

UNAMI Herald

Volume 6, Issue 6

November — December 2019



Protests and civil unrest show 'renewed sense of patriotism' in Iraq, UN envoy tells Security Council

New York, 3 December 2019 - After decades of sectarian strife and conflict, "a renewed sense of patriotism has taken hold", the head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) told the Security Council on Tuesday.

Briefing from Baghdad, Special Envoy Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said that "out of love for their homeland", thousands of Iraqis have taken to the streets, asking for their country to reach its "full potential for the benefit of all Iraqis".

"However", she lamented "they are paying an unimaginable price for their voices to be heard", pointing out that since 1 October, over 400 people have been killed and more than 19,000 injured.

She explained that although today's youth has no recollection of life under the former dictator Saddam Hussein, who was executed after being found guilty of war crimes in Iraq in 2006, they are aware of what was promised after his death and "through the power of connectivity, they know perfectly well that a better future is possible".

"The current situation can hardly be judged without putting it in the context of Iraq's past", Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said, "but what we are witnessing is an accumulation of frustration over the lack of progress for so many years".

'Crisis of confidence'

Since the first night of demonstrations, the Special Envoy recalled that "events spun out of control", with authorities "immediately resorting to excessive force".

"The high loss of life, the many injuries, the violence – combined with this long period of undelivered promises – all resulted in a crisis of confidence", she spelled out.

Although the Government announced various packages addressing the lack of housing, chronic and high unemployment, the need for widespread financial support and education, she noted that these are often perceived as unrealistic or "too little, too late".

'Harsh reality'



The UN official flagged that although "there can be no justification" for the killing and injuring of peaceful protesters, "this is precisely what we have been documenting".

And while the rules of engagement are to minimize the use of lethal force, "the harsh reality" is that live fire, tear gas and unlawful arrests and detentions persist, "as do abductions, threats and intimidation".

Drawing attention to "the critical importance" of full accountability and justice, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert reiterated the significance of guaranteeing fundamental rights, beginning with the right to life, but also to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

She highlighted that media, internet and social media shutdowns add to the "public perception that the authorities have something to hide", stressing that addressing hate speech "does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech".

Noting that most protesters are peacefully seeking a better life, the Special Representative stressed that "it is the primary responsibility of the State to protect its people", spelling out that all forms of violence are intolerable and must not distract from "the rightful demands for reform".

Other shortcomings

Electoral reform, pervasive corruption and an environment conducive to employment and growth are all issues that must be tackled, according to Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert.

While fostering dialogue is imperative, "bloodshed, abductions and unlawful arrests", must be terminated. Moreover, without full accountability and justice, "it will be nearly impossible to convince the people that political leaders are sincerely willing to engage in substantial reform", she underscored.

Turning to the resignation of Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the Special Envoy updated the Chamber that President Barham Salih was given 15 days to replace him.

"While talks about the Prime Minister-designate are ongoing between political leaders, I would like to emphasize the urgency of current circumstances", Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert asserted. "Political leaders do not have the luxury of time and must rise to the moment".

She emphasized that "a Government cannot go it alone" but is instead "a collective responsibility of the political class as a whole".

Iraq at 'a crossroads'

In closing, the UNAMI head argued that the country is as at a crossroads that cannot be resolved by "buying time with band-aid solutions and coercive measures".

She called on Iraqis to build a sovereign, stable, inclusive and prosperous country: "Now is the time to act", Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert concluded. "The great hopes of so many Iraqis call for bold, forward thinking".

By UN News

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Human rights violations ongoing: UN Second Special Report on protests in Iraq

Baghdad, 5 November 2019 – UNAMI has found that serious human rights violations and abuses continued to occur during the second wave of demonstrations that started in Iraq on 25 October. A second report, prepared by the UNAMI Human Rights Office, was published today. It follows an earlier special report which covered the 1-9 October protests and was published on 22 October... *More on page 5*

SRSO Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert statement at the meeting of the Presidency of the Council of Representatives and heads of parliamentary blocs

Baghdad, 13 November 2019 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today the meeting of the Presidency of the Council of Representatives and heads of parliamentary blocs. Here is the text of her statement made at the meeting ... *More on page 8*

