and Covid-19 on Iraq's Fragility explores the major dimensions of fragility - economic, environmental, political, societal, and security - and their impact on Iraq in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic and resulting oil crisis.

The paper is the first in a series of policy papers that UNDP will issue on the impact of COVID-19 on Iraq. It provides key recommendations to support the Government of Iraq, local development actors and the international community develop strategies that enable Iraq to recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic.

"In fragile countries, social safety nets are weak and insufficiently address the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups in society. This ultimately results in deeper social inequalities," says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"For Iraq, decades of conflict have hampered the country's stability and

stunted its prosperity. The onset of COVID-19 and the oil crisis has exacerbated existing fragilities in the country.

"The different dimensions of fragility explored in this report emphasise that Iraq's fragility is not a result of one single event; it involves a number of intricate factors that have collectively impacted every aspect of the country's development, and these must be closely considered when charting the path to Iraq's recovery from the pandemic.

"Tackling Iraq's fragility by addressing these main drivers is critical to achieving Agenda 2030 and getting Iraq back on a prosperous and tangible development trajectory. We hope this policy paper is a useful tool for partners to shape effective policies for post-COVID-19 recovery in the country," she adds.

The policy paper, which applies a multidimensional concept of fragility based on the methodology developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), was developed in consultation with UN agencies in Iraq, notably the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labor Organization



(ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

UNDP's upcoming policy papers will cover the themes of: social protection, macro-economic stability, social cohesion, and household vulnerability. Impact of the Oil Crisis and Covid-19 on Iraq's Fragility is available on the UNDP Iraq website.

## WHO: with COVID-19 cases in Iraq at an alarming level, effective ways to prevent community-wide transmission is to avoid mass gatherings, exercise social distancing and wear masks in public

**Baghdad, 16 August 2020** - Although the number of infected COVID-19 cases in Iraq is exponentially rising to an alarming and worrying level, suggesting a major health crisis soon, Iraqis can still defeat the pandemic if they continue to diligently apply preventive measures, from collective efforts such as avoiding mass gatherings to self-discipline acts of wearing masks in public, exercising social distancing as effective ways to block the dangerous community-wide transmissions.

The current proliferation of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country has challenged a fragile health system weakened by years of conflict. Despite the limitations, the swift and effective response to the pandemic by the health authorities, especially in the first few months of its spread in Iraq, was commendable. But in recent months, the situation deteriorated due to a

number of factors, including the easing of the restrictions and the failure to adhere to the measures or to implement them forcefully.

The seriousness of the crisis can be clearly demonstrated through a simple epidemiological analysis of the recorded daily numbers over the last 175 days of the spread of the virus. Based on available data from the Ministry of Health and Environment in Iraq, by 16 August 2020 there were over 175,000 cases reported in the country, with over 5,800 related deaths. Data clearly indicates that more than 98 percent of the cases and deaths were reported during just the last three months. Almost 44,000 of cases are active in Iraq and close to 90 percent are treated at home, with nearly 9,000 of them health care workers. A detailed analysis of the pattern of spread of the virus in the country reveals that many parts of Iraq are now considered to be

suffering from community-wide transmission of the virus: an alarming and dangerous situation that requires urgent and serious measures.

A thorough analysis of the situation of the COVID-19 crisis in the country by the technical teams of several UN agencies (including WHO and UNICEF) highlights that Iraq needs to adjust its COVID-19 preparedness, readiness and response actions for the purpose of slowing the virus transmission, reducing number of daily reported cases, and ending at all costs the community outbreak. In the absence of a drug or vaccine, Iraq is only left with preventive measures to fight the spread of the pandemic. These include wearing masks and social distancing, instructions the health authorities keep stressing over and over and which many people are already following.

One of the most important measures to

## WHO: with COVID-19 cases in Iraq at an alarming level, effective ways to prevent community-wide transmission *(continued)*



prevent widespread transmission of the virus is for mass gatherings (for example, weddings or funeral ceremonies, sports and cultural events) not to take place at this critical stage

and for people to avoid such events for their own health and safety and that of their loved ones and community. These gatherings in large numbers put the risk of people unintentionally infecting others and spreading the virus very high. WHO and other UN bodies have undertaken a risk assessment of mass events in Iraq, looking into the likelihood of disease importation and spread in the country and its onward transmission, as well as the country's capacity to manage and control the outbreak. It was concluded that public health risks increase significantly at events with close human contact in crowded venues. WHO judges that avoidance of mass gatherings and wearing masks (while keeping social distancing and adopting a practice of frequent handwashing) can greatly reduce the rate of transmission of COVID-19 by at least 57 percent and 30 percent respectively.

The United Nations family in Iraq appreciates and strongly supports recent statements by Iraqi political and religious scholars discouraging super transmission events in the coming days. If we are to ensure the protection of people from the disease and prevent super transmissions, mass assemblies of people should not take place at this stage. The United Nations, guided by WHO expertise, stands committed to support the government in planning and implementing preventive measures in line with the recommendations of the health authorities.

The experience of other countries shows that it is possible to contain COVID-19 and gradually reopen economies within 2-3 months, if countries heed the advice of competent medical experts. With self-discipline, a willingness to remain informed by credible sources, and the concerted efforts of all, Iraq will overcome the pandemic.

## WHO concludes COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign in the South



**Baghdad, 19 August 2020** – As the number of COVID-19 cases in Iraq continues to rise, WHO, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and its implementing partners, has just concluded another round of a COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign that intensified community outreach efforts to educate people on measures to limit transmission of the coronavirus. The campaign reached more than 5 million people in 4 densely populated and heavily affected areas in Basra, Wasit, Thi Qar and Missan.

These governorates were the focus of the campaign as each has recorded a high number of cases over the past few months. Recently, the Government of Iraq eased lockdown measures nationwide, opening malls and re-opening its borders, including airports, to resume commercial activities and

trade. Both Missan and Basra border the Islamic Republic of Iran and are engaged in commercial activities. To increase community awareness of measures to limit transmission of COVID-19, WHO and the Ministry of Health partnered with United Iraqi Medical Society, community police and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, to disseminate health education messages in these high-risk areas.

"Even if we continue to see an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country, the good news is that death rates due to the disease have decreased in the last week, from 4% to 3%. This is a strong indication that the quality of health care being provided to those infected and hospitalized is good, for which we applaud frontline workers," said Dr Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. "Despite the admirable efforts of health care workers, COVID-19 remains a serious public health problem, and until a cure or vaccine is developed, communities need to protect themselves by wearing face masks, practicing physical distancing, and washing or sanitizing hands frequently. We count on the citizens to adhere to these preventive measures," added Dr Adham.

The campaign "Your health is important" was conducted in each area for 4 days each using 650 volunteers who used booths, mobile screens and mobile clinics to display educational

videos and play audio messages on a range of protective measures. The volunteers distributed more than 360 000 educational materials informing people of measures to limit transmission. The campaign was supported by a number of influential figures, including religious leaders, athletes, artists, and journalists.

"Communities welcomed the campaign because it gave them an opportunity to ask questions firsthand and engage with the campaign teams, this increased the uptake of preventive messages delivered. However, there are a lot of rumours and misinformation circulating in communities, and our teams are working hard to provide people with accurate information," said Dr Ahmed Alheeti, Head of the United Iraqi Medical Society. "The campaign wasn't without its challenges. In Basra, our teams faced demonstrations; however, good working relations with local officials and security meant we were able to access even hard-to-reach areas," added Dr Ahmed.

Next, campaign teams are moving to the Kurdistan region and will be targeting 9 heavily populated, high-risk areas in Sulaymaniyah province from 23 to 31 August 2020. WHO acknowledges the generous support of the Government of Kuwait and the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) in keeping the people of Iraq safe.



## Kurdistan Region of Iraq embraces a major COVID 19 awareness campaign

**Erbil, 23 August 2020** - The World Health Organization (WHO), in cooperation with the Ministry of Health in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, launch a major COVID 19 prevention and containment campaign in KRG-I.

The onset of the 9-day campaign on 23 August 2020 is from Suleimaniya which marked a severity in infection rates since the early stages of the outbreak due to multiple factors, mainly its proximity and long borders with neighboring Iran.

The campaign engages the local community through the mobilization of more than 250 local community volunteers to reach a population of over 800,000 people in 10 target areas including IDP and refugee camps in Arbat and Kalar districts.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq, like the rest of the country and the world, was impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic which laid its heavyweight on the health care system and lifesaving services in the region which continues to host approximately 700,000 internally displaced population and over 220,000 Syrian refugees.

"The outbreak has challenged the health resources and capacity to accommodate the uncontrolled increase in the number of cases in almost all countries around the world," said Dr. Adham R. Ismail Abdel Moneim, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq.

"WHO and the health authorities at the Federal level as well as in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq have been closely monitoring the proliferation of the outbreak in Iraq. As early as February this year, WHO has stepped up its response activities to support the federal and regional ministries of health with urgent medical supplies and equipment in addition to the implementation of consecutive awareness campaigns in many parts of the country to limit the spread of the disease and stop it from encroaching to slums and camps hosting IDPs and refugees," he added.

The campaign covers several activities like the dissemination of audio messages through a selection of Kurdish radio waves and the deployment of mobile screens to display WHO educational videos and animation messages focusing on mask-wearing, social distancing, and hand hygiene. It also includes booths which were set at entries to local markets, main public places, and crowded streets to distribute awareness material like

brochures, flyers, in addition to the campaign protection package which contains 3 masks, a campaign T-shirt, and a head cap to the pedestrians spotted around with no personal protection.

During the logistics preparations in the governorate, we met with people who shared many bitter stories on their experience with COVID19 disease. "Many have lost a family member, a friend, a neighbor, a loved one. Others have survived the disease after weeks of suffering from fever, malaise, cough, and difficulty breathing. It was such an experience that I do not wish anyone to go through it," commented Ahmed Sadruddin who lost a younger brother after a month of suffering in Shahid Aso Hospital in Suleimaniya District. For Lana Rashad, the situation was a terrifying one. She was in her 5th month of pregnancy when she was tested positive for COVID-19. She got the virus from her sister who visited her one evening without knowing she was infected, Lana explained. The sister didn't look well but she thought it was simple fatigue caused by housework. "Two days later, my sister and her husband were admitted to hospital for breathing assistance while I developed a severe headache, non-stop cough, sore throat and more that I surrendered to the thought I was going to die," Lana added narrating how she felt more than a month ago.

In Mawlawi street, Sulaimaniyah downtown, a family of 6 members just recovered after a 2-week hospitalization. "The hard time we've been through wouldn't have happened if we had committed to the lockdown and social distancing," said Sabah Mousa, a resident of the city. "The disease is a fact, not fake like others believe; it is dangerous and tough," he



added alerting all against contracting it to protect their elderly and loved ones.

More painful stories are still out there and could have been prevented with simple prevention measures like mask-wearing and social distancing as Dr. Sami Abdul Rahman highlights. "The population began to realize the seriousness of the infection. It is a reality that can be avoided by tending to hygiene practices, social distancing, and compulsory wearing of masks-which is what WHO is promoting through messages and awareness campaigns."

WHO and the Ministry of Health in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq expect the campaign to succeed in raising the awareness of the Kurdish population on the importance of wearing a mask while outside the household or in gatherings, not to forget social distancing and good hand hygiene.

WHO continues to express its gratitude to the Government of Kuwait and the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) for their generous contribution to support the implementation of this campaign. Thanks is also extended to the local implementing partner the United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS) NGO for their efforts to execute the campaign in KRG-I.



## WHO delivers ambulances and health technologies to Ministry of Health in the Kurdistan region to support emergency referrals and COVID-19 containment efforts

**Erbil, 25 August 2020** – The World Health Organization (WHO) has today delivered 6 ambulances to the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan region to improve ambulatory and life-saving services for the vulnerable population of Syrian refugees and the host community in the Erbil governorate of Iraq. The WHO consignment also included 22 tonnes of health technologies to support the efforts of the Government in containing COVID-19. It included oxygen concentrators, nucleic acid extraction kits, viral transport medium, personal protective equipment and intensive care hospital beds.

“Strong ambulatory and referral services are the backbone of health care services,” said Dr Adham R. Ismail Abdel Moneim, WHO Representative in Iraq. “The increasing demand for accessible and timely provision of essential emergency and referral services necessitate an urgent intervention to support national health capacity to save more lives. These ambulances will help to achieve this goal. They will be placed at health facilities which serve a high number of refugees and the host community in

Erbil,” Dr Abdel Moneim added.

In 2019, local health authorities and partners in the Kurdistan region reported an urgent need for additional ambulances to maintain 24/7 emergency referral services between primary, secondary and referral hospitals in the region, in which more than 1.8 million vulnerable people, including Syrian refugees, are accommodated. This population has been paying out of pocket and renting private vehicles without assistance to transfer emergency cases to the nearest referral health facility.

The ambulances are equipped with GPS tracking systems and essential

equipment to stabilize patients with urgent medical conditions, including heart attacks and traumatic injuries, and patients with other severe medical conditions.

WHO would like to express its gratitude to the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Government of Kuwait for providing the funds to materialize this lifesaving support, which will directly benefit hundreds of thousands of Iraqi and Syrian refugees living in camps and within the host community in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.



## Gender

### UN Women and EU provide training to women and girls at women shelters in the Kurdistan Region

**Erbil, 24 June 2020** - Several pastry training courses were held at two women shelters in Erbil and Suleimaniyah Governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) recently. Organised by KRI's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the courses are held as part of the project “Strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls and host communities,” which is supported by UN Women and the European Trust Fund “Madad”.

The project aims to provide high quality services to gender-based violence survivors staying at four women shelters in KRI. In addition to training activities to survivors, staff and security forces, the project supports services such as psychological counselling, legal aid and referrals.

A total of 45 women and girls staying at the shelters benefited from the pastry-making courses, according to officials at the shelters.

The officials said the courses had a positive impact on the beneficiaries, noting that they were intended to provide them with some skills that they can use to

be able to generate their own incomes in the future.

A series of sewing and clothing design courses organized at three women shelters by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq concluded on June 30.

The courses, which started on March 1, 2020 in shelters in the governorates of Erbil, Suleimaniya and Duhok, were held as part of the project “Strengthening the Resilience of Women and Girls and Host Communities in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey”, which is supported by UN Women and the European Trust Fund Madad.

Organizers said a total of 35 women and girls benefited from the courses, acquiring skills in dress-making and designs that would enable them to earn their living in the future.

The sewing and dress making workshops in the three shelters were founded with the help of UN Women which provided them with all needed machines and equipment, according to a statement by the organizers.

Within the framework of the same program, a series of handicraft training workshops organized in women shelters by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq concluded in June 2020.

The workshops were organized in governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok in the period May 1-June 30, 2020. Organizers said that 40 women benefited from the workshops, which aimed to offer them moral support as well as provide them with skills that would enable them to earn a living once they leave the shelters.





## UN Women supports advocacy for the anti-domestic violence law

**Baghdad, 7 July 2020** – UN Women Representative in Iraq and Yemen, Ms. Dina Zorba, had an online meeting with senior officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to identify priorities for effective coordination and collaboration and discuss the current situation with respect to the endorsement of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law.

A key priority outlined was the need to create sustainable safe spaces for gender-based violence survivors and to provide them with vocational training to enable them to enter the labor market. Representing MoLSA in the meeting were Director General of the People with Special Needs Welfare Department, Dr. Abeer Chalabi, Deputy Director General of Women’s Affairs Department, Alaa Abdul Hussein Zweir, and officials from the women’s safe space at the Department of Labor and Vocational Training.

Participants in an online meeting convened by the Baghdad Women Association (BWA) today agreed to



start a series of meetings with heads of Parliamentary blocs and political parties to advocate for the anti-domestic violence law in view of the increase in the number of reported cases of violence since the outbreak of the new coronavirus.

The participants, who included around 50 representatives of civil society organizations, government departments and activists, stressed the need for conducting in-depth studies of the causes of domestic violence and

means of tackling it, a statement by the organizers said. In their recommendations, the participants stressed the need for the law, which is awaiting approval by Parliament. The meeting was convened under the project “Monitoring and advocacy for the implementation of the Iraqi National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325” which is carried out by BWA with support of UN Women and Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).

## “The acceptance of women as peacebuilders in the city of Mosul” workshop held with support of UN Women

**Mosul, 8 July 2020** - Ayadi Al Salam for Relief and Development organization organized a two-day training workshop in the period 7-8 July on “The acceptance of women as peacebuilders in the city of Mosul”. The workshop was held as part of the “Women Peacebuilders of Mosul”, organized by Ayadi Al Salam for Relief and Development through support by UN Women and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF). Participants in the workshop included tribal, community and religious leaders, activists, representatives of CSOs and community police. The

meeting aimed to familiarize society leaders and influencers with the

important role of women and with problems they are facing.



## UN Women and KRG High Council of Women Affairs discussed ways of empowering women in KR

**Erbil, 23 August 2020** - UN Women representative in Iraq and Yemen, Ms. Dina Zorba, held a meeting today in Erbil with the Secretary General of the High Council of Women Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Dr. Khanzad Ahmad. They discussed cooperation between UN Women and the Council and means of supporting the Council’s work in empowering women in the Kurdistan Region.

Photo courtesy of the High Council of Women Affairs.



## Community police in Diyala and Her Voice Network agree on joint action to serve women issues

**Baghdad, 20 July 2020** - Activist Marwa Al-Gamily, coordinator of Her Voice Network for human rights defenders, the Iraqi community police director, Dean Ghalib Al-Attia, met at the headquarters of the Directorate in Diyala governorate to discuss a number of issues related to women in the governorate, consistent with UN Security Council resolution 1325, According to the statement of Her Voice Network.

The meeting included how to use network coordination represented by the Peace Organization to build social cohesion to support and empower women by compensating the lack of women's element in the security institution, and drawing on the experience of women in coordinating their voice network to solve problems and issues In several areas, including domestic violence, cybermail, other

community problems, how to fuel psychological and community support and empower women.

Her Voice Network meeting for human

rights defenders is part of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Action Fund project supported by the UN Women in Iraq.



## Despite the risks, Sarin Abdallah is determined to keep sheltered women safe



**Erbil, 29 July 2020** - Sarin Abdallah, a 33 year-old psychologist from the Sulaymaniyah Governorate in Iraq, visited a women's shelter\* in Kurdistan for the first time in 2012 while accompanying a colleague who was doing research on the facility's services. Because the center was located in the district where she grew up, Sarin quickly developed a connection with it and applied for a six-month internship. After the internship, she was appointed as a psychosocial counsellor at the shelter.

Established in 2009, the center is one of four women shelters supported by UN

Women's regional programme "Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities in Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey," funded by the European Union, the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis (the EU Madad Fund). This project, run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, aims at helping and supporting women survivors of violence. This includes shelter, psychosocial counselling, legal aid, case management and referrals. The shelter usually hosts between 40 to 60 women and girls, including refugees.

It has been almost eight years since Sarin Abdallah started working at the shelter. "Ever since, I have been very attached to the shelter. I believe in its mission to help women in need." Sarin said.

She says she loves her job because it has given her the opportunity to develop her skills through on-the-job experience and trainings so she could help other women.

But apart from the rewards, this job also carries risks. Not only for survivors, but also for the shelter workers. By giving shelter to survivors of violence, Sarin has put her own life at risk. In one case, she received threats from the family of a survivor who took shelter at the center. The family did not want Sarin to offer their daughter counselling and a safe place to stay.

"Her family thought that I had encouraged her to come to the shelter. The family attacked the shelter and the police had to intervene to protect me. I was living in fear and afraid of venturing out. Even when I went out with my husband, who is a policeman, I used to sit in the backseat for fear of being seen by the girl's family."

But such threats have never discouraged Sarin from helping women in need. Both her family and husband have been supportive, encouraging her to stay in Erbil and continue to help women in need.



## The link between lockdown and gender-based violence (GBV) in Iraq

By Sundus Abbas, UNDP Iraq Gender Advisor

**Baghdad, 22 July 2020** - Did you know, that despite decades of progress closing the gender equality gap, close to 90 percent of women and men hold some sort of bias against women?