Next step

Baghdad, 10 November 2019

- Over the past weeks, demonstrations erupted in Baghdad and other governorates in Iraq. Protester demands cover a wide spectrum of issues, including economic growth and employment, reliable public services, prudent and impartial governance, an end to corruption, credible elections as well as broader reform of the political system - including amendments to the constitution... *More on page 6*

France welcomes final Yazidi families from Iraq through Humanitarian Admissions Programme

Paris/Erbil, 22 November 2019 - One hundred members of Iraq's Yazidi community arrived safely in Paris, France, on Wednesday (20/11), the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) final operation in support of French President Emmanuel Macron's 2018 commitment to receive 100 families from the ethno-religious minority group... *More on page 34*

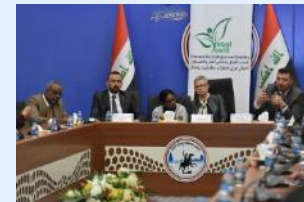
Victims' Testimony Steering United Nations Team Investigating ISIL/Da'esh Atrocity Crimes in Iraq, Special Adviser Tells Security Council

New York, 26 November 2019 - Testimony from victims of terrorist crimes in Iraq — including mass murder, abductions and sexual slavery — is now steering the work of a newly operational United Nations investigative team, its chief told the Security Council today, while also outlining a range of forensics and other tools being used to build cases against perpetrators... *More on page 28*



Partners and leaders to build a peaceful, sustainable future Iraq

Salah al-Din, 21 December 2019 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in cooperation with the national Committee for Coexistence and Societal Peace and the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, organized a workshop in Salah al-Din governorate from 19 to 21 December for a group of Iraqi youth under the ongoing project "Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability"... *More on page 13*



Erbil's cyclists roll through the city for the Ride On! Marathon

Erbil, 13 December 2019 - More than 300 bikers from different backgrounds, including 140 women, took part in the Ride On! Erbil International Bike Marathon on 13 December 2019. The race was the second annual bike marathon in the city... *More on page 16*

UNAMI Herald is published bi-monthly by the Public Information Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

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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

New York, 03 December 2019 – The United Nations Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8676th meeting. Here is the text (as delivered) of the briefing to the Security Council by Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq:

Madam President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

In recent months, I have consistently referred to urgent unfinished domestic business in Iraq. Perhaps inevitably, today I will brief on protests and civil unrest.

Protests, initially driven by young people in particular. Giving voice to their frustration with poor economic, social and political prospects. Giving voice to their great hopes for better times. Away from corruption and partisan interests. Away from foreign interference.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis - from all walks of life - took to the streets, out of love for their homeland, emphasizing their Iraqi identity. All they are asking for is a country reaching its full potential for the benefit of all Iraqis.

However, they are paying an unimaginable price for their voices to be heard. Since early October, over 400 people have been killed and over 19,000 have been injured.

As we commemorate the fallen and pay our respects, their ideals and demands remain more alive than ever.

One of the protesters told me in the clearest of terms:

“A life in dignity and freedom. Or no life. This is what the protests are all about”.

Last week I visited a hospital in Baghdad and met with a 16-year-old boy, heavily injured by shrapnel. His mother said: “The lack of any prospect makes our teenagers desperate. It makes them think and act at least twice their age”.

Her son is only 16 years old. But 16 years is a very long time if one is waiting for political leaders to live up to their promises.

Now, these young people have no recollection of how horrific life was for many Iraqis in the time of Saddam Hussein. However, they are very much aware of the life that was promised after Saddam Hussein. And through the power of connectivity, they know perfectly well that a better future is possible.

I often said: the current situation can hardly be judged without putting it in the context of Iraq's past. But what we



are witnessing is an accumulation of frustration over the lack of progress for so many years.

After years - even decades - of sectarian strife and conflict, a renewed sense of patriotism has taken hold. Symbolized by the 16-year-old boy I met in hospital, as well as his countless brothers and sisters demonstrating in Iraq. Some well-known Iraqis refer to it as the ‘battle of a nation’.

And let me underline: any successful nation needs to warmly embrace the potential of its young people. This is all the more important in Iraq, with its remarkably young population.

Madam President, events spun out of control on the very first night of the demonstrations - with authorities immediately resorting to excessive force.

The high loss of life, the many injuries, the violence - combined with this long period of undelivered promises - all resulted in a crisis of confidence.

Although the Government announced various reform packages addressing issues such as housing, unemployment, financial support and education - these are often perceived as unrealistic or ‘too little, too late’.

Additionally, the Government's investigation into the violence of early October is seen as incomplete. Who is smashing media outlets? Gunning down peaceful protesters? Abducting civil activists? Who are these masked men, unidentified snipers, unknown armed actors?

I do note that a number of arrest warrants have been issued, but I would like to emphasize that perpetrators must be brought to full account.

Now, Madam President, there can be no justification for the many killings and heavy injuries of peaceful protesters. Yet this is precisely what we have

been documenting since the first of October.

The rules of engagement were reviewed to minimize the use of lethal force - and indeed, more restraint was observed at the start of the second wave of demonstrations, in Baghdad in particular.

Yet the harsh reality is that the use of live fire has not been abandoned, that non-lethal devices - such as tear gas canisters - continue to be used improperly causing horrific injuries or death, that unlawful arrests and detentions continue to take place - as do abductions, threats and intimidation. The recent events in Nasiriyah and Najaf are a case in point.

Therefore, I wish to reiterate the importance of guaranteeing fundamental rights. Above all the right to life, but also the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. Additionally, I wish to (again) stress the critical importance of full accountability and justice - at all levels.

Also important to note: the shutdown of media outlets, internet and social media adds to the public perception that the authorities have something to hide. Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech.

Another grave concern, Madam President, is the encroachment of power dynamics - trying to hijack the peaceful protests.

Acts of violence that are politically motivated, gang-driven or arising from external loyalties, risk placing Iraq on a dangerous trajectory, sowing chaos and confusion - including the further loss of life and the destruction of public and private property.

This gravely undermines the rightful demands of the Iraqi people. It compli-

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq *(continued)*

cates the work of the security forces. And it provides a cynical excuse for political inaction or worse: an excuse for all kinds of conspiracies to justify violent crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations.

To be perfectly clear: the vast majority of protesters are evidently peaceful. Everyday men and women seeking a better life. And let me emphasize: it is the primary responsibility of the State to protect its people.

In other words: Any and all forms of violence are intolerable, and must not distract from the rightful demands for reform. This would compromise the State even further.

It would only harm an already gravely eroded public trust - further narrowing the Government's ability to reform. And this ability grows weaker every time a peaceful protester is killed or injured.

Madam President, the weight of Iraq's past and the immensity of current issues would surely be challenging to any Government's ability to act, and to act fast.

However, the shortcomings are longstanding and painfully real. To give you a few examples:

Free, fair and credible elections: the call for electoral reform reverberates all over Iraq. Iraqis call for independent and impartial electoral management, for changes in the electoral system to bring voters closer to their candidates and to make their elected representatives duly accountable.

Secondly, pervasive corruption: we have heard plenty of words and gestures, but have seen fewer concrete outcomes. The political class will need to lead by example, for instance by publicly disclosing their assets and by abolishing their so-called 'economic offices'. I cannot overstate that anti-corruption efforts in Iraq will be key to unlocking immense social, economic and political potential. Without meaningful progress here, we risk treading water on nearly every other front.

A related key demand of the demonstrators is an environment conducive to employment and growth. While this is one of the best remedies against unrest and conflict, we have seen precious little in terms of implementation.

Madam President, some three weeks ago, following consultations with a wide range of Iraqis, including protesters and authorities, we proposed a number of steps as a way forward. And further initiatives to foster dialogue are ongoing or on their way.

But for this dialogue to succeed, the protesters' conditions are clear: an end to the bloodshed, abductions and unlawful arrests.

Also, it must be understood that without full accountability and justice - it will be nearly impossible to convince the people that political leaders are sincerely willing to engage in substantial reform.

And while I acknowledge that a collective protesters' movement does not necessarily recognize central leadership, some structure and coordination on the part of the peaceful protesters will prove of great importance as well.

Madam President, the Prime Minister's resignation was accepted by Parliament last Sunday. Today, the Speaker asked the President to designate a new Prime Minister - he will have 15 days to do so. In turn, the Prime Minister-designate will have 30 days to form a government.