Revealed in the recently released UNDP Gender Social Norms Index, which measures how social beliefs obstruct gender equality in areas like politics, work, and education, across 75 countries, this analysis provides new clues to the invisible barriers women face in achieving equality, and shattering the glass ceiling.

In Iraq, where the high unemployment rate (58%) and the low labour force participation (12.6%) of women is often associated with persisting social and cultural norms – whether by limiting the kind of work women are able to do safely, or through the limited economic and financial literacy of women – UNDP convened key stakeholders for a discussion in July.

In cooperation with the Women's Empowerment Department of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and the Iraqi Network for Security Council Resolution 1325, UNDP held two open discussion sessions on 8-9 July. 184 human rights defenders and gender equality advocates joined remotely, in order to discuss social norms and the increased incidence of violence against women that has been witnessed since the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were imposed in mid-March. Discussion participants raised concerns of the greater economic and social impact of the pandemic experienced by women and girls, and its threat to un-do or weaken achievements already made in Iraq – such as the enactment of the Family Protection Act.

The crisis poses an additional threat to women's participation in the paid economy by exacerbating pre-existing and restrictive social norms that assign specific roles to women and men. It also highlighted how discriminatory legal frameworks continue to restrict women's equal access to economic opportunities.

“Many of the response procedures for dealing with crisis such as lockdown, clearly reflected the strength of social norms, which are built on male dominated systems and reduce the punishment of perpetrators due to unconscious and sometimes conscious biases. Accordingly, most cases of violence against women have been

resolved tribally, despite having reached the point of murder,” stated the General Director of WED, Dr. Ibtisam Aziz. “In contrast, the quarantine measures also gave young Iraqi women an opportunity to embark on the design of many innovative solutions to stimulate their social and economic roles,” Duaa Ali, a University Law student said.

The sessions concluded with the announcement of the formation of a crisis chamber, aimed at documenting, mapping and analyzing the upward trends of violence, as well as suggesting innovative, and sustainable solutions and reviewing existing protocols and standard operating procedures to reflect the changing circumstances under COVID-19. In addition, this chamber, intends to set the stage for a new approach to the strategic engagement of partners and a new perspective to addressing the impact of social norms and gender bias in impeding gender equality during crisis. Importantly, the crisis chamber will also ensure that all COVID-19 response interventions - even if they do not explicitly address Gender Based Violence (GBV) – should help to prevent GBV and protect survivors.

At a critical moment for gender equality – the world celebrating the 64th Commission on the Status of Women (Beijing +25), the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UN

Security Council Resolution 1325 and the fifth anniversary of the Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – the sharp increase in the rate of violence against women and girls in Iraq, is being brought to the forefront of the COVID-19 response. The

UNDP is supporting the Government to reassess the national path to equality and how we can bridge the gender equality gap, including by strengthening protection mechanisms financially and with greater human resources, and facilitating access to justice for women.

“Because of the difficulty of monitoring and measuring social norms and attitudes, the influential power of customs is often ignored. This leads to lack of understanding of social change and the persistence of gender inequality. The prevention of GBV is a strategy that could promote progress across multiple sustainable development goals, not only because it is integrated into most goals but also because it improves results and deepens the positive impact. This underscores the opportunities for the integration of prevention programs throughout the COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives in all areas, particularly the rule of law, justice, security and human rights,” Mr. Khalid Mohammed, a lawyer and discussion participant stated.



## UN: accountability for human rights violations during peaceful protests is key

**Baghdad/Geneva, 27 August 2020** – Despite promising steps by the current Government of Iraq concerning human rights violations and abuses committed in the context of recent demonstrations, accountability remains elusive, according to a UN report released on Thursday.

The report details actions and omissions in handling the massive protests that took place between October 2019 and April 2020, highlights the human rights violations and abuses, calls for immediate action to achieve justice, recommends protection measures for demonstrators and urges redress for victims.

“Of great concern is the continued targeting and killing of activists and human rights defenders. This is not random violence but a deliberate silencing of peaceful voices, coupled with the total impunity enjoyed by perpetrators,” said the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. “Without accountability, the crimes committed will remain mere statistics, numbers on a page. This report sheds light on the suffering, and provides concrete recommendations to help rebuild public trust”, she added.

The Human Rights Office of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) based its report on more than 900 interviews with victims and their

relatives, witnesses, journalists, and civic and political activists. It documents that at least 487 people were killed and 7,715 injured during the protests, a majority of them young men.

The report highlights a pattern of unnecessary and excessive force, including live ammunition, when dealing with protesters.

Another worrying development were attacks by so-called unidentified armed actors as well as abductions.

Approximately 3,000 demonstrators were detained, adding concerns about arbitrary detentions and ill-treatment.

The right to freedom of expression was also severely curtailed, with frequent Internet blackouts, news outlets raided, journalists assaulted, harassed and arbitrarily detained, their material confiscated or deleted.

“People were killed, injured, tortured and mistreated, kidnapped, disappeared, arbitrarily detained, for exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. This is unacceptable. Everyone has the right to peacefully demonstrate and to publicly express their frustration at not being able to provide for themselves and their families,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

Since taking office in May, the current government has taken welcome steps to establish an independent investigative

### Human Rights Violations and Abuses in the Context of Demonstrations in Iraq October 2019 to April 2020



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
August 2020  
Baghdad, Iraq



body and offer some redress for the victims and their families, but much more needs to be done.

Full report is available at the [www.uniraq.org](http://www.uniraq.org) website: <https://bit.ly/2A7oe75>

## Iraq: UN calls for renewed efforts to investigate enforced disappearances in Anbar Governorate

**Baghdad, 30 August 2020** – A UN report on enforced disappearances calls for independent and effective investigations to establish the fate of approximately 1,000 civilian men and boys who disappeared during military operations against ISIL (Da'esh) in Anbar Governorate in 2015-2016, and to hold perpetrators accountable as well as provide justice and redress to victims' families.

Coinciding with this year's International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances on 30 August, the report by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) titled “Enforced Disappearances from Anbar governorate 2015-2016: Accountability

for the victims and the right to truth” also encourages renewed efforts to address the broader issue of enforced disappearances in Iraq.

The report provides detailed recommendations to encourage acknowledgement and redress for victims, the establishment of a strong domestic legal framework against enforced disappearances, compliance and procedural safeguards as well as close cooperation with the UN specialized mechanisms. Though focused on Anbar as a case study, the report's recommendations are valid countrywide and can help address other cases of enforced disappearances.

The report is available at the [www.uniraq.org](http://www.uniraq.org) website: <https://bit.ly/2A7oe75>

Enforced disappearances from Anbar governorate 2015-2016:  
Accountability for victims and the right to truth



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
August 2020  
Baghdad, Iraq





## Confronting the silent and endemic crisis of harmful practices

*Urgent, accelerated action needed to stop female genital mutilation, child marriage, and other practices that harm women and girls, according to new UNFPA report*

**New York, 30 June 2020** - Every year, millions of girls are subjected to practices that harm them physically and emotionally, with the full knowledge and consent of their families, friends and communities, according to the State of World Population 2020, released today by UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency.

At least 19 harmful practices, ranging from breast ironing to virginity testing, are considered human rights violations, according to the UNFPA report, which focuses on the three most prevalent ones: female genital mutilation, child marriage, and extreme bias against



daughters in favour of sons.

“Harmful practices against girls cause profound and lasting trauma, robbing them of their right to reach their full potential,” says UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem.

This year, an estimated 4.1 million girls will be subjected to female genital mutilation. Today, 33,000 girls under age 18 will be forced into marriages, usually to much older men. Also, an extreme preference for sons over daughters in some countries has fueled gender-biased sex selection or extreme neglect that leads to their death as children, resulting in 140 million “missing females.”

Some harmful practices are waning in countries where they have been most prevalent. But because of population growth in these countries, the number of girls subjected to them will actually rise in the coming decades, if urgent action is not taken.

Countries that have ratified international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child have a duty to end the harm, whether it’s inflicted on girls by family members, religious communities, health-care providers, commercial enterprises or state institutions. Many have responded with laws, but laws alone are not enough.

Decades of experience and research show that bottom-up, grassroots approaches are better at bringing change, the UNFPA report states. “We must tackle the problem by tackling the root causes, especially gender-biased norms. We must do a better job of supporting communities’ own efforts to understand the toll these practices are

taking on girls and the benefits that accrue to the whole of society by stopping them,” Dr. Kanem says.

Economies and the legal systems that support them must be restructured to guarantee every woman equal opportunities, the report adds. Changing rules for property inheritance, for example, can eliminate a powerful incentive for families to favour sons over daughters and help to eliminate child marriage.

Ending child marriage and female genital mutilation worldwide is possible within 10 years by scaling up efforts to keep girls in school longer and teach them life skills and to engage men and boys in social change. Investments totaling \$3.4 billion a year through 2020 would end these two harmful practices and end the suffering of an estimated 84 million girls, the report shows.

While progress has been made in ending some harmful practices worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse gains. A recent analysis revealed that if services and programmes remain shuttered for six months, an additional 13 million girls may be forced into marriage and 2 million more girls may be subjected to female genital mutilation between now and 2030.

“The pandemic both makes our job harder and more urgent as so many more girls are now at risk,” Dr. Kanem says. “We will not stop until the rights, choices and bodies of all girls are fully their own.”

The Report in English is available at <https://www.unfpa.org/swop-2020>

## UNESCO’s support for the safety of journalists in Iraq is underpinned by a strong conviction that safety standards in the time of COVID-19 are essential, along with the fight against misinformation

**Erbil, 1 July 2020** - In times of the COVID-19 pandemic, professional news media have acted as a guardian of public interest. They are an important component of the checks and balances that form part of public safety. By fighting disinformation and the misinfodemic and disseminating trusted information to citizens, the news media enables citizen participation in health development and strengthens accountability of feedback mechanisms in the health sector. Citizens cannot be safe in the absence of crucial

information and knowledge about the pandemic, which well-trained journalists are better placed to provide.

In this context and in the context of the E U - f u n d e d p r o j e c t o n “#CoronavirusPandemicFacts – Addressing the Covid-19 disinfodemic in conflict prone environments”, UNESCO Iraq office held the third online training for 40 Kurdish journalists.

In the two-day training, the trainees focused on a range of factors that are transforming the communications landscape, raising questions about the

impact and credibility of journalism in such crises.

The training explored UNESCO’s efforts to develop the basic guidelines for ‘Fake News’ and disinformation, and to assist journalists in covering news about the pandemic, including in the Kurdistan region.

The training is designed to be used as an entire course or can be used in ways tailored to suit the media landscape and the needs of journalism at the local level.

## Citizen journalist training conducted by Media in Cooperation and Transition and supported by IOM Iraq

**Baghdad, 8 July 2020** - "The absence of an independent press in the country and all the things happening around us made me interested in becoming a journalist," said Hawazen who took part in a Citizen Journalist training conducted by Media in Cooperation and Transition and supported by IOM Iraq. "It is important to report on what's happening, and I found citizen journalism to meet the demands of those looking for truthful reporting." "I learned about digital security, media discourse analysis, physical security, news writing, photography, montage, and report writing, and we got to know the types of journalistic work, this gave us a broader understanding," Hawazen added. Hawazen was awarded a grant by IOM



Iraq following her completion of the training, to support her in her work. "With the grant I want to buy simple

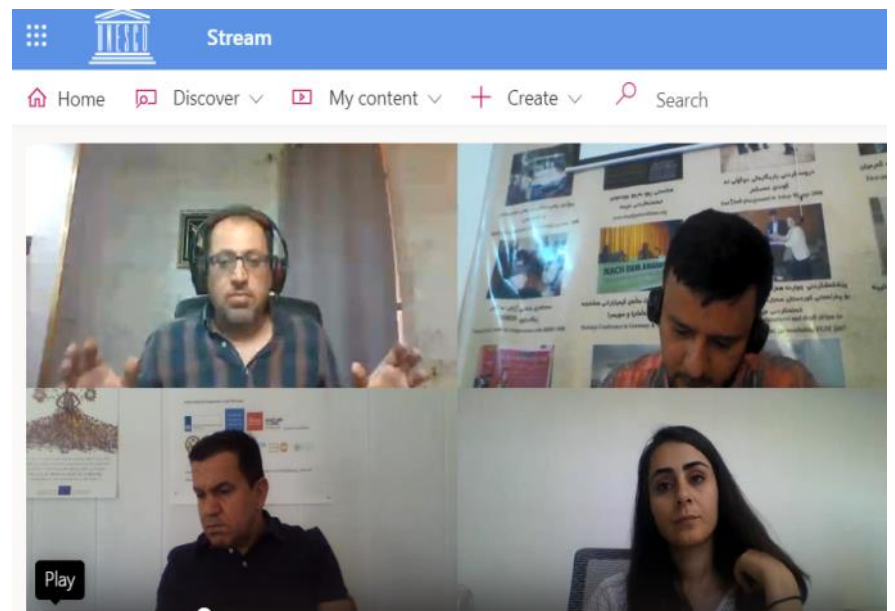
photography equipment to complete what I have started in the field of citizen journalism."

## UNESCO organized a Training-Of-Trainers course to counter media misinformation and enhance the safety of journalists

**Baghdad, 15 July 2020** - UNESCO Iraq office held an online Training-Of-Trainers course, with the participation of 20 trainers including female journalists. The training course was organized under the "Coronavirus Fact" project to tackle the outbreak of COVID-19 in conflict-prone environments, funded by the European Union. The three-day online training course aimed at providing 20 trainers with the safety measures of the COVID-19 pandemic and tools for fighting misinformation, to be used later to train 1000 journalists in the period of six months. Over three days, Participants received training on a range of cases by experts on safety of journalists, Misinformation and Fact-Checking tools (FCT), and how to conduct more effective trainings on pandemic cases, policies, finance and adaptation, in a session on The Role of Media in Covering the COVID-19 Outbreak. On day two, the session revolved around misinformation, reports, recourses, and training tools amid the pandemic, followed by detecting and reporting COVID-19 in a better way, and who determines the levels of misinformation associated with the pandemic. A full day training workshop was held on the third day, studying the role of fact-checking tools to tackle fake news during COVID-19. The participants completed the pre-test and the

dimensional test of the training, to refine the skills of the trainees and ensure they will be able to train the journalists according to the project's main specific objectives. In recognition of the growing threats facing journalists in the field. UNESCO has provided more capacity-building activities over the past month, based largely on journalists' reactions and their networks with more than 1,700 members to work towards achieving the projects goal, supported by the European Union fund. The TOT Safety Training provided participants with a better

understanding of the threats they are likely to encounter. Physical attacks and verbal abuse, or online risks related to false information. The journalists shared their experiences dealing with safety and security challenges. The security experts who led the three-day sessions, offered advice on how they and their colleagues can protect themselves in a better way. The training was concluded with a discussion on how to conduct local TOT with their partners in order to obtain the skills and tools needed to be able to develop resources within their networks and organizations.





## Iraqi cartoonists take action on human rights and COVID-19

By United Nations Human Rights Office

**Baghdad, 22 July 2020** - "The idea of my image is to fight ignorance about the virus, and to promote the power of education," says Nassir, an Iraqi artist from Baghdad. "All our actions together will not contain coronavirus, but people need to be educated about what action needs to be taken and what not to do." Nassir is one of seven young Iraqi cartoonists who are taking part in a joint social media campaign by the human rights office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the al Amal Association, an Iraqi organization.



The aim of the vibrant and colourful cartoon series is to dispel rumours about the virus, and to commend the courage and resilience of healthcare workers. One of its other main objectives is to raise awareness on the multitude of human rights consequences that the pandemic has brought to the fore: stigma and discrimination, an increase in domestic violence, limited access to education and decreased access to healthcare.

"The fight to contain COVID-19 in Iraq must put people – and their rights – front and centre," said Danielle Bell, Head of UN Human Rights in Iraq.

"This campaign highlights the human rights dimensions of this terrible virus by drawing attention to issues revfaced by Iraqis countrywide," continues Bell. "The cartoons also demonstrate the courage, strength and commitment of Iraqi healthcare workers."



As Iraq's COVID-19 numbers surge, the campaign takes on even more importance. Following the ease of lockdown measures nationwide, the

country has seen a significant increase in cases. According to the Iraqi health authorities, as of 19 July 2020 there were a total of 92,530 confirmed cases, 60,528 recoveries and 3,781 fatalities.

"Standing together and showing solidarity with people affected by COVID-19 - especially marginalised and vulnerable groups - is a social responsibility," says Hasan Wahab, from the al Amal Association. "It requires multiple collaborative efforts to reduce violence and to limit the spread of the virus across Iraq."

### Countering stigma

Stigma around COVID-19 has been one of the barriers to combatting the virus' spread in Iraq. In Basra for example, UN Human Rights has documented attacks against medical staff by relatives of patients, in fear of their families being 'shamed' by stigma.

Through her cartoons, Evan, another Iraqi artist based in Turkey, wanted to help stem the consequences of stigma. "I wanted to show that it is a disease that can be treated and people who are sick should be treated not punished," she said.

### Domestic violence surges

Between 15 March and 10 April, at the height of the lockdown, domestic violence cases in Iraq increased. The tragedy was compounded, with some women not wanting to leave their house to seek medical treatment for fear of shaming themselves and their families.



The cartoon series seeks to highlight the hidden pandemic of violence in the home, and to protect women and children from it. Qasim is an artist from Mosul: "I want to raise the alarm on how the coronavirus pandemic has a direct impact on our families. We must all do something against it. Each one of us has a choice to stop domestic violence!"

### Ensuring the right to education

When schools shut down around Iraq, inequalities were made blatantly clear very quickly. The government launched an educational TV channel and schools

provided classes on social media, but not all children have access to stable electricity or internet.



The most marginalised, including children who are displaced, and those living in informal settlements, were left behind. A recent study showed that the vast majority of those children did not receive any type of schooling during the month of April.

The cartoons aim to show the strength of children to demand their right to education.

### A salute to healthcare workers

"One of the very few positive effects of the coronavirus pandemic is how our health workers courageously continue to fight the spread of the disease," said Omar, another of the cartoonists. "We can all pay our respect by following the health authorities' instructions."

Medical and support staff around the globe have been working tirelessly to treat patients and stop the spread of the virus. In Iraq, they have faced a further issue of stigma: many patients themselves face stigma when seeking treatment, and there have also been attacks against healthcare and testing facilities. In addition, healthcare workers frequently perform their duties without adequate personal protective equipment and are often exposed to the virus.



Raid is an artist eager to highlight the role of those health workers: "I wanted to pay tribute to the brave medical workers - the white army - to recognise the heroic role of men and women at the front line fighting to contain coronavirus."

The cartoons have been produced in Arabic, Kurdish, and English. They can be seen on the Flickr account of UN Iraq.

## IOM Iraq hosted an awareness raising session focused on preventing domestic violence during COVID-19

**Baghdad, 26 July 2020** - Lockdown measures put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 have led to socioeconomic challenges for many vulnerable families across Iraq. A difficult economic situation can lead to increased cases of domestic violence and suicide, as families cope with financial and psychological pressure under lockdown.

IOM Iraq recently hosted a multi-day awareness raising session focused on preventing domestic violence during COVID 19. The training covered types of domestic violence, factors that can lead to it, and how Iraqi laws deal with this issue. The activity had a specific focus on the inclusion of women and girls, and included a considerable percentage of female trainees. In addition to a discussion about legislation that covers all forms of

violence, the workshop also included a session on cybercrimes and how they target girls and women in particular. IOM Iraq's Baghdad Community Center team hosted the workshop with support from the Government of

Australia, to contribute to their shared objectives of strengthening individual and community capacity to mitigate tensions; peacefully resolving and managing conflict; and channelling stress and frustration effectively.



## UNAMI on Twitter

**Baghdad, 27 July 2020** - We deplore the violence and casualties during Baghdad protests last night. We

welcome government commitment to investigate and hold perpetrators accountable. Iraqis are in a difficult

place facing many challenges. Their right to peaceful protest must be protected unconditionally.