While talks about the Prime Minister-designate are ongoing between political leaders, I would like to emphasize the urgency of current circumstances. Political leaders do not have the luxury of time and must rise to the moment.

Moreover, they will have to come clean in public and advance real solutions, instead of leaving it to a Prime Minister with little or no support. I have always emphasized that a Government cannot go it alone. It is a collective responsibility of the political class as a whole.

With your permission, Madam President, I will now briefly turn to Baghdad-Erbil relations. Another critical file. As I said in earlier briefings: relations are surely on an upswing, but I must repeat that, to date, this has not materialized in the form of real breakthroughs on the ground.

In Sinjar, we continue to face major

restrictions to our humanitarian action. Erbil and Baghdad are duty-bound to establish a single administration and stable security structures. Their ongoing failure to agree can no longer be explained nor tolerated.

Another concern is the situation in Dohuk governorate: over 16,000 Syrian refugees have arrived so far, and more continue to arrive on a daily basis. Nine years into the Syrian conflict, we did not expect to open new refugee camps in Iraq. And let's not forget: they add to the quarter million Syrians already being hosted in the Kurdish region.

Now, while the protests dominate our attention, we should not forget the legacy of yesterday's fight against ISIL. As we speak, a new disaster is in the making. On many occasions, I have stated that the situation in camps (such as al-Hawl) is not sustainable. Transnational threats demand collective action, but instead we are seeing a frankly shocking lack of international long-term thinking.

Madam President, I would now like to turn to the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

Despite the domestic crisis, I am pleased to report that, on October 27, Iraq handed over approximately 200,000 books belonging to the Kuwaiti National Library and Kuwait University.

I would also like to commend the difficult work carried out by Kuwaiti forensic experts in the ongoing identification process of the human remains that were found earlier this year in the Samawah desert. I truly hope that these efforts can soon be completed, delivering some closure to relatives.

A final word, Madam President, on the ongoing demonstrations in Iraq. The



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country is as at a crossroads.

In my meeting with Grand Ayatollah Sistani, he expressed concern that relevant actors might not be serious enough to implement any meaningful reform. He added that “the situation cannot continue as it was before the demonstrations”.

Very true.

Meanwhile, the protesters appear determined to persevere as long as their

demands remain unheeded.

The situation cannot be resolved by buying time with band-aid solutions and coercive measures: this approach will only further fuel public anger and distrust.

Pursuing partisan interests, muddling through or brutally cracking down on peaceful protesters: these are no strategies at all. And nothing is more damaging than a climate of anger and fear.

We must not let history repeat itself.

Out of any crisis, new and great opportunities can emerge. Iraq is not a lost cause. Far from it. It has immense potential.

The challenge is to seize this opportunity and to build a sovereign, stable, inclusive and prosperous Iraq. Now is the time to act. The great hopes of so many Iraqis call for bold, forward thinking.

Thank you very much.

Demonstrations

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 4 November 2019 - Appalled by continued bloodshed in Iraq. People’s high frustration not to be underestimated or misread. Violence only

begets violence, peaceful demonstrators must be protected. It is high time for national dialogue.



Human rights violations ongoing: UN Second Special Report on protests in Iraq

Baghdad, 5 November 2019 – UNAMI has found that serious human rights violations and abuses continued to occur during the second wave of demonstrations that started in Iraq on 25 October. A second report, prepared by the UNAMI Human Rights Office, was published today. It follows an earlier special report which covered the 1-9 October protests and was published on 22 October.

The latest report indicates that demonstration-related violence from 25 October to 4 November caused at least 97 further deaths, and thousands of injuries. Although Iraqi security forces displayed more restraint than in the early October protests, particularly in Baghdad, the unlawful use of lethal and less-

lethal weapons by security forces and armed elements requires urgent attention.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, stated: “This report also highlights areas where immediate action is needed to stop the vicious circle of violence, and stresses once again the imperative of accountability”.

The report attributes at least 16 deaths – and many serious injuries – to demonstrators being struck by tear gas canisters. “There is no justification for security forces to fire tear gas canisters or sound and flash devices directly at unarmed demonstrators”, said Danielle Bell, Chief of the UNAMI Human

Rights Office.

The report furthermore highlights concerns regarding continued efforts to suppress media coverage as well as an ongoing block on social media. Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert added: “We must recognise that in today’s digital age, daily life has moved online. A blanket shutdown of internet and social media is not only disruptive to the way people live their lives and do business: it infringes freedom of expression”.

The respective reports are also available for download from the UNIraq website at the following links:

English: <https://bit.ly/2pQthnR>

Arabic: <https://bit.ly/2PV2KAm>

SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert meets Minister of Foreign Affairs

Baghdad, 5 November 2019 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Mr. Mohammed Ali al-Hakim. They discussed the current political situation in the country, and the government measures to address the demands of the demonstrators, and ways in which the UN can support and assist Iraq in achieving stability.



Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on demonstrations in Iraq

New York, 6 November 2019 - The Secretary-General expresses his serious concern over the rising number of deaths and injuries during the ongoing demonstrations in Iraq. Reports of the continued

use of live ammunition against demonstrators are disturbing.

The Secretary-General urges all actors to refrain from violence and to investigate all acts of violence seriously. He renews

his appeal for meaningful dialogue between the Government and demonstrators.

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 6 November 2019 - Disruption of critical infrastructure also of grave concern. Responsibility of all to

protect public facilities. Threats/closures of roads to oil installations, ports causing billions in losses.

Detrimental to Iraq's economy, undermines fulfilling protesters' legitimate demands.

Baghdad, 7 November 2019 - Addressing allegations of bias: the UN is a

partner for each and every Iraqi seeking change. Standing together, Iraqis

can make their country a better place, and we are here to support.

Baghdad, 9 November 2019 - Receiving daily reports of killings, kidnap-

pings, arbitrary arrests, beatings and intimidation of protesters. Fundamen-

tal rights consistently being violated. Climate of fear is not the way forward.

High Commissioner for Human Rights gravely concerned about continuing reports of deaths and injuries resulting from the use of force by security forces against demonstrators

Geneva, 8 November 2019 - Excerpts from the briefing by the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Rupert Colville related to Iraq:

We are gravely concerned about continuing reports of deaths and injuries resulting from the use of force by security forces against demonstrators, as well as deliberate killings by armed elements in Iraq. Between 1 October and last night, the Human Rights Office for the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq has documented 269 deaths in the context of demonstrations across the country. At least 8,000 others have reportedly been injured, including members of the Iraqi security forces. The exact casualty figures may be much higher. The majority of the casualties have resulted from the use of live ammunition by security forces and armed elements, described by many as private militia groups, as well as the unnecessary, disproportionate or improper use of less-lethal weapons such as tear gas.

Protests have continued this week in Baghdad, and deaths and injuries have been documented during demonstrations in

Baghdad, Basra, Dhi Qar and Karbala. Just this morning, we received reports of five protesters killed during demonstrations in front of the Governorate building in Basra last night. On Wednesday this week, a civil society activist was shot and killed, and another injured by armed elements on the way home from a demonstration in Missan. We are also following up on reports of multiple arrests of demonstrators and activists, as well as bloggers and social media commentators, but there has been a lack of transparency, making these reports difficult to follow up on.

We are alarmed by reports of the abduction, by unknown perpetrators, of protesters or volunteers providing assistance in the demonstrations. These allegations should be promptly investigated, the whereabouts of those missing clarified and those responsible held to account.

We are disturbed by the statement by the High Judicial Council in Iraq that the Federal Anti-Terrorism Law would be applicable against those resorting to violence, sabotaging public property and using firearms against security forces - these are

acts of terrorism that may be punishable by death.

We urge the Iraqi Government to ensure it complies with its obligation to protect the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly. This means taking preventive steps to protect demonstrators from armed elements, as well as issuing clear instructions to security forces to abide by international norms and standards on the use of force, including for example, an explicit prohibition on the shooting of tear gas canisters directly at demonstrators.

Immediate steps must be taken to investigate and prosecute those responsible for these killings, and justice and truth should be provided for the victims and their families. It is crucial that terrorism charges are not used against demonstrators.