## Statement by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

**Baghdad, 28 July 2020** - In response to claims circulating that UN Special Representative for Iraq (SRSG) Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert made a statement to the UN Security Council regarding the recent demonstrations, the United

Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) asserts that the SRSG did not submit any report or statement to the Security Council on these demonstrations. UNAMI is monitoring the situation and stands by the right of

demonstrators to peacefully express their legitimate demands. Now, as always, we call for peaceful demonstrators to be protected.

## UNAMI condemns killings of activists in Basra, urges stepped up efforts to ensure accountability

**Baghdad, 20 August 2020** - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) strongly condemns the killing of two activists in Basra and the targeting of two others over the past week and urges increased government efforts to hold the perpetrators accountable and prevent the recurrence of attacks and intimidation against activists.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, said: "The killing of Dr. Riham Yacoub last night and Tahseen Oussama a week ago present a serious threat to security and stability in Basra. Basrawis should

not live in such an atmosphere of terror and intimidation. Greater action by the authorities is urgently required. The full force of the law must be applied to find, apprehend and hold the perpetrators accountable, and to put an end to this cycle of violence."

The killing of Mr. Oussama on 14 August prompted protests in Basra to intensify, demanding accountability for the killing. The UNAMI Human Rights Office has received credible reports of two attempted targeted killings in Basra on 17 August: unidentified armed elements shot at a vehicle carrying three activists, including one woman, leading two to be admitted to

hospital for treatment, and unidentified armed men shot at a vehicle driven by another woman, but missed.

While UNAMI acknowledges positive steps taken by the government in response to these developments, it urges further action to deliver justice, accountability and security.





## ILO and RDPP launch a partnership to combat worst forms of child labor in Iraq

**Baghdad, 28 July 2020** – The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) have launched a partnership to tackle the worst forms of child labour amongst Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons and vulnerable host community members in Iraq.

Years of conflict, displacement and destruction of infrastructure have increased the vulnerability of children in Iraq to child labour, with around 7% of children between the ages of 5 to 17 engaged in various forms of child labour, including dangerous and exploitative work.

The EUR 2,559,175 project targets both children in or at risk of the worst forms of child labour and their families in efforts to increase protection and find sustainable solutions that address the root causes of child labour in the country. It will be implemented by the ILO through close coordination with the government and in partnership with a number of local civil society organisations as well as other UN agencies in Iraq. The project is supported by the European Regional Development Protection Programme (RDPP II) – a joint European initiative by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland and Switzerland.

“Our partnership with the ILO aims to support Government institutions and specialized local NGOs to jointly address the drivers of child labour,” stated Vincenzo Schiano Lomoriello, RDPP Project Manager. “This approach encourages the engagement of partners in both piloting local solutions to curb child labour more efficiently, and in designing strategies to ensure the policy framework further protect children.”

The ILO and national partners will work closely to pilot a Child Labour Monitoring System to identify vulnerable children at risk of or already in child labour and refer them to the relevant actors to receive the needed support.

They will also ensure that vulnerable children have access to tailored formal and non-formal education. This will include the ILO’s SCREAM (Supporting Children’s Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media) programme, which helps educators

worldwide promote understanding and awareness of child labour among young people. Guardians and older siblings above the minimum age of employment will be supported to access employment services, livelihoods opportunities and informal apprenticeships to support their resilience and avoid resorting to negative coping mechanisms.

“Child Labour is a longstanding issue in Iraq for a number of reasons, including conflict and poverty,” said Maha Kattaa, ILO Iraq Country Coordinator. “An effective child labour monitoring system is critical to facilitate the identification, withdrawal, referral and rehabilitation of vulnerable children through coordinated efforts with all partners involved. We are pleased to be working with RDPP on ensuring that such a system is in place, in addition to other interventions which will enhance our efforts to combat child labour in the country.”

On the policy level, a National Action Plan Against Child Labour will be developed in close consultation with tripartite constituents, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, to ensure better protection for vulnerable children and families from the worst forms of child labour.

Iraq has ratified all key international

conventions on child labour, namely the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, which are central to the fight against child labour.

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In December 2019, the ILO signed and launched a new Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in Iraq in partnership with the Government and social partners for the period 2019-2023. Under the programme, the ILO is working with government, worker and employer organizations to support national initiatives on employment promotion, rights at work, social dialogue and social protection, including developing an effective framework to address child labour.

RDPP II is a joint European initiative running until 2021. The Programme is supported by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland and Switzerland. Since 2018, RDPP II supports five partnerships in Iraq with more than 10 million Euros, with the commitment of building partner capacities and developing local institutions for a more effective and sustainable response.



## Six years after Sinjar massacre, support and services are vital for returning Yazidis

**Baghdad, 2 August 2020** - Sinjar is a district in northern Iraq's Ninewa Governorate; it was once home to an estimated 420,000 individuals representing diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds[i]. It is widely known as the homeland of the Yazidis, members of an ethnoreligious minority group whose communities are spread across Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

On 3 August 2014, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) launched a deadly assault on Sinjar. ISIL overran Sinjar City and its surrounding areas and committed terrible atrocities against the civilian population including mass murder, forced religious conversions, abduction and enforced slavery of thousands, particularly of women and girls. Thousands fled the area and were displaced across Iraq, with some moving further abroad. The United Nations Human Rights Council has officially recognized that this reign of terror constituted genocide against the Yazidis, and that ISIL committed multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sinjar and other parts of Iraq.

Six years on, up to 200,000 Yazidis are still displaced. Some are still facing harsh conditions on Mount Sinjar, where they fled to escape, while the majority live in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Return to Sinjar has been slow since the officially declared cessation of the ISIL conflict in 2017, largely due to the level of destruction wrought in 2014. In addition to the human catastrophe, ISIL destroyed up to 80 per cent of public infrastructure and 70 per cent of civilian homes in Sinjar City and surrounding areas[ii], as well as many important religious sites.

Jalal Khalaf Piso and his family fled to the Kurdistan Region after ISIL entered Sinjar; they went to Baadre first, and later to Duhok. The family lived in unfinished buildings in Duhok until Sinjar was liberated in 2015.

"We were the first family to come back," Jalal explained in October 2018. "I don't like people to say I'm displaced. My home is here, and also my job."

Jalal's case is quite remarkable in the years following ISIL's defeat; the destruction of essential services and lingering insecurity in the region initially discouraged Yazidis from returning to Sinjar. But June 2020 signalled the start of a marked increase in returns of displaced families. According to a recent assessment conducted by the International

Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, 10,165 individuals (1,694 families) returned to Sinjar between 8 June and 16 July. This is a marked increase over previous years; in May and June of 2019, IOM Iraq recorded only 1,512 individuals returning to Sinjar and Baaj, the neighbouring district in Ninewa Governorate. Stabilization programming in Sinjar must be scaled up to support returnees.

Local authorities, NGOs and UN Agencies, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are working to support the Government of Iraq in providing vital services to recent returnees and vulnerable populations in Sinjar.

IOM has been active in Sinjar since 2017, across a range of different programming sectors and approaches. Stabilization programming focuses on addressing some of the major obstacles to return — the organization is investing in livelihood opportunities and improving access basic services and housing in Sinjar and in the communities to which households are returning. IOM continuously tracks and reports on population movements back to Sinjar, and those households currently in secondary displacement or returning to their areas of origin. This supports evidence-based programming, through raising the awareness of the international community about ongoing movements, their points of departure and arrivals and the conditions in areas of return.

IOM also provides mental health and psychosocial services, legal services related to housing, land and property, and support to civil society organizations working on peacebuilding initiatives. Protection services are provided in Sardashti camps, where many Yazidis remain displaced.

UNDP's stabilization efforts, under its Funding Facility for Stabilization, aim to support returns and lay the groundwork for Iraq's recovery by re-establishing critical services and rebuilding infrastructure damaged in the ISIL conflict, working in close partnership with the Government of Iraq and the international community.

In Sinjar, where UNDP has been active since 2016, this covers the rehabilitation of schools, houses, water systems, electricity networks, healthcare centres, police stations and a number of municipal buildings — including the Agricultural Directorate to support one of Sinjar's key industries.

Providing short-term job opportunities through livelihoods programming helps returnees alleviate financial burdens accumulated as a result of the conflict for rent, food and school supplies and other items.

UNDP's support to returnees also extends to neighbouring areas Sinuni, Baaj, Tel Afar and Rabia across a number of critical sectors including health, education water and electricity. For 2020 and beyond, this entire area remains a key strategic priority for UNDP's stabilization programming, which will, in partnership with the Ninewa governorate, see upscaled efforts and include new areas of work based on the area's unique needs, such as social cohesion activities.

"I hope that organizations and UN agencies will stay and help continuously, because people need help to renew their life. It is difficult to renew without having organizations' support," said Saher Saeed, an English teacher.

"We as a community wish to have a safe place to live with the main basic life facilities so that we can live and make sure that such barbarian attacks will not happen again to the next generations," added Waleed Saydo, a pharmacy student from Sinjar.

This and every August 3rd, IOM and UNDP stand in solidarity with communities in Sinjar to honour the victims of the massacre. Continued advocacy with the Government of Iraq is necessary to address outstanding issues related to administration and security governance must be addressed and dedicated assistance is vital for those who are now returning to the area. While humanitarian assistance must continue for Yazidis still in displacement — for those who are unwilling or unable to return, other forms of durable solutions must be explored.

IOM and UNDP Iraq also call for a strong focus on restoring schools, hospitals and sanitation facilities; improving access to education; improving security; and strengthening local governance; on the path to sustainable peace in Sinjar.

Both organizations will continue working in Sinjar to restore vital services, rebuild key infrastructure, support reintegration, and offer protection, mental health and psychosocial Support, and livelihood support.

*This story was written by Vanessa Okoth-Obbo for IOM Iraq, with input from UNDP Iraq.*



## Six years after genocide, international community must prioritize justice for Yazidi community

**Baghdad, 3 August 2020** - Six years after ISIL launched a genocidal campaign against the Yazidi religious minority in Iraq, the international community must live up to its promise to deliver justice, survivor and Nobel Peace Laureate Nadia Murad told a virtual event on Monday marking the anniversary.

The young human rights activist, who was among thousands of Yazidi women forced into sexual slavery by the terrorist group, reminded countries that the impacts of its atrocities endure to this day.

### Outrage and inaction

Ms. Murad said although 100,000 Yazidis have returned to their homeland in Sinjar, in northern Iraq, they lack vital services such as healthcare and education.

Meanwhile, scores more remain in camps, nearly 3,000 kidnapped women and girls are still missing, and dozens of mass graves have yet to be exhumed.

"The world watched in outrage and demanded that tangible action be taken to end the genocide. But six years later, the international community has failed to keep its commitments to protect those most vulnerable, especially women and children," said Ms. Murad, who now lives in Germany.

### Justice is possible now

The commemorative event was held to ensure the world never forgets how ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also known as Da'esh, tried to erase the Yazidi community through sexual violence, mass executions, forced conversion and other crimes.

It was co-hosted by Nadia's Initiative, an organization founded by Ms. Murad, alongside Germany and the United Arab

Emirates.

ISIL committed "heinous crimes" against all Iraqis, the country's Ambassador, Mohammad Hussein Ali Bahr Aluloom, told the gathering.

"Da'esh tried to wipe out Yazidis in an attempt to destroy Iraqi diversity and peaceful coexistence that is guaranteed by our constitution," he stated.

Human rights lawyer Amal Clooney recalled that the international community established tribunals for genocides in Germany, Bosnia and Rwanda, while the International Criminal Court is currently investigating crimes against Rohingya in Myanmar.

She told diplomats Yazidi survivors deserve no less.

"Doing nothing is not only wrong, it is dangerous because these fighters are not going anywhere and their toxic ideology continues to spread," said Ms. Clooney.

"And justice is possible now, just as it has been possible before, if only it is made a priority."

The UN's top official in Iraq urged the authorities in Baghdad and in the autonomous Kurdish region in the north to resolve their differences to better support the Yazidis.

"Stable governance and security structures are crucial foundations for the community to rebuild and thrive," said Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). "So, once again, I call on the governments in Baghdad and Erbil to urgently resolve this file, placing Sinjaris' interests first and foremost."

### Support Iraqi draft law

Two years ago, the United Nations established an Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes



Committed by Da'esh/ISIL, known by the acronym UNITAD.

Special Adviser Karim Khan outlined some of its activities, which include helping with exhumations, collecting evidence, and working with various authorities in Iraq to better understand Da'esh criminal networks.

However, he explained that UNITAD is "an investigative team on the lookout for a court" so that fair trials for crimes against the Yazidis can be held.

Mr. Khan commended a draft law presented in November which would allow Iraq to prosecute acts committed by Da'esh as genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.

"In my respectful view, this is critically important. If we don't call it for what it was; if we don't label the crimes correctly, we are doomed, or at least there is a real risk they may reoccur," he said.

"And I think in terms of giving confidence to the Yazidi community, the courage and the stamina of the international community to create that piece of legal architecture would go a long way."

By UN News.

## On anniversary of atrocities against Yazidis, UN Iraq Representative salutes community's resilience and urges agreement for greater stability

**Baghdad, 3 August 2020** - Recalling the atrocities committed by Da'esh (ISIL) against the Yazidis six years ago, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, commended the Yazidis' resilience in preserving their culture and land, and determinedly pursuing their rights despite the odds. She urged Baghdad and Erbil to reach agreement without delay to provide this beleaguered community with the tools and the right environment to rebuild their lives.

In 2014, Da'esh (ISIL) ravaged through Sinjar, killing and destroying, singling out Yazidis in their systematic campaign of destruction. Thousands

upon thousands of people fled to the mountains. Many were killed. Women and children were kidnapped and enslaved, subjected to heinous sexual crimes. Many remain missing, and the survivors continue to bear the scars of this trauma. Women in particular suffer acutely from stigma and rejection. Haunted by the dark shadow of these atrocities, and buffeted by present day political, security and economic challenges, the Yazidis remain determined to build a better future.

"I take heart in the determination of the many Yazidis pursuing freedom and justice for their community", said Hennis-Plasschaert. Still, she stated,

their ordeal is not over. "Sinjaris continue to suffer – from insecurity, the absence of adequate services and the lack of a unified administration".

"Why must they continue to pay the price?" she asked. "We know full well that sustainable solutions are within reach", she added, reiterating her call on the governments in Baghdad and Erbil to urgently resolve this file and reach agreement without delay. "Stable governance and security structures are crucial foundations for the community to rebuild and thrive. We owe it to the victims. We owe it to the survivors. We owe it to our shared sense of humanity".

## Special Adviser Khan: “International community must fulfil our collective promises, which is to ensure justice, and expose the criminality of Da’esh, prove it beyond reasonable doubt in courts, throughout the world, wherever possible”



**Baghdad, 4 August 2020** – The Special Adviser and head of UNITAD, Karim A. A. Khan QC, participated recently at the United Nations Digital Dialogue Event organized by the German Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York and Nadia's Initiative. Here is the text of his statement:

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

It really is a humbling experience to join all of you in remembrance to events that took place what had started six years ago. And one can dive in and start in the five minutes, go through a list of achievements and also deficiencies but, with your leave, I think it is sometimes good to pause and to reflect. And what I would urge with the greatest of humility at the end of this session, if we are to move forward, let's reflect upon the powerful words of Nadia, and also the message of Amal, and also what the SRSG Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert just said.

Six years ago, today, pogroms commenced that not only shocked the conscience of humanity, it shaped the conscience of humanity. I've had the distinct honour of meeting Survivor after Survivor, and what strikes me, it never ceases to amaze me is that when I speak to a whole variety of victims, those that had been enslaved and lived to tell the tale, that concern is not simply one for themselves. It is devoid very often of pity. It is, as Nadia and others have mentioned, the concern of where are their sisters and their mothers? where are the remains of their fathers or their brothers? And I think this has to be etched or seared, in fact, upon our memory and upon our own souls. Because this care for the other is what defines us as humanity. And it's that insistent demand for justice that really, if I may say so, Nadia personifies. Nadia's persistent demand, coming from a village of Kojo in the halls of the United Nations and the

capitals of the world, with a simple and yet resounding message that this is wrong. It requires investigation. It requires juridical determination. If we are to be true as an international community, that every life matters, that every human being has certain inalienable rights. And if these are to stop being platitudes or false promises, it requires continued action.

I really applaud the work of Nadia Murad, the advocacy of Amal Clooney, the political stewardship of the United Kingdom, our penholder, the Government of Iraq, the Security Council to create UNITAD. But we are an investigative team on the lookout for a court, and we are trying to feed into as many courts as possible where fair trials can be conducted. This unity of the council coalesced around a common objective, namely the common ground that repudiated the false un-Islamic ideology of Da'esh. That that pretence that it had anything to do with religion was to be exposed, and that the rights of the individual to practice what they wish, to live lives with freedom, was something of concern to the whole international community.

I take this opportunity to note the role of those organizing today's [event]. The Federal Republic of Germany who has been a strong ally of UNITAD, in terms of giving us expert personnel to the analysis unit and financial investigative capacity. The United Arab Emirates, that has helped with our investigations into sexual and gender-based crimes. Of course, the constant and unwavering support of the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands for witness protection, the United States for exhumations, Denmark and Sweden. All of that has allowed UNITAD to help with exhumations; to collect evidence, whether it's testimonial or digital; to work with the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi judiciary so we could collect cell site records from June to August 2014 that allows us to get a grip on the criminal network of Da'esh, where individuals of interest to our investigations went, so that we can actually fulfil a promise that Nadia has mentioned, that individuals and survivors have their right to confront their perpetrators in a court of law.

I have had the sober privilege of seeing the effect of that in my career. Sometimes I have seen individuals that

are very often the world would say broken, confront their accuser in a courtroom. And the power imbalance fundamentally alters in that scenario. The individual that has been oppressed or tortured has the whip hand, and the fact of confronting the accuser and giving an account can be immensely powerful, and it can also have an effect on the perpetrator as well.

A lot has been said regarding the importance of infrastructure. Education and health are also forms of justice; not all justice is confined to the courtroom. But the part of UNITAD's mandate that I am responsible for, that the Council is entrusted to us deals with legal accountability. And I applaud the work of the Government of Iraq and President Barham Saleh, to present a bill to Parliament last November, that would allow Iraq to prosecute the acts of Da'esh against all communities, including the Yazidi community, as genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. In my respectful view this is critically important. If we don't call it out for what it was, if we don't label the crimes correctly, we are doomed, or at least, there's a real risk that they may reoccur. And I think in terms of giving confidence to the Yazidi community, the courage and the stamina of the international community to create that piece of legal architecture would go a long way.

My final remarks, if I may, would be really for all of us, to recognize the immense courage of the people of Iraq and the Yazidi community. I often say, because I find it really a truism, that their survival, Nadia, your survival, those of the Yazidi individuals that are all over the world now, the way that you are practicing your beliefs is a very eloquent and powerful repudiation of the criminal intents of Da'esh to silence your voices, to suffocate your beliefs. And I think it should be a timely reminder for us, the international community, that we must fulfil our collective promises, which is to ensure justice, and expose the criminality of Da'esh, prove it beyond reasonable doubt in courts, throughout the world, wherever possible. And at the same time, by doing that, we will demonstrate the courage of the Iraqi people, and the resilience and the heroism of the Yazidi community.

Thank you so much.



## IOM Iraq organized an art exhibition to commemorate the sixth anniversary of the Sinjar Massacre

**Sinjar, 3 August 2020** - IOM Iraq today organized an art exhibition on Sinjar's old market street, to commemorate the sixth anniversary of the Sinjar Massacre. Four women artists worked on a series of paintings reflecting stages of life for Yazidis in Sinjar: displacement; adapting to life in the camps & recovery; and returning to Sinjar to rebuild. The aim was to show how Yazidis are recovering, and to spread a positive message about their efforts to rebuild their cities and villages.

This activity was funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development.