We call on the authorities to take firm steps towards a meaningful dialogue in Iraq, to take stock of the many grievances and work with a broad range of actors towards a sustainable resolution to the many challenges Iraq faces. We stand ready to assist.

Next step

Baghdad, 10 November 2019 - Over the past weeks, demonstrations erupted in Baghdad and other governorates in Iraq. Protester demands cover a wide spectrum of issues, including economic growth and employment, reliable public services, prudent and impartial governance, an end to corruption, credible elections as well as broader reform of the political system - including amendments to the constitution.

An accumulation of frustrations about the lack of progress in the last 16 years is clearly perceptible, and with rising numbers of deaths and injured (both

protesters and members of the Iraqi Security Forces) a climate of anger and fear has set in. The Iraqi people cannot afford to be held back by the past nor by partisan interests. Rising hope asks for a leap forward, including the understanding that - in today's digital age - daily life has moved online. Meanwhile, the risk of 'spoilers' hijacking peaceful demonstrations is increasing and potentially derailing any attempt at genuine change. Time is therefore of the essence, as are tangible results.

To start with, and following consultations with a wide range of Iraqi parties,

actors and authorities (including the three Presidencies, the Supreme Judicial Council, protesters and union representatives), the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) proposes the following principles and measures:

PRINCIPLES

The following principles apply to all parties at all times:

1. Protect the right to life above all.
2. Guarantee the right to peaceful assembly, demonstration and freedom of expression, as granted in the constitu-

Next step *(continued)*

tion.

3. Practice maximum restraint in the handling of the protests, including no use of live ammunition, ban the improper use of non-lethal devices (such as tear gas canisters).

4. Deliver full accountability for perpetrators and redress for victims.

5. Act in keeping with the law, including in regard to public and private properties.

MEASURES

Immediate measures (less than a week) include:

1. Release all peaceful demonstrators detained since 1 October, in accordance with the law.

2. No peaceful demonstrators shall be targeted.

3. Initiate full investigation of cases of abduction (including by making available CCTV footage) and reveal the identity of those responsible.

4. Accelerate the identification and prosecution of those responsible for targeting demonstrators.

5. Prosecute and punish those responsible for the excessive use of force and/or other violent acts, in accordance with the law.

6. Publicly call on all regional and international parties not to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs, respecting its sovereignty.

Short term measures (within one week to two weeks) include:

1. Electoral reform: With the technical support of the UN, a single legal framework shall be finalized. Soon after, the framework shall be submitted to the Council of Representatives (CoR). The parliamentary procedure shall be completed as soon as possible.

2. Security Sector Reform: Executive Order 237 shall be fully implemented without delay. Any weapons outside state control shall be prohibited. Any outlaw armed entity or rogue element shall be considered illegal and it is the state's responsibility to take them on.

3. Corruption: The political elite shall lead by example, for instance by publicly declaring their assets – at home and abroad, held under their own name or another. Additionally, political parties/blocs and movements shall abolish their economic committees.

Medium term measures (within one to three months) include:

1. Constitution: With the technical support of the UN, the Constitutional Review Committee shall continue its work. Any amendment to the constitution shall be put to referendum by the people of Iraq.

2. Corruption: The Commission of Integrity shall submit corruption cases to the High Judicial Council or the Central Anti-Corruption Court. The Central Anti-Corruption Court shall handle corruption cases at all levels of the state. All corrupt officials will be held accountable and prosecuted.

3. Enactment of laws: The Government shall send the following draft laws to the CoR, and the CoR shall complete its due process as soon as possible:

a. A law addressing the principle: 'Where did you get this from?'

b. The Federal Court Law

c. The Social Security Law

d. Law on resolving the Housing Crisis

e. The Oil and Gas (Hydrocarbon) Law
f. Amending the Law on Encouraging Investments and Public-Private Sector Partnership

g. The Council of Ministers and Ministries Law

h. The Reconstruction Council Law

His Eminence Al-Sistani receives SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert

Najaf, 11 November 2019 - Today, His Eminence Al-Sayyid Ali Al-Husseini Al-Sistani received the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert.

Photo courtesy of the Office of His Eminence.



SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert met with heads of Iraqi unions and syndicates

Baghdad, 12 November 2019 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with heads of Iraqi unions and syndicates. They discussed the current political

situation in the country, including the ongoing demonstrations and possible solutions.



SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert statement at the meeting of the Presidency of the Council of Representatives and heads of parliamentary blocs

Baghdad, 13 November 2019 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today the meeting of the Presidency of the Council of Representatives and heads of parliamentary blocs. Here is the text of her statement made at the meeting:

Mr. Speaker,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, thank you for this opportunity to be with you today, and to exchange views after an introductory statement on my behalf, to exchange views at - I think what we can all agree - is a critical juncture for the people of Iraq.

However, before I continue, I would like to invite you to join me in a moment of silence, to pay our respects to all those who recently lost their lives or were injured. So, I would like you to pay - with me - tribute to them, and to observe this moment of silence for a minute.

Thank you so much. And although I realise that no words can heal the pain of losing a loved one, I would also like to express my deepest sympathies to the families, of both peaceful protesters and members of security forces. Our thoughts are with you.

Now while we commemorate the fallen - their ideals and demands remain the same. Over the past six weeks, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis - peaceful Iraqis - have been protesting - making genuine, legitimate, demands, loud and clear.

And very true, these demands cover a wide spectrum of issues: an end to corruption, economic growth, employment, reliable public services, prudent and impartial governance, credible elections - as well as a broader reform of the political system, including amendments to the Constitution.

But above all, I think that we can all agree here that many, many, Iraqis are asking for a brighter future - for the country to reach its full potential for the benefit of all Iraqi citizens.

Meanwhile, however, the Iraqi people have paid an unthinkable price to get their voices heard. Since the start of the protests on the first of October, at least 319 people have been killed and around fifteen thousand have been injured, peaceful protesters and members of the security forces.



To date the UN, UNAMI, has published two special reports on human rights issues. And despite the many promises, the harsh reality is that we continue to receive daily reports of new killings, new kidnappings, new arbitrary arrests, new beatings and new threats. I have said it many times – and I will do so again: violence only breeds violence. It should stop, and it should stop now.

A number of peaceful protesters told me last Monday: “We lost our brothers, our friends, our sons. Yet, we had no time to cry. We will not let go. A life in dignity and freedom...or no life. We started peacefully and are determined to continue in a peaceful way”, so they said.

Now, with all this in mind, I wish to reiterate, also in your presence, the importance of guaranteeing fundamental rights: above all the right to life, but also the right to peaceful assembly and to freedom of expression. And I wish to reiterate the importance of delivering full accountability and justice - at the right levels.

Also, the respect for these basic, fundamental rights and principles is – in a way - an essential pre-condition to any form of meaningful dialogue or mediation.

Legitimate, genuine demands deserve meaningful responses and active engagement - both in this House and on the streets.

Mr. Speaker already referred to it, to the paper we published a while ago. From the beginning of the protests, UNAMI has actively reached out to a wide range of Iraqi parties, actors and authorities - including the three Presidencies, the Supreme Judicial Council, peaceful protesters, Members of Parliament and Union Representatives.

Based on these discussions, and with full respect for Iraq’s sovereignty, we have proposed a number of concrete steps as a start - as a way forward to confidence-building and reform.

And, most important to emphasise is that now is the time to act, otherwise any momentum will be lost - lost at a time when many, many Iraqis demand concrete results.

You know, as a former Member of Parliament, I believe I can safely state that your role - in your position as a Member of Parliament - elected by the people and also accountable to them – that your role is of utmost importance.

You are important in reaching out to the people, in making their voices heard, in moving forward on key reforms.

And we all know that nothing is more detrimental to public trust than overpromising and underdelivering. Nothing is more harmful than saying A but doing B. And nothing is more damaging than a climate of anger and fear.

Also, it must be understood that daily life has moved online. The disruptions or even blanket shutdowns of internet and/or social media - in recent weeks - were not only unworthy of Iraq’s potential as a free and democratic society, but they were also extremely disruptive to the way people live their lives, they do business and speak their minds. In other words: unrestricted access to the internet is an essential right in today’s digital world. And I am also happy to note that last night I was still having access to the internet. So I would like to emphasise as well that we welcome the restoration of internet access throughout Iraq, and very much hope that this will remain the case, and that unrestricted access to social media will fol-

SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert statement ... (continued)

low soon.