## Moving beyond survival: Sixth anniversary of genocide of Yazidis and Christians

**Washington, D.C., 7 August 2020** -

In the summer of 2014, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) rampaged across Iraq and Syria, declaring a caliphate and committing genocide against various peoples of Iraq, most notably the Yazidis and Christians. Thousands were killed or abducted, including Yazidi women and children, about 3,000 of whom are still missing today. Christian churches, Yazidi shrines and other sites of cultural and religious heritage were destroyed as ISIS attempted to wipe out entire peoples, their history and culture.

The Nineveh Plain and Sinjar, the home of the Chaldean Christians and Yazidis, were liberated from ISIS but most of the people that have yet to return home. Six years later, hundreds of thousands remain displaced. Many fled Iraq, more than 1 million Syrians, Iraqis, including Yazidis and Christians have sheltered in the Kurdistan Region, whose population of 5 million. Their displacement is perpetuated by lack of jobs and essential services, and fear of the fragile security.

What are the needs, demands and aspirations of the Yazidis and Christians? What role can the United States and the United Nations play in meeting those needs? What are the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government doing to support the return of these communities to their homes and to ensure a stable and prosperous future?

The Wilson Center and the Kurdistan Regional Government Representation in the United States commemorated



this solemn anniversary and discussed what steps are being taken to bring about justice, accountability and the safe return of the communities to their homelands with a webcast today.

Participating at the panel, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General and head of UNITAD, Karim A. A. Khan QC said: "Proper accountability is needed. If we are to fully expose the virulence of the crimes of Daesh, to debase the ideology, to show the greatness and resilience of the Christian, the Yazidi, the Shia, the Sunni, the Kaka'i communities who not

only survived Da'esh... I have so many examples where a Sunni saved a Yazidi, a Christian has been saved by a Sunni, where communities actually came together during those very bleak occasions, bound not by their religion but by their common humanity."

"There needs to be movement. There needs to be progress. Inertia, the status quo is not an option...Now is the time where the different victim and survivor communities in Iraq want us to deliver...Common issues of humanity demand progress" added Special Adviser Khan.

## IOM Iraq partners with Nadia's Initiative for Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Programme



**Erbil, 12 August 2020** - In 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) launched a genocidal campaign against the Yazidis — an ethnoreligious minority whose ancestral homelands are found in Sinjar, northern Iraq — and other minority groups. ISIL's assault on Sinjar led to the displacement of over 350,000 Yazidis, with the majority seeking refuge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Over 100,000 Yazidis have now returned to Sinjar and are struggling to rebuild their lives. Women who lost their husbands during the ISIL attack are now coping with both looking after their families and earning a living while attempting to come to terms with the impact of the past years. While haunting memories often persist, many women have also become engaged in the fight for justice for survivors and efforts to restore peace and stability in their homelands.

“Women are key to solving many problems and must be involved in building lasting peace among communities. With the voice and participation of women, we can make fundamental changes in our communities. Providing Yazidi women with tangible, sustainable support will enable them to positively contribute to the redevelopment of their community,” said Nadia Murad, President of Nadia's Initiative and 2018 Nobel Peace Laureate. “I urge other humanitarian actors working in Iraq to invest more in redeveloping the Sinjar region.”

“There are few resources available for returnees to access education, counselling, vocational training, and employment opportunities,” said Gerard Waite, Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq. “Dedicated psychosocial support and livelihood opportunities are crucial for those who return to Sinjar.”

“We would actively support reconstruction of liberated areas from ISIL to realize stability in Iraq and continue to work to prevent sexual violence in conflict and to support victims,” said Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, when he met Nadia Murad in September 2019. He paid respect to Nadia Murad's activities supporting victims and their children in the Middle East region and beyond.

The Government of Japan is supporting IOM Iraq, who is partnering with Nadia's Initiative (NI) for the Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Programme. The aim of this project is to strengthen support systems for women in Sinjar and improve their access to livelihoods. The project will concentrate on livelihood training and provide a business incubator for women-led small businesses. By developing income-generating small businesses, vulnerable women can gain confidence, build community and establish economic independence. The project will also give the same women access to psychosocial support activities through a multi-purpose community centre run by an implementing partner, Danish NGO Mission East, in Sinjar City.

The Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Programme is part of a larger project, “Leveraging the Security Development Nexus in Iraq: Support for Community Stabilization in Conflict Affected Communities”, funded by the Government of Japan.

### UNITAD



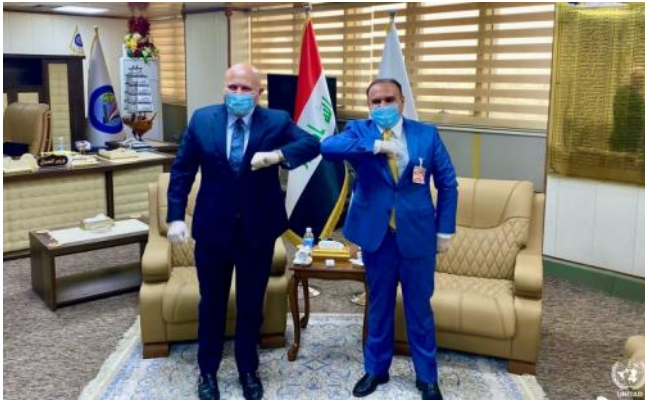
**Baghdad, 28 June 2020** - Special Adviser Karim Khan QC met with Commander of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service, Lt. Gen. Abd al-Wahab al-Saadi. They discussed ways in which both sides can cooperate to ensure accountability of ISIL perpetrators and justice for victims and survivors of these crimes. In the meeting, Special Adviser Khan highlighted UNITAD's project for digitization of evidence of ISIL crimes in Iraq. They also looked into ways to leverage relevant ICTS expertise and experiences in fighting Daesh to support the work of the Investigative Team.



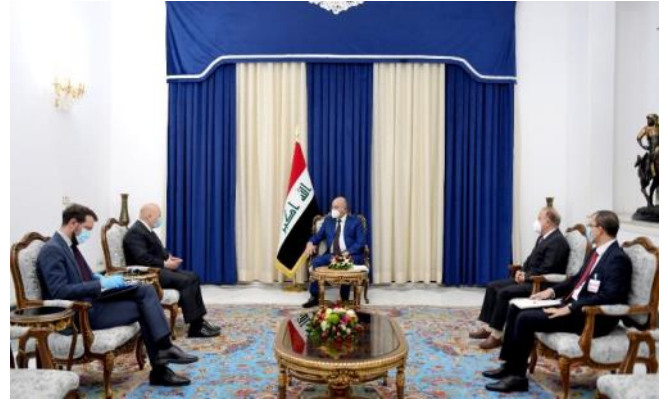
**Baghdad, 30 June 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met the newly appointed Minister of Defense His Excellency Jouma Anad for the first time today. The Special Adviser provided an overview of UNITAD's work, and an update on ongoing projects pursuant to its mandate to hold Daesh perpetrators accountable.

His Excellency expressed his support for UNITAD's capacity-building work within the Ministry of Defense, including the Military Intelligence. He also stressed the importance of this work in ultimately contributing to strengthening Iraq's efforts to support fair and independent investigations to achieve justice for victims and survivors of ISIL crimes.





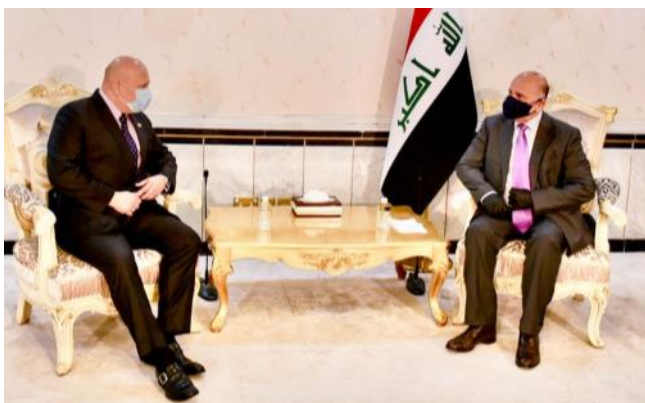
**Baghdad, 6 July 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with H.E. Salar Abdul Sattar for the first time today, congratulating him on his new appointment as Iraq's Minister of Justice. Special Adviser Khan provided H.E. with an update on the ongoing investigations that UNITAD is conducting, and the support it can provide to the Ministry of Justice to assist with archiving and digitizing ISIL-related records and evidentiary material. H.E. the Minister and the Special Adviser discussed the Badoush Prison massacre, and the provision of information from Ministry of Justice investigations to UNITAD to support its work on this case. Special Adviser Khan acknowledged the objective of building on the work already done by Iraq, and that this will make a significant contribution towards ensuring perpetrators of this massacre are held accountable for international crimes.



**Baghdad, 7 July 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with H.E. Barham Salih, the President of Iraq today. They discussed ways to move forward amendments to the Iraqi High Tribunal law, currently with Parliament, to domesticate International Crimes into Iraqi law enabling Iraqi judges to prosecute Daesh for such crimes. Victims and survivors have made clear the importance of properly labelling and charging these crimes as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. We have to call what took place by its proper name(s) as a way to appropriately recognize the suffering, sacrifices and immense courage of the Iraqi people, and to ensure an evidential record is created that can never be forgotten.

**Baghdad, 9 July 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC, and UNITAD Iraq team members joined Iraqi counterparts from the Medico Legal Directorate (MLD) and the Mass Graves Directorate (MGD) to conduct an initial visit of a mass grave site north of Ramadi. Surveying of the crime scene took place along with discussions on approaches to victim identification, relying on equipment previously donated by UNITAD to MLD and MGD that facilitates rapid DNA analysis. During his visit to a mass grave site the Special Adviser listened to leaders of the Al-Bou Nimr tribe, and informed them of an investigative unit recently established to specifically focus on crimes ISIL committed against Sunnis in Iraq. He also mentioned that UNITAD is working to enhance the capacity of the Iraqi judiciary to build case files for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, highlighting how crimes committed at this site could potentially fit under this initiative. During an interview with Al Arabiya, Special

Adviser Khan underlined that every community in Iraq, including the Sunni community, was targeted by Daesh. "Investigations to establish what happened, and ensure accountability, is essential", he noted.



**Baghdad, 13 July 2020** - A partnership for justice. In his meeting today with H.E. Fuad Hussein, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Special Adviser Karim Khan QC emphasized the importance of the partnership between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq to ensure accountability for ISIL crimes is delivered. Both agreed that accountability must be holistic, and should allow for prosecution of ISIL members in Iraq for international crimes to ensure these acts are properly labelled, to honor the sacrifices made by the people of Iraq and respond to the calls for justice by victims and survivors. To achieve this, work will continue to support the adoption of the legislative amendments before Parliament of Iraq, which would allow the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.



**Baghdad, 15 July 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC received MP Saeb Khidir at his residence in the UN compound in Baghdad today. The Special Adviser provided an update on accountability efforts for ISIL crimes committed against Yazidis and the next steps in cooperation with the Government of Iraq to move Sinjar investigations forward. Special Adviser Khan also stressed the importance of a domestic legal basis for Iraq to appropriately label and prosecute ISIL crimes in domestic courts as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. MP Khidir expressed his strong support for UNITAD's work and his commitment to help the draft amendment of the Iraqi High Tribunal law pass when it is presented to the Iraqi Parliament, so ISIL crimes against Yazidis are properly labelled and prosecuted in Iraq in line with international standards.

## Iraq: ISIL's acts of terror 'divorced from the values of all faiths'

**Baghdad, 16 July 2020** - Religious leaders from communities across Iraq called for greater "healing and reconciliation" during a UN-organized event on Thursday, reaffirming their commitment to support survivors of crimes perpetrated by ISIL terrorist fighters.

Key signatories of a landmark Interfaith Statement on the Victims and Survivors of ISIL – representing Islam, the Christian church and other faiths – joined the discussion online, held under the auspices of the UN Special Adviser who also heads up the Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh / ISIL (UNITAD) and co-hosted by the international coalition, Religions for Peace, which consists of 90 national and six regional Interreligious Councils.

The event was made possible by the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, headed up by Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser, Adama Dieng.

Mr Dieng said it was an honour to be accompanied by religious representatives "whose tireless work, days after day, is making a difference in the lives of all Iraqis. Their leading efforts for justice, peace and reconciliation constitutes an example for all society to follow."

### Many still vulnerable: Dieng

He noted that many of the challenges for peace in Iraq did not start with the emergence of ISIL nor have they ended with its military defeat: "Many communities still feel vulnerable and consider that not enough is being done to protect not only their linguistic, religious or cultural heritage, but their very physical integrity. Addressing long-term grievances is one of the most effective ways of prioritizing prevention of human rights violations, including atrocity crimes."

He noted that Iraqi society has experienced "the tremendous cost of not addressing long-term grievances. It must therefore work to build and strengthen an inclusive society, where diversity is not perceived as a flaw but as an asset."

The prevention of genocide chief said he was convinced that Thursday's Interfaith Statement on Victims and Survivors of ISIL constitutes "an essential step in this direction, in line with the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes. I am proud to

support it and commit my Office's assistance in ensuring its full implementation."

The participants condemned ISIL's ideologically-driven acts of terror as being "contrary to the core principles of our religious faiths as well as the fundamental values of humanity".

"What can religion be if not for peace?", UNITAD Head, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan QC said to the meeting.

### Attacks 'far from over'

The UNITAD chief, expressed gratitude to Iraq religious leaders for their courage "in these difficult times" as they together support survivors and victims of ISIL.

Stressing that as ISIL attacks are "far from over" across the world, he exhorted representatives of all religions to denounce the group's ideology as alien to religious values and those of all humanity.

According to Mr. Khan, the only way to respond to groups like ISIL, is for religious leaders to support each other and each other's communities.

"Whenever people seek to weigh the worth of humans by their own belief, there should be alarm", flagged the Special Advisor, adding that everyone must "start to implement a zero tolerance to intolerance."

### No religion spared

All religions across Iraq have been impacted by ISIL atrocities, the signatories said, as they underlined the importance of supporting survivors within their own communities.

"In showing ISIL crimes are divorced from the values of all faiths, Iraqi religious leaders have exposed crimes of ISIL", upheld the UNITAD chief.

At the same time, the participants also noted that their brutality had prompted "acts of heroism" in which religious communities rose up in defence of those from different religious and ethnic

backgrounds.

### The most vulnerable

In recognizing the "tremendous suffering" endured by victims of sexual and gender-based violence, the signatories underscored their commitment to ensuring that those individuals are "fully supported" and do not suffer from stigmatization.

And for the "innocent children of God" impacted by ISIL, they stressed that "whatever pain these children have suffered, they are blameless" and called on the terrorists to return every child they have abducted to their rightful families.

### Delivering justice

Justice will only be delivered for ISIL victims by ensuring that those who fought in its name, are held responsible for their actions, and that people forced to flee the violence, can return home safely.

To this end, they underscored their "strong collective support" for UNITAD's work while stressed the importance of exposing ISIL's offenses in a court of law.

"Investigating the cases of disappeared persons and those abducted" not only delivers justice for victims but also promotes "understanding of the severity and scale" of the violence and prevents "future revisionism", maintained the signatories.

In closing, they highlighted their "common commitment" and "collective stamina" to promote "justice, tolerance, reconciliation and forgiveness" as the most effective way to combat ISIL's crimes in Iraq.

This also serves as "a key step in preventing the re-emergence" of any similar terrorist ideology or groups, said the religious leaders.

By UN News.





## SA Khan: “Exposing the crimes, ideology and fallacy of Da’esh – in court, where hard evidence is presented– will serve as a springboard for national reconciliation and long-lasting peace.”

*Message from Special Adviser Khan marking International Justice Day*

**Baghdad, 17 July 2020** - On 17 July, the world marks the Day of International Criminal Justice. Its observance reflects the international community’s collective acknowledgement of the vital role of accountability for grave international crimes in securing enduring peace, security and human rights.

On 21 September 2017, that commitment was renewed and given concrete expression through the Security Council’s unanimous adoption, at the behest of the Government of Iraq, of resolution 2379 (2017), establishing the UN Investigative Team to promote accountability against Da’esh crimes – UNITAD.

As Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, I re-affirm on behalf of my

Team our determination to make good on this commitment to the thousands of victims and survivors who continue to seek justice for the crimes Da’esh committed against them in Iraq.

Justice can only be achieved by conducting thorough and impartial investigations that feed into fair trials. To this end, UNITAD is collecting, storing and preserving evidence across Iraq, as well as conducting hundreds of interviews with victims and survivors of Da’esh crimes in line with international standards, to assist in delivering accountability for crimes that may amount to War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity and Genocide.

Evidence collected by UNITAD will feed into domestic courts and allow those who suffered from ISIL crimes to see perpetrators brought to account. In so doing, we also demonstrate the

absolute absence of any moral or religious justification for the atrocities perpetrated by Da’esh against the people of Iraq.

Justice is not an abstract concept. It requires practical results, in the form of fair trials where justice is done for all to see. Exposing the crimes, ideology and fallacy of Da’esh – in court, where hard evidence is presented– will serve as a springboard for national reconciliation and long-lasting peace.

As victims and survivors are eager to see comprehensive justice, they remain hopeful for their cries to be heard, their suffering to be recognized, and their perpetrators to be brought to justice.

UNITAD is determined to ensure that these hopes are fulfilled, through its continuing partnership with the Government of Iraq and the international community.



**Baghdad, 20 July 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC is delighted to welcome Mr. Brett McGurk to UNITAD as a senior consultant. Brett’s vast diplomatic experience and expertise as the former head of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIL will add immense value to our efforts to ensure accountability for Da’esh crimes.

Mr. McGurk is currently the Payne Distinguished Lecturer at Stanford University’s Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. He will consult regularly with Special Adviser Khan and provide advice as UNITAD advances its work to bring justice to the victims and survivors of ISIL crimes in Iraq.



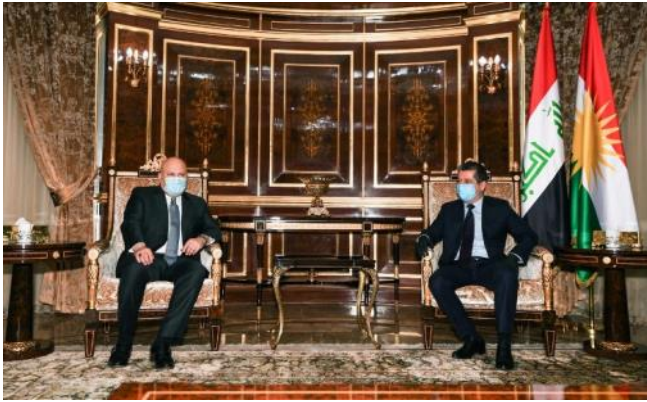
**Erbil, 22 July 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with H.E. Nechirvan Barzani, Kurdistan Region President.

Special Adviser Khan was grateful for KRG President’s wisdom, unwavering support for UNITAD and commitment to justice for victims and survivors.

Practical discussions took place on how to facilitate and support for amendments to the Iraqi High Tribunal law.

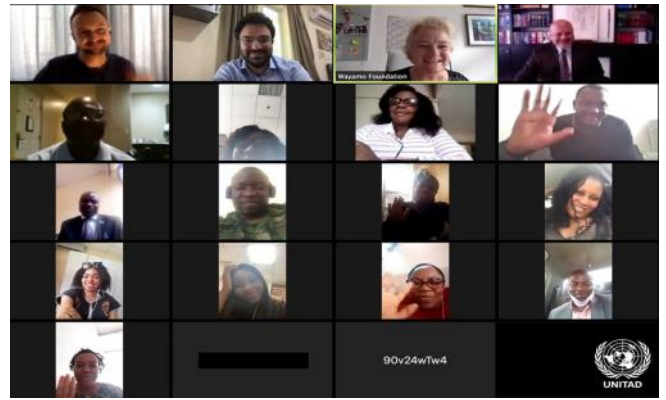


**Erbil, 22 July 2020** - KRG Minister of Interior, Rayber Ahmed, and Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC discussed the ways UNITAD is using to conduct its field investigations safely and securely during Covid19 Pandemic. Special Adviser Khan was grateful for the Minister’s support and help in facilitating the work of UNITAD’s office in Dohuk.



**Erbil, 23 July 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani this morning and acknowledged the continued support of the KRG for UNITAD's mandate. The Special Adviser briefed the Prime Minister on his meetings in KRG, including agreement on the need to prioritize prosecuting ISIL suspects for international crimes.

"Prime Minister Barzani and the KRG authorities are a critical component in UNITAD's efforts to help Iraq hold ISIL perpetrators accountable. We are appreciative of their support to this joint effort", said Special Adviser Khan.



**Baghdad, 29 July 2020** - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC was pleased to share UNITAD's experience and lessons learned on approaches to investigating the use, conscription and enlistment of child soldiers by ISIL as part of a training organized by the Wayamo Foundation for Nigeria's civilian and military prosecutors.

## Humanitarian

### UNOPS' Iraq Information Center marks its fifth year in linking people with assistance

**Baghdad, 13 July 2020** - Largest ever inter-agency project, Iraq Information Center (IIC), has been offering vital information to those who need it the most, since its launch in July 2015.

- Operated by UNOPS on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team in Iraq, the Iraq Information Center (IIC) partners with UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to enable two-way communication between the vulnerable communities and the humanitarian response in Iraq.

- Through its confidential and free hotline, the IIC started out with taking calls from only internally displaced people in 2015; gradually increasing its scope and operations to include returnees, asylum seekers, refugees, and the host community.

- During 2019, the IIC handled over 121,000 calls, 76% of which were from male callers and 24% were from female callers. In addition, 47% of these calls were received from internally displaced persons, 30% from returnees, 21% from refugees, and 2% from host communities. The IIC has received a diverse set of calls from parents who urgently needed food or cash to make ends meet, or survivors of gender-based violence, harassment or mistreatment of authority.

- The IIC remains dedicated to raising people's voices during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The IIC stepped in through the provision of coordinated

feedback via its monthly COVID-19 dashboard, in an effort to analyze the challenges the pandemic brought to the lives of thousands in Iraq. Partnering with various humanitarian clusters, the IIC has supported SMS campaigns to deliver information on prevention measures for COVID-19 in and outside of the camps across Iraq. In addition, IIC jointly conducts an opinion survey on COVID-19 with Ground Truth Solutions to track community behavior, which is inherently linked to information, trust and risk perception. Through phone interviews conducted since April 2020 in Anbar, Dohuk, Erbil, Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Sulaymaniyah governorates, the survey is designed to identify tangible steps that humanitarian responders can take to improve the COVID-19 response.

- As an inter-agency effort, IIC is generously financed by multiple contributors. The project is currently being funded by the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF) provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The project previously received financial support from the European Union, the Office of the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq and

World Health Organization (WHO).

"The Iraq Information Centre is a 'one-stop-shop' to ensure the effective delivery of services to the affected communities. The success stories coming out of the Centre reinforce every day what an important resource it is," said Richard Dictus, Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, a.i. "By calling the Centre, people in need have been able to access psychosocial counselling for instances of GBV, ensure that sick children can reach the hospital even during COVID-19 movement restrictions, and receive the cash assistance they are entitled to. Five years on, the IIC has easily proven its value."

"USAID is proud to support the Iraq Information Center through our Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. For five years, the IIC has acted as a platform for people to access lifesaving humanitarian assistance, and it will continue to be a critical lifeline for Iraqis who have been affected by conflict, refugees, and other vulnerable communities in Iraq," said Dana Mansuri, Mission Director for USAID Iraq.

"The Iraq Information Centre is one of the humanitarian community's primary methods of strengthening accountability to affected populations



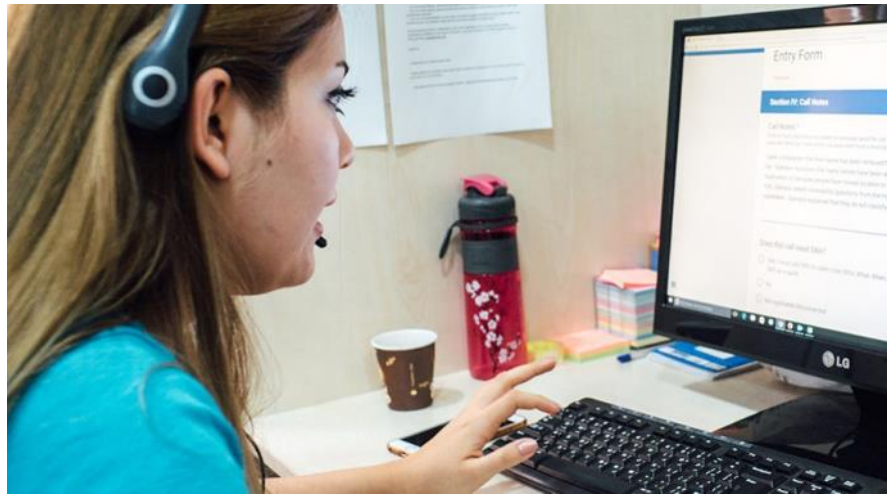
## UNOPS' Iraq Information Center marks its fifth year in linking people with assistance *(continued)*

in its operations. Fielding thousands of calls each month from people in need, the IIC provides a reliable outlet for reported problems, and established methods for follow-up. Consistent communication with communities is vital to ensuring that aid is efficiently and effectively provided to those who need it most," said Georgios Petropoulos, OCHA Deputy Head of Office and Coordinator of the Iraq Coordination and Common Services Cluster.

"Our goal is to empower communities in Iraq through easy and free access to information. The IIC, which is one of the flagship projects of the Humanitarian Country Team in accountability, has connected over 3 million people in Iraq with the

humanitarian agencies within the past five years," said Muhammad Usman

Akram, Director for UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman.



## Ministry of Education and WFP discussed the School Feeding Programme

**Baghdad, 15 July 2020** - This week, Iraqi Minister of Education, Ali Hameed Mukhlif, met with UN World Food Programme Iraq Representative, Abdirahman Meygag, and the WFP team, to discuss the School Feeding Programme.

Together with WFP partners, WFP has been working to reach up to 330,000 schoolchildren with healthy meals this year. When schools closed due to the coronavirus, WFP distributed take-home rations to schoolchildren and their families, during the holy month of Ramadan.

"We are grateful for the humanitarian support that WFP is providing to the Iraqi people through its different programmes... a very important step towards having healthy and educated pupils, that will serve the country and



society in the future...I do believe in having a sustainable, holistic School Feeding project," said the Minister.

WFP is looking forward to continuing

its partnership on School Feeding, working together with the government and partners to reach more vulnerable students in the new academic year.

## IOM provided emergency assistance to the victims of a sandstorm

**Baghdad, 29 July 2020** - Around 4pm on 26 July, a sandstorm hit Amriyat al-Fallujah camps, damaging several shelters (sandwich panel caravans, wooden Caravans, RHUs and tents). Several electrical poles and water tanks were also damaged by the storm. IOM Iraq urgently responded in coordination with AAF Central Camp Management and Anbar MOMD staff. Technical staff and maintenance teams using Cash-For-Work incentives, raised and rehabilitated the damaged electrical poles, reattaching the wiring and connections. IOM staff assessed the situation in coordination with MOMD staff and were able to supply the



affected population with tents as an urgent measure for those whose

shelters were greatly affected/damaged. In total 32 tents were distributed.

## The European Union supports WFP with lifesaving assistance to vulnerable families in Iraq

**Baghdad, 30 July 2020** – The European Union has provided a new contribution of €5 million for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) to provide food assistance to vulnerable families, over six months.

In its response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable in Iraq, WFP has scaled up its response to help meet the food needs of 76,000 Syrian refugees and 280,000 vulnerable displaced Iraqis, in camps throughout the country.

“The EU support is helping to cushion the blow that the coronavirus emergency has inflicted on vulnerable families in Iraq, especially displaced people and Syrian refugees who normally rely on daily wages to get by,” said European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič. “In difficult times like these, we must extend solidarity to those who are left defenseless and make sure humanitarian aid gets through to them.”

Refugees and displaced households are

among the worst affected by the ongoing crisis. Many families depend on casual employment, and struggling with little or no income. They rely almost entirely on humanitarian support.

The European Union contribution is supporting WFP in providing monthly cash transfers to families, delivered via mobile phone or “e-vouchers” on registered cards, which they can redeem in food shops in the camps.

“The European Union is a longstanding partner of WFP and has taken action to help support vulnerable families who are now confronting the threat of the coronavirus as well as existing challenges,” said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. “We thank the EU for this generous humanitarian contribution and for helping displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees at a time of desperate need.”

WFP continues to pioneer innovative “cashless payments” in camps in Diyala, Ninewa and Salah al-Din, as another COVID-19 precautionary



measure, whereby families can purchase food in camp shops with their mobile phones. At the same time, WFP is on standby to provide ready-to-eat food packages or “immediate response rations” in case supplies to food markets are disrupted. The emergency packages cover the food needs of a family of five, for three days.

## The United States of America continues its support to UNHCR critical work in Iraq

**Baghdad, 9 August 2020** - UNHCR welcomes the new contribution of USD 41.8 Million from the United States of America that aims at supporting the response for Internally Displaced Iraqis, the 2020/2021 Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, refugees and asylum seekers as well as the response for COVID-19. This brings the total US contribution to UNHCR Iraq over USD 107 Million this year. So far, the UNHCR operation in Iraq is 31% funded.

In Iraq today, there are still thousands of vulnerable displaced families that are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. With close to 1.4 million IDPs, 4.7 million returnees, and 286,000 refugees and asylum seekers, the needs are significant and ongoing support is needed to ensure a stable and peaceful recovery. More so during the prevailing COVID-19 health crisis, which has significantly exacerbated the protection risks faced by vulnerable displaced families and has further hindered their access to basic goods, essential services, and livelihood opportunities.

This timely and generous donation from the United States of America will help UNHCR provide displaced families

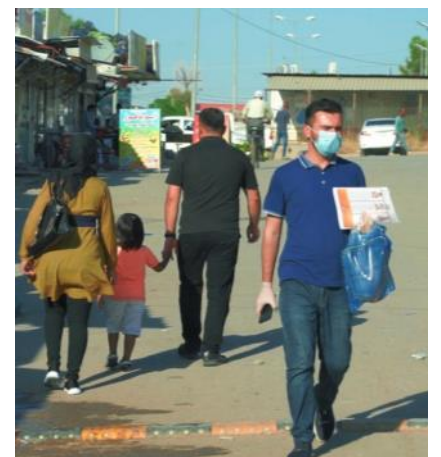
with the needed protection services, including child protection, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and protection monitoring, as well as cash assistance to meet their basic needs.

The Chargé d’Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Steven Fagin, emphasized the United States is deeply committed to the welfare of displaced Iraqis, and to supporting UNHCR’s work toward sustainable, voluntary, and safe returns, local integration, and other solutions. He said the United States is dedicated to working with the new Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to ensure that all components of Iraqi society can thrive in their homeland, and that Syrian and other refugees and asylum seekers in Iraq receive the assistance they need. Supporting these populations and their communities is part of bolstering Iraq’s stability and success.

UNHCR’s Acting Representative Philippa Candler stated that “With rising challenges, timely funds are needed to help support those displaced by conflict, refugees, asylum seekers and returnees. Donor support is much appreciated during these times, as not only do refugees and displaced persons

face the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic but we fear the aftermath will continue to affect livelihood opportunities for the months and years to come. UNHCR will spare no effort to provide protection and other support to those in need as we work towards achieving durable solutions for those who are displaced. UNHCR appreciates the support from major donor countries such as the United States of America which makes this ongoing work possible”.

The United States of America remains the biggest donor to UNHCR globally.





## Thousands of vulnerable IDP and returnee families across Iraq will receive increased support thanks to additional funding from Germany

**Baghdad, 11 August 2020** - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, welcomes the generous contribution of 8 million euros from the Federal Republic of Germany to protect and support internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees in Iraq. This brings the total amount contributed by Germany since 2014 to over 185 million euros.

Under the current situation, and following years of conflict, thousands of vulnerable displaced families across Iraq remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance. With close to 1.4 million IDPs, 4.7 million returnees, and 286,000 refugees and asylum seekers, the needs remain massive and ongoing assistance is essential to continue ensuring a stable and peaceful recovery. More so during the current COVID-19 health crisis, which has significantly exacerbated the protection risks faced by vulnerable displaced families and has further hindered their access to basic goods and essential services.

This timely and generous donation from Germany will contribute to ensuring the provision of much needed life-saving support for IDPs and returnees throughout Iraq, including protection services, cash assistance, child protection, and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, among others. IDP and returnee families will benefit from increased support to alleviate their suffering, and to improve their already challenging situation. The assistance will further contribute to creating adequate



conditions for vulnerable IDPs and returnees to rebuild their lives in dignity and a sustainable manner.

The Chargé d'Affaires of the German Embassy in Baghdad, Mr Peter Felten, emphasized that “Germany continues its support of the important humanitarian work of UNHCR in Iraq. With Covid-19, life has become even harder for vulnerable internally displaced persons. We are convinced that UNHCR with the support of the Federal Republic of Germany makes a significant and much needed contribution in improving the situation of internally displaced persons.

The longstanding and ongoing cooperation with Germany will enable UNHCR to continue providing protection and humanitarian assistance to thousands of vulnerable displaced

families in Iraq. This contribution shows Germany’s strong commitment to address the needs of displaced populations in Iraq as the country works towards stabilization and recovery.

“While the situation in Iraq has improved during the past years and the country is advancing into a new post-conflict phase, we need to continue supporting the people of Iraq in their recovery and national reconciliation efforts. This generous and flexible contribution enables us to be responsive and compassionate towards the most vulnerable populations. With ongoing support, we will stand with all those affected by displacement in Iraq until complete recovery is achieved” said Philippa Candler, Acting UNHCR Representative in Iraq.

## PRM delivers ambulances and health technologies to KRG Ministry of Health to support COVID-19 containment

**Erbil, 27 August 2020** – United States Consul General in Erbil, Rob Waller, joined Minister of Health, Saman Hussein Muhammed, and U.N. Deputy Special Representative for Iraq/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, at a special handover ceremony for six U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) funded ambulances to help provide medical care to Syrian refugees and their host communities in Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaimaniya. The United States stands with Iraqi Kurdistan Region in the fight against COVID-19.



## DSRSG/HC/RC Vojáčková-Sollorano visited Domiz Syrian refugee camp

**Dohuk, 24 August 2020** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by the UNHCR and OCHA representatives in Iraq, visited today Domiz Syrian refugee camp where she met with the camp

management, refugees and community leaders. She discussed with them living conditions in the camp, continuing efforts by the United Nations and its partners to find durable solutions for the challenge of mass displacement and the challenges they face during the COVID19 pandemic.



## DSRSG/HC/RC Vojáčková-Sollorano visited Kabarto IDPs camp

**Dohuk, 24 August 2020** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by the UNHCR and OCHA representatives in Iraq, visited today Kabarto camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) where she met with the Joint Crisis

Coordination Centre (JCC) Dohuk Manager, Camp Manager and community leaders. She discussed with them wide range of issues including living conditions in the camp and the difficulties they face during the COVID19 pandemic. She also discussed ongoing efforts to find durable solutions.



## Families displaced by ISIL conflict safely return home through Government of Iraq, IOM Project



**Anbar/Baghdad, 19 July 2020** — During the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) more than 6 million Iraqis were displaced from their areas of origin. Nearly three years after the official end of the ISIL conflict, hundreds of thousands of families have returned to their areas of origin; an estimated 1.3 million individuals still remain in displacement.

In support of and in partnership with the Government of Iraq, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) — a leading member of the Durable Solutions Network — organized the first round of facilitated voluntary returns for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in situations of protracted displacement, launched today (19/7) and continuing tomorrow (20/7). Over 50 households will receive support to return from Amriyat al-Fallujah camp to their areas of origin in Anbar Governorate. This activity is

the first of its kind in post-conflict Iraq. “I would like to thank all who contributed to this project, reconstructed homes that were destroyed during ISIL occupation, and brought smiles back to the faces of children who have experienced the ordeal of displacement,” said Mrs Evan Faeq Jabro, Minister of Migration and Displacement, on Sunday. “Our Ministry is determined to end displacement as soon as possible; this goal will not be achieved unless we overcome the obstacles to return of displaced families.”

IOM Iraq worked closely with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, the Directorate of Mine Action and local authorities in Anbar. IOM also collaborated with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Peoples’ Aid, and local organizations including the NGO Dary. “Many displaced families living in camps will benefit from this program

and it will encourage other displaced families to return to their areas of origin. In order to turn the page on this painful period in Anbar’s history, we must continue to find long-term solutions for IDPs,” said Dr Ali Farhan, Governor of Anbar.

“The process of actively supporting displaced families to safely depart camps and return to their areas of origin represents a landmark in the way the international community can reinforce the government’s efforts to assist IDPs,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “While voluntariness is a necessary condition of these activities, we must also be conscious of what these families and communities will need so that their returns are sustainable.”

The current pilot phase of this initiative, organized closely with the Iraqi government, is expected to reach nearly 2,400 IDP households that registered to receive similar support in Anbar and Ninewa Governorates; it will also engage vulnerable host community, returnee, and IDP households in the respective areas of return.

Project activities consist of two phases — pre-departure and transition — that address interventions in camps and support in areas of return. Services tied to the process will take place at the household and community levels, including protection; housing repair



## Families displaced by ISIL conflict safely return home through Government of Iraq, IOM Project *(continued)*

and reconstruction; debris removal from damaged areas; livelihood assistance; transportation; cash assistance in the form of departure and reinstallation cash grants; rehabilitation of basic services; and post-return reintegration support. These activities follow international and Iraqi standards — IOM Iraq and its partners seek to ensure that the returns are voluntary, informed, dignified and safe at all times.

The importance of safe and dignified returns is even more relevant considering the risks posed by COVID-19; this concerns the risk of infection in camps, as well as efforts to improve services and conditions in areas of return. IOM Iraq is putting significant protective measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during

activities, including sharing up-to-date guidance and information related to the returns (via bulk SMS messages related to feedback helplines). Temperature checks will be completed on both days, as part of the duty of care processes put in place for returnees.

IOM Iraq's efforts to promote voluntary, safe, dignified and informed solutions to displacement are supported by a number of international partners, most notably the United States Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration.

U.S. Embassy Baghdad Chargé d'Affaires Brian McFeeters underscored the value of American support for IOM, saying, "the United States is deeply committed to the welfare of the world's most vulnerable people, including families displaced in Iraq, and their

communities of origin. Supporting these communities and populations is part of supporting Iraq's stability and success."

This initiative is part of broader joint efforts, with NGOs and UN agencies, to support the government and people of Iraq in ending internal displacement and achieving durable solutions. IOM and numerous international partners, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), are engaged in a wide variety of activities to support the needs of IDPs, returnees, host communities and other vulnerable populations in Iraq.

## Australia supports migration management and border security on path to stability in Iraq

**Baghdad, 23 July 2020** — In 2020, the Government of Iraq (GoI) is working towards improving migration management and rebuilding the capacity of border points. These are priority actions to create the conditions for sustainable security and, therefore, safe orderly and regular migration. Strengthened borders are also critical components that promote economic growth, which has become ever more important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government of Australia is providing the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with USD 840,000 to support the GoI, by implementing the seventh phase of the Capacity Building for Migration Management Programme (CBMMP) in Iraq. Principal partners are the Ministries of Interior (MoI), including the Kurdistan Regional Government's MoI, and the Border Points Commission.

The programme began in 2006 with a comprehensive border assessment which helped the Government define priorities and chart a course forward. CBMMP supports strategic, tactical and operational interventions that strengthen the GoI's capacity to manage its borders and promote safe, orderly and regular migration.

The new phase of CBMMP is geared towards three key outcomes: strengthened coordination among relevant entities, through increased

capacity and standardisation of Border Points Commission processes; strengthened infrastructural capacity and utility of border management centres by upgrading premises and through the provision of specialised equipment; and increased skills and experience among officials, through staff training and provision of materials. Programming will operate in Sulaymaniyah, Baghdad and Basra Governorates.

These interventions are now more critical than ever as they improve internal coordination to address current and emerging risks. Migration and health are intricately linked — local, regional and global human mobility are complex and dynamic phenomena, and complex migratory flows put extensive pressure on the government's capacity to effectively manage its borders. IOM Iraq is working with the Border Points Commission alongside other entities, to

support an integrated border management approach that is responsive to the dynamics of human mobility and outbreak trends.

CBMMP is an essential piece of IOM Iraq's Migration Management portfolio, which also supports understanding and management of migration flows, developing policies and regulations, and enhancing cooperation with International Organizations and other States. In 2020, IOM Iraq is also supporting the Government with the development of a National Migration Strategy, and mainstreaming migration into development plans.

In addition to long-term support of IOM's CBMMP initiative, the Government of Australia also supports humanitarian assistance in Iraq for Internally Displaced Persons and returnees through protection, infrastructure and sustainable livelihoods activities.



## Testing the potential of solar in Iraq

*Solar PV systems in Najaf demonstrate the potential benefits of renewable energy in Iraq*

**Baghdad, 24 June 2020** - Characterized by long, hot and clear summers, Najaf, Iraq's holy city, seems like the ideal place to realize the potential for solar energy in Iraq. Which is why in 2016, Najaf was selected as one of three sites to pilot rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, testing their potential for application across the sunny nation.

Energy consumption in Iraq is dominated by fossil fuels, at 96%. Not only is this a missed opportunity for the subtropical nation, but it has had very real, and visible consequences for the environment. As public infrastructure struggles to cope with the growing population, dependency on diesel generators has created a smoggy reality, with the air pollution levels in Iraq linked to health consequences for the nation.

In 2016, with support from the Global Environment Fund (GEF), six families were selected to receive rooftop solar PV systems. These initial six families, were selected as part of a pilot to raise awareness and demonstrate the potential benefits of solar energy. Since then, some of these families have benefitted from the cost savings and all are excited by a new vision for clean energy and solar for their country.

"I knew that using solar energy had positive returns on the environment, and in a country like my homeland, Iraq, there is an urgent need to use it," explains Ihsan, 49-year-old father-of-

four and recipient of a rooftop solar PV system in Najaf. "But I was also surprised in many aspects, I didn't know that by generating clean energy, I could contribute to my community," he adds, pointing to the excess energy the panels provide being pumped back into the government grid.

For Qusai, a 45-year-old father-of-four and Ihsan's neighbor, the benefit was also linked to the "clean" aspect of solar energy production, "The financial burden of relying on expensive diesel generators and the noise and smog produced, makes solar energy very appealing," he explains. "It's also very efficient!"

On average, each of the six households were able to save \$2,300 over the past four years and a total of 58,000 kgs of CO2 was saved from being emitted into the atmosphere – that's the equivalent of consuming more than 7,000 gallons of diesel.

But to make the use of solar energy more sustainable, UNDP and the GEF knew that Iraq would need trained and experienced personnel to maintain and repair the systems.

Faridha, a local Najaf resident and Head of Amal Al-Hayat Organisation for Culture and Information, was one of 25 civil society organization members – including 15 women – trained in operating and maintaining solar PV systems, to both support the piloting of these systems over the past four years, but also act as advocates for the adoption of cleaner, greener energy across Najaf.

"Before the training, we had heard about solar energy, but we did not



know how we could benefit from it in Iraq, especially in the province of Najaf," she explains. "Solar energy is an investment for the citizen. If people consume wisely, they benefit not just themselves, but their community."

Thanks to funding support from the Global Environment Fund, this project was able to install solar PV units in Baytti district, Najaf and Al-Mansour Factory, Baghdad, as well as a solar PV energy Test Station at the Ministry of Science and Technology Baghdad. In addition, a draft law for the sale of power by independent power producers (IPPs) that would enable the sale of excess energy from solar PV systems back into government grids and financially benefit producers has been developed.

Since 2016, 15 government officials and 50 private sector firms have also participated in training on the potential economic and environmental gains for Iraq, if solar energy is adopted.

## Celebrating the small: MSMEs in Iraq

*Empowering people as business owners and community leaders.*

**Baghdad, 26 June 2020** - In Iraq, a country most recognized for its oil production, it's the micro - small - and medium-enterprises (MSMEs) that bring life and colour to the streets. Despite being the 'small' players in business, the private sector (excluding oil) accounts for close to 60% of employment, with MSMEs active in the widest range of sectors and with the greatest opportunities for youth.

In Basra City and Al-Qurna, two cities in the largest oil producing region in the nation, the unemployment rate has risen to at least 30% in recent years. Largely attributed to the lack of government employment opportunities and the skills mismatch of the growing



youth demographic, investment in micro- small- and medium-enterprises is bringing new hope and opportunities for economic development.

Since mid-2019, the United Nations Development Programming (UNDP), in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), has provided targeted support to 319 new and

established MSMEs across Basra City and Al-Qurna through business development training and cash-grants. The training worked to build skills that would enable enterprise growth, such as finance and accounting, marketing, human resources and employment management, as well as soft skills such as communication, leadership,



## Celebrating the small: MSMEs in Iraq *(continued)*

negotiation skills, decision making and problem solving.

“I learned the importance of good leadership,” says Labieb, 57, father-of-5 and owner of a cherry and nuts store in Basra City. “I also learned how to best deal with customers and be part of a team.” Following completion of his training and receiving his cash-grant, Labieb was able to hire an additional staff member to manage increased stock and customers and enjoyed a 15% increase in profits.

But like most other cities around the world, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 was also felt in Basra and Al-Qurna. Businesses took all precaution to prevent the spread of the virus, ensuring the safety of both staff and customers by wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and

adhering to the government curfews, with limited operating hours. By demonstrating solidarity, these business owners were not only able to continue making a livelihood for themselves and their employees, but to set an example for the community.

“As a business owner, I am empowered to build something successful – that I created the plan for, and that enables me to give back to the community,” explains Hisham, 40, father-of-2 and owner of a small five-a-side football stadium in Abu Al-Khaseeb.

For Kawthar and Jenan, both mothers-of-five and owners of successful beauty salons in Basra and Al-Qurna respectively, hygiene and care are always a big part of their daily work. “After receiving the grant, I was able to hire three new staff members and saw

my profits increase by 40% - this is because I put together a good business plan, but also because we take the necessary precautions to keep ourselves and others safe,” says Kawthar.

MSMEs continue to face challenges to their growth during COVID-19 pandemic, limiting their capacity to hire additional employees, but with the recognition and support they need, could MSMEs be the way forward for economic growth in Iraq?

Together with NRC, and generous funding support from the Government of Japan, UNDP has supported 319 MSMEs through training and cash-grants and placed 125 individuals in jobs through private sector partnerships, since mid-2019.

## Returnees in Yathrib, Iraq, help rebuild homes in their conflict affected communities during the pandemic



**Yathrib, 2 July 2020** - While living away from home in Baghdad for four years, 31-year-old Mohammed Madi Ahmad learned new skills in painting, plumbing, electrical work and installation of fans, lighting and decoration.

On returning to his home town of Yathrib, Mohammed is now working as a daily labourer on various construction sites, while his 24-year-old wife stays home to take care of their two young sons.

“The situation is very difficult due to the Coronavirus pandemic,” he said. “There are no jobs and no way to support our families. I was lucky to find out about this construction work and I am thankful I had a job for a month, and I hope there will be more opportunities like this in the future.”

In the rural town of Yathrib, Salah Al Din Governorate, 45 kilometres north of Baghdad, returnees are rebuilding their lives with the assistance of UN-Habitat following several years of conflict.

Since UN-Habitat’s contractors are requested to hire skilled and unskilled labourers locally, the construction

works enabled 56 people from the neighbourhood, most of whom are recent returnees, to find employment during the recent lockdown.

The majority of people in Yathrib, many of whom are former IDPs and recent returnees, work in seasonal or daily jobs to make up for their low return on farming which has suffered due to insecurity, conflict and under-investments in infrastructure.

The number of COVID-19 reported cases in the district has been among the lowest in Iraq since the beginning of the pandemic, which allowed UN-Habitat to continue with the EU-funded construction works and rehabilitation of houses begun before the lockdown. UN-Habitat adopted strict preventive measures for all construction site workers and supervisors – including physical distancing, mandatory wearing of personal protection such as face masks, measuring body temperature of all who enter the site and frequent hand washing.

As the construction material was delivered at the start of the project and labourers and supervising engineers live locally, UN-Habitat managed to complete the rehabilitation of seven houses, the first batch of the planned rehabilitation of 120 houses, in just a few weeks.

“Prioritising the delivery of materials to the site was a key for successful completion of the activities. We are grateful that the local authorities were extremely supportive and approved the continuation of our ongoing works,”

said UN-Habitat Senior Programme Officer, Oday Lafta.

Even before the pandemic, UN-Habitat requested contractors to hire skilled and unskilled workers among unemployed residents of the target areas allowing the job to be done more quickly and supporting local livelihoods. Providing jobs and income at the height of the pandemic is key to help rural communities in their recovery.

“It makes me proud and happy that during the lockdown I didn’t have to go deeper in debt,” says Mohammed, who noted that as he already knows many skills, he aims to pay off his debt and buy tools and equipment that will help him do his job better and earn more money as his children grow up. He also wants to build his house that was destroyed during the conflict and cultivate his farmland, which was torched during their displacement.

So far, UN-Habitat has created 150 jobs for skilled and unskilled workers from Yathrib through a series of area-based integrated projects. These included the rehabilitation of the Emergency Unit of the local Medical Centre, the extension of the water network to 400 homes, rehabilitation of war-damaged houses and the on-going cleaning of an irrigation canal. All of these interventions are being undertaken within the four-year-long EU-funded programme ‘Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development,’ implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

## UNDP in Iraq resumed Cash-for-Work activities in Mosul

**Mosul, 2 July 2020** - In Mosul, UNDP in Iraq resumed Cash-for-Work activities after a temporary suspension due to COVID19. 389 workers are back on sites. They are paid weekly while adhering to health preventive measures particularly wearing personal protective equipment (PPEs), masks and gloves and maintaining social distancing.



## New report and webtool provide insight into Iraq's looming water crisis: IOM and Deltares

**Erbil, 9 July 2020** — Iraq faces a complex water crisis that is expected to persist and might have implications at the humanitarian, socioeconomic, security and social levels, including population movements. In July 2019, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in Iraq identified 21,314 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the central and southern governorates who were displaced due to the lack of water associated with high salinity content or waterborne disease outbreaks.

Intake from the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers – Iraq's primary sources of water – is decreasing at an unprecedented rate. Concurrently, climate change is leading to increasing average temperatures and decreasing annual rainfall, causing further challenges throughout the region. The risk of water shortage-induced displacement of populations in Iraq remains high due to degradation of the quantity and quality of available water.

IOM Iraq and Deltares, an independent institute for applied research in the field of water and subsurface, have published a new report — *Water Quantity and Water Quality in Central and South Iraq: A Preliminary Assessment in the Context of Displacement Risk* — focused on understanding variations in water quantity and water quality in central and southern governorates over the last two decades.

“Water scarcity is one of the main threats to agricultural communities. Environmental factors are among the drivers of displacement and have witnessed this in governorates like Thi-Qar, Basra, Najaf and Kerbala,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “The evidence presented in this report can inform future actions to mitigate a looming water crisis, that would leave vulnerable communities more at risk.”

The report provides insight for the coming years, and key recommendations to mitigate the water crisis, based on an exploratory model-based analysis.

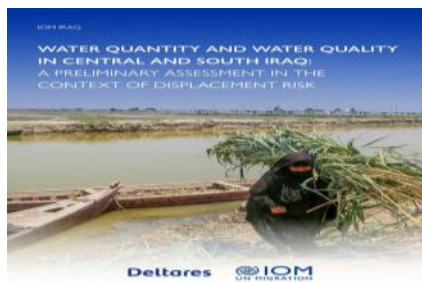
“As a member of the Water, Peace and Security Partnership, Deltares aims to improve the availability of water data and information to help prevent water crises,” said Karen Meijer, Senior Researcher at Deltares. “Working with IOM has given us the opportunity to tailor our analysis to information needs for preventing and

responding to water-related displacement and improve decision support in this area.”

IOM Iraq and Deltares have also launched the Iraq Water Risk Webtool, an interactive webtool that provides insight into variations in water quantity and water quality over time in the central and southern governorates in Iraq. Using data from past years, it explores the impact of different scenarios of water management, climate change, and effectiveness of measures to mitigate these changes. The tool presents Baseline, Water Management, and Climate Change scenarios, each showcasing two series of interactive maps on past and future water availability and water quality.

This study was carried out as part of IOM's efforts to better understand forced migration as a result of environmental factors, and craft more effective responses. In Iraq, this project is a first step towards better preparedness and response measures — designed by and for vulnerable populations that may be faced with the difficult prospect of climate migration.

The study was funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. Deltares' work under the Water, Peace and Security partnership was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



## IOM support modern farming in Southern Iraq

**Basra, 10 July 2020** - Agriculture is the main source of income for over 70 per cent of people Southern Iraq's rural communities, but water scarcity and high salinity are posing serious challenges to this way of life. IOM Iraq, with funding from U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, supported the Government of Iraq in establishing a Water User Association in Al-Muntadhar community, Thi Qar governorate. The association provides trainings to local farmers on modern

farming techniques to ensure water conservation and prevent soil erosion; the association also manages water distribution to ensure fair use. With the same funding stream, IOM Iraq has provided 20 local farmers with drip irrigation system materials and irrigation enclosures to further support efficient farming.

“I have never had a harvest this bountiful before, the training and materials made a big difference,” said Jaleel Majeed, a father of four and the only breadwinner of a large family.

“Many farmers in my community left to the city due to water scarcity, I really hope this type of support will continue because it gave us security and more reasons to stay,” he added.





## The Ministry of Trade and the World Food Programme announced the launch of the new “Tamwini” mobile app

**Baghdad, 14 July 2020** - The Ministry of Trade and the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq are thrilled to announce the launch of the new “Tamwini” mobile app, in Baghdad. Tamwini - “My Food Ration” is the latest innovation in WFP’s work to support the government to digitalise the Public Distribution System (PDS) of food rations. Through the app, families can update their information to receive entitlements – and stay home, which helps during the COVID-19 pandemic. Changing the lives of Iraqi families, people can now avoid visiting PDS

branches, waiting in line, and filling paper applications.

Starting in Baghdad, “Tamwini” will be rolled out across Iraq soon.



## IOM launched capacity building programme for Civil Society Organizations that will empower them to run community development projects

**Baghdad, 16 July 2020** - Yesterday, in Northern Diyala, IOM Iraq launched a three-month capacity building programme for Civil Society Organizations in Khanaqin, Jalawla and Saadiya districts. The programme will empower the organizations to run community development projects and will focus on different specialty areas including Sexual and Gender Based Violence; Disability Inclusion; Child Protection; Social Cohesion; Community Development; Community-based Protection; Women’s Empowerment; Entrepreneurship; and Community Policing. The training package also includes modules on

livelihoods; Mental Health and Psychosocial Support; Peacebuilding; Leadership; Conflict Assessment; and Communicating with Communities.

The programme will run until 15 September. This program is funded by European Commission - Development & Cooperation – EuropeAid.



## Rebuilding Mosul in the midst of a pandemic

**Mosul, 23 July 2020** - No one could predict that in 2020 we would be faced with an unprecedented global pandemic. For Mosul, which today is still reeling from the effects of ISIL’s four-year brutal rule, COVID-19 presented a crisis upon crises affecting the city’s quest for stability. Under its Funding facility for Stabilization Programme (FFS), UNDP has been active in Mosul before its liberation, working to restore critical infrastructure and services, provide short-term job opportunities, and build cohesion amongst its fragmented communities.

To mitigate health risk and to safeguard the safety and health of workers and communities, UNDP temporarily halted its field operations in mid-March, to comply with the curfews and movement restrictions instructed by the Iraqi Government

and health advice provided by the World Health Organization.

Today, critical work on rebuilding Iraq’s second city has resumed, in strict accordance with preventive measures like mandatory PPE and social distancing. Given the scale and impact of UNDP’s projects in Mosul, the need to continue this critical work could no longer await.

### Mosul University: The iconic Central library and University Hall

The University Theater Hall, which was the biggest hall within Mosul university, was badly burned during Mosul’s liberation. Now, work is progressing with twenty-five workers back to work while maintaining social distancing, wearing masks and gloves and receiving frequent temperature checks.

“We feel safe to be back to work as all health measures are in place like

wearing gloves and masks. We keep social distancing as well,” says Talib, 42 years old, a site worker in the Theater Hall. “The suspension of work for three months due to COVID-19 had a tough impact on our families since we work daily to provide their basic needs”.

Likewise, work in the iconic Central Library, which was established inside the Mosul University and is a cornerstone of the academic campus, was totally burnt and was struck with several rockets during the military operations against ISIL. Today, FFS



## Rebuilding Mosul in the midst of a pandemic (Continued)

resumed rehabilitation work with forty workers back to site. They work while abiding by preventive health measures to fight COVID19.

In both sites, weekly briefings are held with teams to update them on health measures, and regular monitoring of these measures are in place.

As the sole pediatric hospital in Mosul and with an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 children in Ninewa Governorate, many families rely on this critical facility to access healthcare services. UNDP recently restarted the rehabilitation of Ibn Al Atheer Hospital in Mosul.

Twenty-five workers recommenced work, maintaining preventive health measures to fight COVID19. This hospital, which was badly damaged during the liberation of the city, will

employ some 500 medical staff to take care of patients' needs, once fully rehabilitated.

### Mosul University Women's education building

UNDP works tirelessly to ensure that all women have an equal right to access an education. At the Women's Education building in Mosul's University, the rehabilitation work is well underway. Thirty workers returned to the site while adhering to new preventive health measures, like wearing masks and gloves.

"We resumed work on site only after we received guidance from UNDP with health measures to be respected," explains Thabet, 30 years old, a site worker in Mosul.

To date, UNDP has completed 760

stabilization projects in Mosul, benefitting more than five million people. Another 73 are currently underway.



## Rehabilitation work has resumed at the Al-Qurna Water Treatment Plant in Basra

**Basra, 6 August 2020** - Al-Qurna district in Basra Governorate only has one water treatment plant. Part of it fell out of service and the resulting water challenges led to the displacement of over 100 families. IOM Iraq is rehabilitating the plan, with funding from Qatar Charity.

The project will give 100.000 people access to drinking water and improve the livelihoods of local communities.

After the easing of movement restrictions put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19, rehabilitation work has resumed at the Al-Qurna Water Treatment Plant. "Significant progress has been made during this challenging time," said Eng. Ashraf,

from IOM Iraq.

"Movement restrictions made it difficult for our team and the contractors to stick to the original

timeline, but we have been able to meet our targets due to the extra efforts put in to make progress during this difficult time," Eng. Ashraf added.



## UN-Habitat provided shelter upgrade kits to over 700 struggling Iraqi families in Anbar

**Baghdad, 28 July 2020** - Whilst in February 2020 there was snow blanketing the streets of Baghdad, Iraqis now face an unprecedented heat wave during which temperatures may soar between 50 – 54 degrees Celsius.

"Shelter upgrades in countries, such as Iraq, that experience severe weather conditions are critical to saving lives in extreme temperatures, particularly for the very young, the elderly, the disabled, and those perhaps suffering from illnesses, such as COVID-19," said UN-Habitat Iraq Head of Country Programme, Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab.

In June and July, UN-Habitat and its partner were able to provide shelter upgrade kits and other important

shelter items to over 700 struggling Iraqi families in Anbar. This included items to help keep families cool during the summer months, which can be lifesaving when temperatures rise above 50 degrees, and families must stay at home to respect COVID-19 movement restrictions.

UN-Habitat would like to thank the donors that generously fund the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF), its partner Engineering Association for the Development and Environment, the Global Shelter Cluster, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations OCHA).





## ILO and Kurdistan Region of Iraq pledge to support formal employment for forcibly displaced persons and host communities

**Erbil, 11 August 2020** - The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) signed an implementation agreement aimed at boosting formal employment amongst internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and host community members in targeted governorates impacted by displacement and conflict.

The agreement will see the establishment and upscaling of employment service centres run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to create more decent jobs through integrated services, such as job and skills matching, career guidance and counselling, as well as on-the-job training opportunities.

A virtual meeting attended by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in KRI, Kwestan Mohamad and representatives of the ILO, was held on



Monday (August 10) to mark the signing of the agreement.

“This project is a positive step towards collaboration with the ILO, providing opportunities for job-seekers and especially young people,” said the Minister. “We hope to expand this collaboration to cover other governorates, and we look forward to greater cooperation with the ILO in other fields.”

The ILO will provide financial and technical support to the centres, including capacity building for ministry staff. It will help develop and upgrade an existing online employment system, and train employment officers on the on-line platform as well as on business counselling, to further facilitate job-matching between job-seekers and employers. The agreement will also ensure that 50 per cent of job-seekers benefiting from the centres’ services are women.

“We are pleased to be signing this agreement with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs which will help provide decent work opportunities for vulnerable people including IDPs, refugees and host community members,” said ILO’s Country Coordinator in Iraq, Maha Kattaa. “Through this collaboration, the Ministry will enhance and expand its employment services to meet the needs of Iraqis and refugees alike, improving their access to formal employment and much-needed income.”

Activities will be closely implemented with the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, which will coordinate services that reach in-camp refugee populations and with the UN Children’s Fund UNICEF, which will focus on reaching younger

job-seekers and workers. Additional referral pathways for enterprise training will be coordinated with the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The agreement is part of efforts under the Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS), a four-year global partnership between the Government of the Netherlands, ILO, IFC, UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank that seeks to develop a new paradigm in responding to forced displacement crises.

Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the programme operates in eight countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon as well as the East/Horn of Africa in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. In Iraq, the partnership aims to enhance sustainable living conditions for refugees, IDPs and vulnerable host communities through increased access to quality education and skills training; increased protection and inclusion; as well as enhanced economic opportunities and decent employment for all.

The ILO’s contribution to the partnership in Iraq includes an employment intensive investment programme (EIIP), enterprise and skills development and efforts to enhance refugees’ access to the labour market and social protection.

The initiative also contributes to the Decent Work Country Programme launched in 2019, which seeks to support national initiatives on employment promotion, rights at work, social dialogue and social protection.

## IOM EDF is supporting private sector economic growth and job creation in Iraq

**Baghdad, 15 August 2020** - IOM’s Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) is an innovative livelihoods approach to contribute to economic recovery and private sector revitalization in Iraq through tailored support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The EDF aims to restore essential economic infrastructure by providing financial capital to SMEs (2-30 employees) in primary and secondary economic sectors that were successful prior to the conflict but suffered loss and damage and have a high demand for labour force. By targeting key sectors and

providing necessary funding, the EDF encourages rapid but also large-scale job creation. The EDF is fit-for-purpose in the context of Iraq, where 60% of jobs are in the private sector, the majority of which are in SMEs. At the same time, most SMEs have experienced large scale destruction or loss and lack access to finance to rebuild. This is especially challenging as access to credit in Iraq is limited or non-existent, making it very difficult for these businesses to find funds to recover. The EDF, thus, addresses the critical gap that SMEs face in accessing

finance for rehabilitation and expansion.

IOM goal is to support SMEs so as to enable them to recover and expand their businesses post the 2014-2017



## IOM EDF is supporting private sector economic growth and job

conflict, as well as to facilitate rapid job creation that meets decent work criteria.

### Success stories

**Al-Najah Ice Cream Factory**, established in 1984 in Mosul, had three production lines and employed twenty workers. When ISIL was in control of the city (2014- 2017), the factory's production was reduced to one line, and only six employees remained because of reduced market demand. During the battles to retake Mosul, the factory was destroyed. IOM Iraq approved an EDF grant to support the recovery of the business, which created ten new job opportunities and allowed the owners to reinstate all three production lines.



**Bashiqa Bakery** is famous in the town for its delicious Iraqi bread and

Sammon Hajari. During the conflict with ISIL, the bakery was looted, and the building partly destroyed. IOM Iraq approved an EDF grant to support the recovery of the business, which created three new job opportunities.



Caroline Wiliam refashioned her **tailoring factory** in April to produce medical masks. The factory, which is based in Erbil, now produces more than 2500 masks per day, and they are distributed all over Iraq as essential items in the fight against COVID-19. IOM Iraq awarded the business with an EDF grant to expand the business, which will help Caroline hire 10 additional employees and produce more masks.

"I'm very happy about this opportunity, it will help my business substantially; I can finally grow the factory and produce many more masks," she said.

"Our mission is to provide sanitizers at good prices to encourage people to follow COVID-19 instructions," said Ghassan, owner of **Ayoob Factory** in West Mosul. His factory produces various types of disinfectants, including soap, and sanitizers. The factory supplies its products to hospitals in Mosul as well as the local market. IOM Iraq awarded the factory an EDF grant to help the business repair an essential machine and buy additional equipment that will help boost the production rate; the grant will also allow the factory to hire seven more employees.

"The grant came at the right time because border closures are creating more demand for our product," said Ghassan. "We are eight workers at the moment including three women, but with the grant I will be able to increase my production and hire more people."



## Mercy Hands and WFP support gardening in Salah Al-Din

**Baghdad, 16 August 2020** - Over 200 females beneficiaries garden's have been planted with cucumber, bean and green pumpkin by Mercy Hands cash-for-work team in Salah Al-Din in partnership with World Food Programme in Iraq. Fresh vegetables will be harvesting in the next weeks.



## Workshop on "Solar energy projects policies and opportunities in Iraq"

**Baghdad, 22 August 2020** - Under the patronage of Ministry of Electricity in Iraq, RCREEE, UNDP and GEF organized a workshop on Solar Energy project policies and opportunities for the Iraqi private sector.

The workshop aimed to support local service providers benefiting from GEF project supported policies. It also focused on raising the awareness on the services of solar energy field and encouraging new service providers to utilize the emerging market opportunities in Iraq.

In her speech, RCREEE Senior Expert Eng. Rim Bokhshina presented the outputs of RCREEE and UNDP project "Catalyzing the use of solar photovoltaic energy in Iraq" project. RCREEE Technical Director, Dr. Maged K. Mahmoud also proposed a roadmap for the development of solar energy projects in Iraq and the integration of the private sector. The attendees were representatives from the private sector, governmental bodies and international institutions.





## Park squatter in Mosul, Iraq offered new opportunity thanks to UN-Habitat rehabilitation project

**Mosul, 17 August 2020** – After squatting in Al-Yarmouk Park in Mosul, northern Iraq, for 22 years, Suliman Hassan Matar has been provided with a temporary new home and a full-time job as a park guard as part of the UN-Habitat rehabilitation project.

Mr. Suliman moved into a corner of the park with his family in 1998, as they could not afford to rent anywhere, and began working as a guard. He remained in the park with his wife and six five children during the city's occupation by the militant ISIL group and took in his brother's daughter when the rest of her family died in the conflict.

"I have been living for over two decades with my family in a few rooms that I built myself with concrete blocks. We did not have running water or a proper toilet. I had very little money," Mr. Suliman said. "It was a space that only animals could live in. Every year, in spring, we were suffering from floods that destroyed most of our belongings. I always dreamt of living in a proper house."

Al-Yarmouk Park had not been maintained for nearly a decade and was full of rubbish, benches had been stolen and trees cut down for fuel. UN-Habitat started rehabilitating the park in late 2019 creating over 200 jobs for skilled and unskilled workers from the

surrounding area, including female workers. The project, funded by the EU, includes new sports facilities, playgrounds, a community hall, a new irrigation and lighting system, and an intense horticulture training programme, targeting unemployed female residents, which will include planting of hundreds of trees and bushes.

Mr. Suliman thought he would be evicted but instead UN-Habitat reached an agreement with the Municipality to assign him as one of the park guards and provide him with a prefabricated house on higher and safer ground.

"Many residents of the area are now passing by and congratulating me for my new house and feeling happy for me," he beamed, sitting with his children in the doorway of his new home.

"I will be taking care of the park as my home and family" said Mr. Suliman who is already taking care of the plants and has been occasionally hired as an unskilled worker by the contractors working on site. "This project has not yet been completed but it has already changed my life. I feel I can now provide a better future for my family."

UN-Habitat has adopted strict preventive measures for all construction site workers and supervisors including physical



distancing, mandatory wearing of face masks and gloves, measuring body temperatures and frequent hand washing. Contractors were instructed to hire skilled and unskilled workers among unemployed residents of the target areas allowing the job to be done more quickly and supporting local livelihoods.

Providing jobs and income at the height of the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic is key to help conflicted-affected urban communities in their recovery and is considered a key priority during the four-year-long EU-funded programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

## UNESCO is strengthening partnerships with the private sector to encourage youth employment and training in specialized cultural and creative industries

**Mosul, 12 August 2020** - Within the framework of the project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" supported by the European Union, UNESCO is strengthening partnerships with the private sector to encourage youth employment and training in specialized cultural and creative industries relating to the reconstruction process in Mosul. UNESCO launched an apprenticeship programme for Marble, Stone and Alabaster carvers, supporting 7 different small to medium enterprises in Mosul to take on and train apprentices under the supervision of the Department of Labour and Social Affairs. Currently, 14 apprentices from vulnerable groups have been engaged by the industry and are working on various projects in the city. The programme hopes to alleviate economic hardship caused by the past conflict

and the current COVID crisis and to help address the ongoing skills shortage in Mosul in key areas of reconstruction. This initiative will be expanded to other necessary skills and

trades in Mosul and to relevant industries in Basra under the project once the COVID pandemic has eased and increased movement becomes more possible.



## Internally displaced women trained on poultry farming for food and income

**Baghdad, 14 August 2020** - Twenty internally displaced families living in the Shekhan Displacement Camp are benefitting from the Japanese Government funded United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Household Poultry Project—an initiative designed to promote economic empowerment and pathways to entrepreneurship. The program grants each participating family with laying hens for egg production, feed and coops, as well as the workforce training necessary for establishing and sustaining businesses.

Thus far, 400 hens, 20 coops and 5.5 tons of feed have been distributed to the participants. With the average hen capable of providing up to 300 eggs over the course of a year, the project can easily provide each food-insecure family with much needed sustenance as well as an income, ultimately reducing dependence on emergency assistance and promoting health.

Projects such as this are essential for the families living at the Shekhan Displacement Camp. Well into six years of displacement, there is little hope they will return home and pick up with the livelihoods they knew in their past lives.

Displaced in the camp since 2015, Hannan Said, a married mother of two, is one of the beneficiaries of the UNIDO Project. Hannan was working in harvesting and packing potatoes and common beans for an average of 4 dollars a day prior to the project. Her husband's disability prevents him from working, so the 4 dollars a day—along with some emergency assistance offered by the camp—was the family's only income. The 8 hours of work per day involved was only available during harvesting time, making it an unviable vocation.

The unfortunate reality for the internally displaced is that work can be difficult to find. Harvesting crops, often far outside the camp, is quite often the only means of income and does not equate to enough to support a family. Hanan says of the UNIDO Project, "I was always worried about how to find a reliable source of income to support my family. This has given me ample information on rearing local chickens. Now I can be close to home and generate a stable income and also take care of my family. My children are happy because they know that I can provide food and make some income each day."

42-year-old Adol Ali Hamika, a divorced mother of six, is another beneficiary of the UNIDO Project. Adol was also a seasonal worker harvesting beans and potatoes prior to her participation in the poultry farming. "My life is much better," says Adol. "Coops are very well designed and safe, and we have received plenty of feed". Adol excitedly said that, "besides the income I make, selling eggs is giving me pleasure as I consider the chickens also as pets and companions."



## UN, Ministries discuss cooperation on enhancing the social protection system in Iraq

**Baghdad, 19 August 2020** - The United Nations in Iraq and the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, Health and Environment, and Planning discussed on Wednesday the challenges faced by the national social protection system in Iraq in responding to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

An overview of the challenges confronted by the national social protection system due to the COVID19 was presented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Adel Al-Rikabi, emphasized that the issues faced by the increased number of vulnerable people are urgent and an accelerated response is needed. The UN agencies were represented by the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Ms Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano. She encouraged strengthened collaboration among the Government and the UN Country Team to find effective

solutions for rapid response to the pandemic as well as look for the medium- and long-term strategies to address the impact of COVID-19. A draft of the UN socio-economic COVID-19 response plan in Iraq was presented with the participants.

The attendees discussed collaborating on an inclusive, comprehensive social response to the COVID-19 crisis and its repercussions on the population. They agreed on accelerating joint efforts to scale up the rapid response to the COVID-19 impact on social sector, focusing on the Government areas of priority.

Ms Vojáčková-Sollorano reiterated the UN support to the Government and the people in Iraq: "Our meeting today is only the beginning and not our target.



The UN tailors its programmes and projects based on the priorities of the Government and the needs of the people in Iraq. The UN will work with its government counterparts to ensure the rapid response plan to the needs of the most vulnerable."

The participating UN agencies, who joined virtually in accordance to the COVID-19 Crisis cell recommendations, included representatives from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with representatives of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Labour Organization (ILO).



## Launch of Sumereen: Socio-economic growth through eco-tourism in Thi Qar



**Thi Qar, 26 August 2020-** Funded by the European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will be supporting socio-economic growth through eco-tourism and cultural heritage preservation in the Governorate of Thi Qar, south of Iraq. Virtually launched, project Sumereen: Sumerian Youth for Economic Development and Cultural Heritage, will be implemented in partnership with a number of non-governmental organizations, namely Un Ponte Per, Humat Dijlah, Safina Projects and Carlo Leopardi Studio. The two-year project is part of the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development.

Sumereen aims at the promotion of Thi Qar as a tourist destination, through the construction of tourist infrastructure in Ur archaeological site and the Marshlands, the provision of vocational training in eco-tourism and environmental conservation, in addition to the creation of employment opportunities for local communities,

specifically youth and women.

Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Ambassador Martin Huth, said: "I am very pleased to see the launch of the Sumereen project that so well represents the EU's approach to supporting Iraq and its people from North to South, notably also in Thi Qar. Led by the Governor, H.E. Nazem Hamid Al-Waeli, this project will provide some much-needed job opportunities for Thi Qar's young people. I am happy that Sumereen also provides a long-term perspective for the communities by promoting the Governorates' unique cultural and natural heritage, the archaeological site of Ur, and the marshes. Combining sustainable socio-economic development with environmental preservation is the way forward for the green recovery of Iraq. I do wish all our partners the best of success for this important project."

Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad, said: "Sumereen is a promising project for the people of Thi Qar and the future of eco-tourism

in the south of Iraq. We are grateful for the EU for their support to the important programme that will help us provide the necessary support to the local communities. We look forward to working closely with our partners in the governorate to achieve tangible, sustainable results that can transform the image of this culturally-rich Governorate, and support the youth find their place in the job market, as well as promote the investment environment in the area. Building resilient communities remains a top priority for UNDP in Iraq."

Representative of Un Ponte Per in Iraq, Sumereen Project Manager, Mr. Toon Bijmens, stated: "Un Ponte Per believes that the Marshlands and the site of Ur, both included in the UNESCO World Heritage List as the Ahwar, can foster the socio-economic development of Thi Qar. We are glad to be contributing to this goal through our partnership with UNDP. In the coming months, Sumereen will be involving local communities, women, youth, civil society, local authorities and the private sector through participatory processes for the preservation and development of Ur and the Marshlands."

The programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development aims at contributing to the stability and socio-economic development of Iraq through enhancing democratic governance at the local level. It is working to improve the ability of selected governorates to efficiently manage local government and public services. Economic growth and job creation are prioritized, with a focus on green projects, involving youth and women, in addition to enhancing the living conditions of returnees and in conflict affected areas.

The programme fact sheet can be downloaded at <https://bit.ly/2Wlw17e>

### Security Sector Reform

## Criminal justice services in Iraq strengthened thanks to new contribution from Germany

**Baghdad, 7 July 2020** – The Government of Germany has committed USD 1.13 million to support the Government of Iraq strengthen its criminal investigations and crime scene management under a new project in partnership with UNDP Iraq. Strengthening Criminal Investigations

and Crime Scene Management Capacities in Iraq aims to increase the reliability and effectiveness of criminal investigations, ensuring they are well integrated and proactively conducted by local police. It will also improve the performance of police investigators, making their role in criminal

investigations more accountable.

Activities under this project include comprehensive training sessions for investigating officers from local police stations, relevant directorates, and investigating judges.

"This generous contribution will support Iraqi stakeholders to advance

## Criminal justice services in Iraq strengthened thanks to new contribution from Germany *(continued)*

ongoing efforts to improve local safety and security through better crime management and local policing," said Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad. "Public safety and security lie at the heart of Iraq's transition to long-term stability, recovery and development, so we are extremely grateful to the Government of Germany for its continued support," she adds.

German Ambassador, Dr. Ole Diehl stressed that "this contribution from Germany will assist in advancing capacities of police forces and judicial authorities in Iraq and thereby create conditions to restore public safety and security for all Iraqis as well as enhance longer-term stability."

Major General Talib Khalil Rahi, Forensics Director of the Ministry of Interior, stated "the focus on improving local police and criminal justice services is essential to transit from a

state engaged in protracted conflict to a post-war era of stability and recovery." The new contribution aligns with identified priorities within the Government of Iraq's Security Sector Reform aimed at improving criminal justice and local policing.

The project will be implemented by the UNDP Security Sector Reform and Rule of Law Programme which has

been instrumental in supporting the Government of Iraq's Security Sector Reform Programme, in partnerships with the Office of the National Security Advisor, Ministry of Interior and the Police Affairs Agency, Local Police, Higher Judicial Council, Ministry of Justice and Iraqi civil society organisations and other international donors.



## Pathway to peace: new recommendations to enhance local policing programmes in Iraq

**Baghdad, 30 July 2020** – Designing adaptable programmes, promoting the role of women in policing, and streamlining international interventions are some of the key recommendations made by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in a recent conflict assessment on local policing in Iraq.

Conflict Assessment in Support of Efforts to Improve Local Policing in Iraq outlines key recommendations to mitigate the drivers of conflict and promote forces for peace, focusing on two key governorates in Iraq, Anbar and Ninewa.

It highlights different approaches to address drivers of conflict and instability, and makes recommendations to shape robust,

sustainable local policing programmes in Iraq.

"Local police play an integral role in establishing and forging peace in Iraq, especially in the years since the ISIL conflict," says Resident Representative of UNDP in Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"We hope this assessment is a useful tool for international partners and local decision makers to shape robust and sustainable local policing programmes that reflect community concerns, and promote a more peaceful and just Iraq. In doing so, it is important to increase and promote the role of women in policing, and improve women and girls' access to local police services," she adds.

The conflict assessment was developed under UNDP Iraq's Security Sector



Reform/Rule of Law programme with generous funding from the Government of The Netherlands.

The assessment findings are available online at

[https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/conflict-assessment-in-support-of-efforts-to-improve-local-polic.html](https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/democratic_governance/conflict-assessment-in-support-of-efforts-to-improve-local-polic.html)

## Mine Action

### UNMAS continues its work throughout the pandemic

**Baghdad, 1 August 2020** - UNMAS Iraq, supported by Denmark and other donors, assumed a 'Protect-Plan-Resume' approach during the COVID19 pandemic months, to both maintain the existing national mine action capacity and enhance technical skills through personnel development initiatives. This has allowed the gradual resumption of survey and clearance activities in

country, while simultaneously protecting livelihood opportunities for national staff.

UNMAS thanks the Government of Denmark, in addition to other donors, for their generous support in Iraq, which has allowed UNMAS to honour its commitments throughout the pandemic.





## IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) team started offering psychosocial support services in Kirkuk's Wahed Huzeiran sub-district

**Kirkuk, 15 August 2020** - IOM Iraq and the Kirkuk Directorate of Youth (DOY) have been working together since 2016 to support youth and vulnerable people living in the governorate.

In July 2020, IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) team started offering psychosocial support services in Kirkuk's Wahed Huzeiran sub-district. Wahed Huzeiran was heavily affected during the ISIL crisis; several IDPs, returnees, and host community members reported that had their mental health was negatively impacted during the conflict.

The sub-district now hosts thousands of displaced persons, many of whom live in informal settlements and lack basic services. IOM Iraq, in coordination with the DOY and the primary health care centre in Wahed Huzairan, will support the community by providing



psychosocial support services in a hall that they recently rehabilitated to provide an appropriate space for these

activities. IOM Iraq's MHPSS work in Wahed Huzeiran is funded by Auswärtiges Amt.

## Healthcare challenges under COVID-19 Pandemic



**Baghdad, 06 August 2020** - In June 2014, ISIL took control of Nineveh governorate until 2017.

Thousands of people, including pregnant women, were forced out of their homes and find refuge in camps for internally displaced people where they stayed for many years.

As Yazidis return to Baaj and Sinjar, much-needed services, such as assistance to pregnant women and girls, remained unavailable.

UNFPA, with its partner IHAO, were the first on the ground to deploy two mobile delivery units on 26 July to serve the pregnant women in the villages of Qahtanyia, Jazeera,

Rambooz Sharqu and Rambooz Gharbi.

The team is working towards establishing a hotline for urgent medical care services and referral pathways to women and girls who need urgent medical care to Sinjar hospital and Talafar hospital.

This project was supported by EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid – ECHO.

The protection of health workers, in particular midwives, nurses, obstetricians and anesthesiologists, must be prioritized. They must be provided with PPE if they are treating patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Today, with partners and the support of Canada in Iraq, UNFPA distributed dignity kits to 85 women health workers in Alli Naji, Assa, and Shahid Tahir Ali Wali Bag hospitals dedicated to treating and identifying COVID19 patients.

Personal hygiene products are particularly challenging to access due to pandemic-related movement restrictions, and because access to the women centres has been limited as a result.

"I am grateful for this kit and for the teams who are taking the risks to provide us with these much-needed items," said Marwa, 23, a recipient of

one of 4,000 dignity kits distributed in West Mosul, last week!

UNFPA thanks Embassy of Sweden in Baghdad for funding UNFPA COVID19 response in Iraq.

In June, UNFPA opened four reproductive health clinics and two delivery rooms in Heet (Kubaysah, Al-Furat ), Rawa, Jazeera Al-Ramadi, Anna, Rutba in Anbar Governorate.

In one month only, the teams in these new facilities provided 802 consultations, conducted 439 deliveries.



## UNESCO supports MoE's TV channel in the production of the additional lectures of the Iraqi curriculum for non-final grades

**Baghdad, 23 July 2020** - Since June 2020, in close coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MoE), UNESCO has been supporting MoE's TV channel in the production of the additional lectures of the Iraqi curriculum for non-final grades as a rapid response to the COVID-19 crisis in Iraq. MoE has been running the channel since 2010, this Education TV channel and the e-learning platform are playing a major role in serving students that have lost physical access to schools as well as the most marginalized and vulnerable children to have access to education at home. Thanks to the generous

contribution from Educate A Child, a global programme of the Education Above All Foundation and the

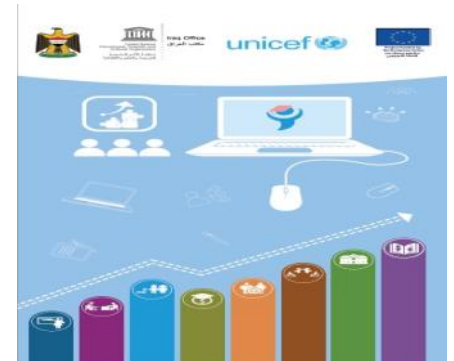
European Union, the monthly production of 376 lectures for different grades and subjects is on-going.



## UNESCO Office in Iraq is supporting the MoE to develop and rollout a computer-based Education Management Information System

**Baghdad, 3 August 2020** - UNESCO is committed to support the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Iraq to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its education service delivery nationwide. As part of the EU funded "System building and capacity strengthening for the MoE and its sub-national Directorates of Education" project, the UNESCO Office in Iraq is supporting the MoE to develop and rollout a computer-based Education Management Information System

(EMIS). EMIS functions as a tool to capture and utilize education data for improved central, sub-national and school-level planning, monitoring, policy and decision-making. An online, functional EMIS ensures user access to reliable and timely data; towards this UNESCO has installed 2 servers at the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission. The servers will host the EMIS and its data warehouse and are fully owned by the MoE.



## Youth

## Youth, the ultimate priority for UNFPA and the Ministry of Youth and Sports

**Baghdad, 23 July 2020** - On her first official visit to an Iraqi official, UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, met with the Minister of Youth and Sports, Adnan Darjal, to discuss the continuous collaboration between the Fund and the Ministry and the youth vision 2030.

The Minister and Dr Columbia emphasised the need for youth-centred strategies and projects to pave the way for young people in Iraq to reach their full potential.

Mr. Darjal shared with the UNFPA Representative the Ministry's vision for young people which included the development of a five-year plan that prioritises youth's need and strengthens their role as the drive for change in Iraq, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups among young people.

For her part, Dr Columbia reaffirmed

UNFPA commitment to helping young people realise their full potential in life and places their needs, aspirations and ideals at the core of the Fund's work to support first and foremost the Government of Iraq's vision of youth and the social-economic development of the country.

She discussed the need to mobilise young people, especially girls, to become leaders and empower them and build their capacity to be engaged in decision-making as part of the Ministry's agenda for youth development.

"As part of the United Nations family in Iraq, UNFPA will continue to work with the Ministry of Youth and Sports to build the capacity of Iraqi youth in peace-building, leadership and volunteerism to support young people across the country, especially girls,"

said Dr Columbia.

At the end of the meeting, the UNFPA Representative thanked Minister Darjal for his trust in UNFPA and for the strong and long-term partnership with the Ministry.





## KRG, UN: Youth, the heart of the socio-economic development

**Erbil, 25 August 2020** – On 23 August, the Kurdistan Regional Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Culture and Youth, and the Kurdistan Region Statistics Office, together with the United Nations, launched the results of the National Adolescents and Youth Survey, which was conducted by the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government with the support of UNFPA & UNICEF in 2019.

The survey, the first of its kind in over a decade, will enable the Iraq Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to develop adolescent and youth-centred policies based on what adolescents and youth see as priorities.

The event took place at the Kurdistan Institute for Public Administration in presence of the Minister of Planning, Dr Dara Rashid, the Minister of Culture and Youth, Mr Mohammad Said Ali, the UN DSRSG/ Resident Coordinator /Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, the UNFPA Representative in Iraq, Rita Columbia as well as UN and Government officials.

Speaking at the event, Mr Ali, said: “Young people represent the large and most active demographic group in the Kurdistan Region, therefore, we can consider that this survey covers the aspirations and opinions of the majority of the population. It is vital to take the results of this survey seriously and develop projects that are youth-



centred”.

For his part, the Minister of Planning commented on the results saying: “On this occasion and as we face difficult challenges due to the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on our daily lives, it is of utmost importance to pay more attention to the changes hitting our society and establish projects and programmes based on accurate data and indicators to minimise, as much as possible, the consequences of this pandemic on the socio-economic developments in the Kurdistan Region.”

In her remarks, Ms Vojáčková-Sollorano emphasised the critical importance of making changes while taking into account the needs of youths in the country. “According to the

findings of the survey, young people in the Kurdistan Region form 39.5% of the population and almost one-third of them expressed their concerns about access to education opportunities”. She further noted that, the fact that around 30% of youths think about leaving the Kurdistan Region to pursue education and employment opportunities elsewhere, is a worrying trend which the government needs to address urgently. Taking action to address obstacles including gender inequality and uneven access to social economic opportunities, will help the Region tap into youth manpower which is a vital component for the better future of Iraq. Following the remarks, the President of the Kurdistan Regional Statistics Office presented the survey’s key findings.

### International Youth Day

## UNICEF is working closely with its government partners to ensure that every child, adolescent and young person is protected and safe

**Baghdad, 12 August 2020** - August 12th is International Youth Day, a special day where the world comes together to celebrate young people and renew our commitment to do all that we can to support them. And on this day, UNICEF would like to renew its commitment to doing all that we can to keep the young safe and protected. This is especially important at a time when violence is increasingly becoming an everyday part of young people’s lives. Since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, we have been deeply saddened to see images of children in Iraq being subjected to horrific abuse, and to hear about reported cases of children suffering physical punishment, humiliations, and emotional abuse, on

a regular basis.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, the level of violence against children and young people was already alarming. In 2018 the UNICEF-supported Multi-Index Cluster Study (MICS6), which is the most comprehensive government study on the state of children in Iraq to date, found that over 80% of children experience violent discipline, including in places that are meant to be safe such as schools and homes. The study also found that almost a third of all children had been subjected to severely violent discipline, including hitting on sensitive parts of the body such as their head as well as severe and repeated beatings.

This is in direct contravention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, or UNCRC. The UNCRC, which is the most ratified treaty in history, and Iraq is a signatory. The Convention lays out the rights of every child and adolescent, and it enshrines their right to be protected from all forms of violence. UNICEF is working closely with its government partners to ensure that every child, adolescent and young person is protected and safe. We are in the process of revising Iraq’s child protection law to bring it in line with UNCRC, and we commend the government’s commitment to this process and to making a positive change in young people’s lives. We have

## UNICEF is working closely with its government partners ... (continued)

also worked with Government of Iraq to develop a Child Protection Policy that includes guidelines for reporting incidents and steps that should be taken in order to prevent abuse. In addition, UNICEF is working with social workers, teachers, and law enforcement professionals to build up their capacity to better detect violence and abuse and respond adequately. With the support of Kurdistan Region Government (KRG), we have initiated a child protection system mapping which we plan to expand into other parts of

Iraq. This mapping will allow us to fully understand how the current system is functioning, build up the KRG's child protection system and improve the availability of quality child protection services for every child, adolescent, and young person.

But more needs to be done. Iraqi children, adolescents and young people deserve to be protected, and on this International Youth Day, we at UNICEF is seeking the support of our allies and partners to ensure that this is fulfilled. Children's safety and their

rights must be a primary consideration for all adults who have influence over children's lives. Now more than ever, we are calling on our government partners to invest more in protecting the youth, so that Iraq can fulfill its UNCRC commitment, and every boy and girl in Iraq can grow up with the knowledge that they will be safe, sound, and cared for. The rights of all children and youths need to be fully acknowledged and fully respected so that Iraq can fulfil its UNCRC commitment.

## The youth of Iraq: highlighting the engine of change

**Baghdad, 12 August 2020** - Young people in Iraq are facing constant hurdles. A lack of livelihood opportunities and limited possibilities hinder their ability in striving to lead the development process in their country.

On this International Youth Day, the United Nations family in Iraq celebrates individual initiatives by young women and men, to support communities through the pandemic.

Today, we celebrate the potential and role of these young women and men as the engine of change in society, and the key to leading the country to a better future.

### Volunteering for communities



Hasan is a 24-year-old freelance journalist from Diwaniyah, Qadisiya governorate. Helping his community has always been his passion. In 2017, he became a Peer-Educator with the UNFPA-supported Y-Peer network - helping spread awareness on sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention, as well as human rights and gender-based violence through peer-to-peer education.

Given the ongoing curfews, many people in his community were unable to meet their basic food needs. Despite the lockdown, Hasan mobilized a team of young volunteers to help provide boxes of healthy, fresh vegetables to 7,000 families in his community in Diwaniyah.

"With other volunteers, I managed to

transport boxes of vegetables to vulnerable families, giving them the necessary ingredients to cook a meal without risking their lives to go to the markets. Helping people reminds me that when we join hands and stand together, we can get over the difficult times".

Hasan is proud of being part of this initiative, as he not only helped families but also local Iraqi farmers, who could continue to make a living and sell their produce, even during the pandemic and all its challenges.

UNFPA works on empowering young people, like Hasan, by building their peace-building and leadership skills to better engage with their communities.

### Fundraising for communities



Abdullah (holding a yellow phone) is 19 years old and lives in Anbar governorate, Iraq. COVID-19 has affected his community with almost 500 cases confirmed so far. Abdullah started raising awareness in Ramadi, Anbar governorate after the report of the first COVID-19 case. He got together with other young people and together they ran an awareness-raising campaign in collaboration with the Anbar Health Department to disseminate brochures and key health messages on COVID-19.

So far, they have distributed 1,500 masks, 400 boxes of sanitizers, and 250 boxes of gloves in their community. Following a virtual meeting, they fundraised to buy food and essential

needs for poor families in their neighbourhood. With this, they managed to distribute 450 food baskets plus small funds to sustain the families for a period of 2 months.

"It indeed gave me the sense that we can make a difference in our communities especially when I see the smiles on their faces when we hand over the supplies", Abdullah says.

UNICEF supports young people like Abdullah throughout Iraq to access skills-building programs and promote them as agents of change in their communities.

### Leading for communities



26-year-old Nouredine is a master's student in the Geoscience Department at the University of Baghdad and a civic activist in Anbar governorate. With the spread of COVID-19 in Iraq and the imposed curfew, Nouredine is part of a group of activists who provided support to low-income families in the region. Nouredine's role as a group coordinator is organizing online meetings to brainstorm, discuss and agree on the ideas for initiatives.

"The idea that I am working to achieve a noble goal makes me feel I have a task in this life to fulfil. I remember when I helped others to start the first cultural park in Anbar. These same parks and public spaces used to be training sites from ISIL militants. They were places to urge extremist ideologies and we turned them into places of enlightenment and culture," says



## The youth of Iraq: highlighting the engine of change *(continued)*

Noureddine.

As coordinator for UNDP Iraq's youth and women peace groups in Anbar, Noureddine helped design community-based initiatives to raise awareness about COVID-19 encouraging preventive health measures and promoting coexistence and social solidarity.

UNDP in Iraq focuses on empowering youth by enhancing their participation in decision-making and building their confidence to better engage with communities and local authorities.

### Educating for communities



Hadiya fled her hometown in northeast Syria seven years ago due to the conflict. Soon after, she fell ill with leukaemia. With treatment, and support from her family, she regained her health and went on to have two healthy children. It is something of a miracle to have recovered.

As well as bringing up her young family and teaching part-time online, Hadiya volunteers on an education programme for teenagers in the camp, on subjects in which they were struggling. She also works to raise awareness of refugee experiences and life in the camp. As well as doing media interviews, Hadiya has spoken with a classroom of schoolchildren in London via Skype, sharing her community's stories.

WFP supports families such as Hadiya's with monthly cash assistance to help meet their food requirements, alongside providing digital skills and English training for youth through the EMPACT "Empowerment in Action" scheme.

### Photojournalism for communities



Meet Murad, a young refugee with a big dream. Syrian refugee, Murad took

his first photo at age eight, when a journalist visiting Akre camp where he lives lent him his camera. From that moment on Murad had a dream; to be a professional photographer, to help refugees by telling their stories with photos and to travel the world. "Photos can tell stories that you cannot normally describe by words. Sometimes you will not believe a story until you see it.", Murad said. At 12, Murad doesn't leave the house without his camera he had been gifted by the journalist. Murad excels at school and spends his spare time taking photos of events and people around him, documenting his life as a refugee with photos.

UNHCR and partners support youth by providing them with education, recreational activities, remedial classes and opportunities to learn, train and prepare for a better future.

### Painting for communities



28-year-old Mustafa Anwer is finding ways to carve out creative paths to nurture his artistic talents. Hailing from Tuz Khurmatu in Saladin Governorate, Mustafa is passionate about the creative arts and is using this period to learn new skills such as sculpting, playing the flute, and honing his talent in painting. He has developed an online platform through which he guides young painters on their techniques and strokes. He is eager to transfer his expertise to others and continues to study at the College of Fine Arts - University of Baghdad.

His message to the youth of Iraq is "hold on to your dreams and practice the kindness of sharing and giving back to others", adding that our paths may not always be smooth like walking on a bed of rose petals, but rather our pathways may be laden with bumps and adventure.

The UN in Iraq works towards advocating and implementing youth projects in Iraq.

### Youth Resilience through Art during the COVID-19 Crisis

Samaa (17) is a young painter and

activist from Iraq, who seized the opportunity and harnessed the power of creativity and digital technology during the pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, she had founded a volunteering network called "Life just like a palette" to support young talents and their artworks through workshops and exhibitions. Due to the restrictive measures undertaken to fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the community, recreational activities, particularly exhibitions, had to find new ways to interact with creators and visitors. This is why she decided to apply her organizational, digital and design skills to create an online exhibition titled "Together we face Corona."



"I decided to set up this online exhibition to illustrate young people's ideas in relation to COVID-19 consequences, the lockdown, the importance of barrier gestures and the necessary sanitation measures in case of symptoms. The "Together we face Corona" exhibition gave the spotlight to 44 young people and 64 drawings, art works and pictures. I held the exhibition through our network "Life Just Like a Palette" – a voluntary, educational and artistic network, that I have established with my mother. This network, which has attracted 295 young people and children, provide them with free services such as exhibitions, workshops, and the publication of their drawings on our digital spaces, such as our website and our social media channels.

Having this experience inspired Samaa and encouraged her to expand her work, inviting and connecting even more young people to be part of the "Life just like a palette" network. Art helps Samaa to overcome life challenges, as she was born in difficult medical conditions, that made it impossible for her to walk.

In the uncertain times of the crisis, where all the familiar things have acquired a new reading, the "Together we face Corona" exhibition gave a unique opportunity for young artists to share their ideas and opinions not only about the COVID-19 crisis, but also regarding the shape of the future, introducing them as torchbearers for peace, resilience and support.

## Message from UN Iraq Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert to the Iraqi people on Eid-ul-Adha

**Baghdad, 30 July 2020** - Eid-ul-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, is traditionally a time of giving, compassion and celebration with family and friends. We mark it this year amid COVID-19, which has overwhelmed us all and compounded Iraq's economic, social and political challenges.

But we must not surrender. We all must push on. We must remain hopeful that brighter days lie ahead.

We can all do our part by remaining

disciplined, responsible and optimistic while following the instructions of the health authorities.

Eid-ul-Adha is an opportunity for us to reflect on the many sacrifices we have all made in fighting this disease, especially the brave healthcare workers.

In the spirit of compassion and giving, let us remember the less fortunate, those who remain displaced or have lost loved ones. Let us wish each other

peace, good health and hope for a better future.

Adha Mubarak to all!



## Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano on World Humanitarian Day

**Baghdad, 19 August 2020** - I am honored to mark World Humanitarian Day as one of my first acts as the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. The commemoration has special significance here, as World Humanitarian Day was designated by the United Nations General Assembly in memory of the attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad at the Canal Hotel on 19

August 2003. Many colleagues lost their lives that day, as they worked to support the Iraqi people in a time of crisis.

With serious humanitarian needs having re-emerged in the country in recent years, I wish to give special recognition today to the humanitarian staff working across the country to assist the 4.1 million Iraqis currently in need of assistance. I thank them for

their dedication and service, especially in the face of the operational difficulties imposed by COVID-19. It is my privilege to take up my new role and oversee the humanitarian response in Iraq and to work alongside the "Real Life Heroes" among us on this World Humanitarian Day.

## World Humanitarian Day commemorated in Iraq

**Baghdad, 19 August 2020** - World Humanitarian Day on 19 August of every year honors the humanitarian workers who have given up their lives in the service of peace and humanity.

It is the 17th anniversary of the truck

bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad in which 22 colleagues, including Special Envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello, were killed and more than 150 wounded.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and as

we remember the victims of that tragic day in 2003, we affirm that their sacrifices and dedication to the ideals of the United Nations will always serve as a beacon for us all in fulfilling our duties as staff of this organization.