Another subject that has received much attention in recent weeks, is Iraq's electoral processes.

In fact, the call to overhaul, in a way, Iraq's electoral processes is a key demand for many. It is a call for independent and impartial electoral management.

Accordingly, and with the technical assistance of the UN, a lot of work has been done to arrive at a single consolidated electoral legal framework. Now, without wanting to pre-empt parliamentary due processes, and without going into details right now, I would like to emphasize the urgent need for such single legal framework, grouping all relevant laws and bringing the voter closer to the candidates.

UNAMI, the UN, was also asked to provide technical support to the ongoing processes to review and amend the constitution, a review process that - at the end of the day - must be accepted by all Iraqis.

What I witnessed on the streets in the past few days is an accumulation of frustration over the lack of progress in the last 16 years. The desire for an Iraqi identity is obvious. Out of love for their homeland, the many young people on the streets are expressing their hope for better times to come.

Better times for all Iraqis: away from corruption and sectarian quotas, away from unemployment and a lack of basic

services. Now, these great hopes call for forward thinking. Pursuing private or partisan interests might be strategy, but it is not a very solid strategy - far from it.

Please don't get me wrong: because painting a grim picture is never a goal in itself. And as I often said: the current situation cannot be judged without putting it in the context of Iraq's past. But I would say that it is high time to build on today's hopes - it is high time to prioritize the country's interests above all else.

The young people are asking for nothing more than a better future. And I am convinced that you are part of the solution. The government cannot go it alone. It is a collective responsibility in a way, a responsibility for the whole political class.

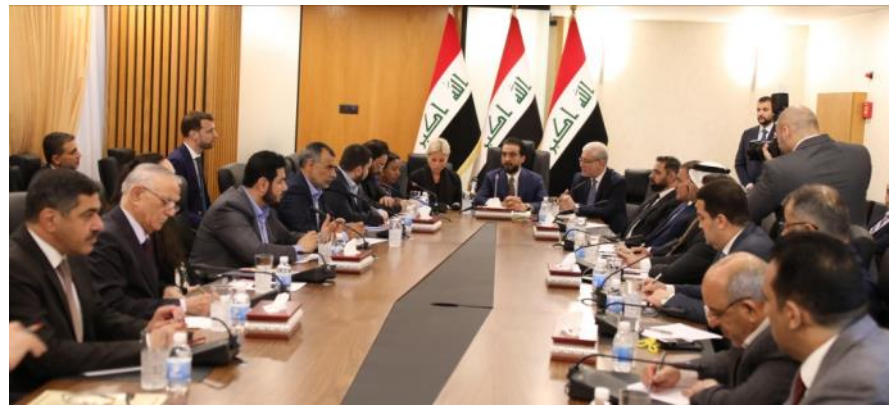
And yes, I am very much aware of the

fact that Iraq's daunting challenges did not arise overnight, nor are they solely the product of Iraqi actions. As such, they will not be resolved 'just like that', right? But with great determination and concerted, decisive action - it must be possible. It must be possible to rise to the moment and meet the aspirations of the young.

Once again, and with full respect again for Iraq's sovereignty, the United Nations is ready to engage or continues to engage with all parties to facilitate constructive dialogue. We will continue to be a partner for all Iraqis.

In closing, I would like to underline that I sincerely hope that your choices, actions and statements will allay the fears of the Iraqi people - that your choices will restore their hope in a brighter future tomorrow.

Thank you so much.



Participation and contribution of Iraqi women to the national discussion explored on the WAG meeting

Baghdad, 14 November 2019 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, today met with members of the Women's Advisory Group, a group of female Iraqi civil society activists and experts who

regularly advise UNAMI on political, legal, social, cultural and human rights issues.

The meeting focused on the valuable participation and contribution of Iraqi women to the national discussion arising from demands made during the ongoing public protests.

Participants at the meeting emphasized the importance of using the proposed political, constitutional and electoral reform processes to advance women's rights in the political, social and economic spheres.



Tweets by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert

Baghdad, 19 November 2019 - SRSJ Hennis-Plasschaert in meetings with authorities: "I reiterated urgency of

protecting peaceful protesters, identifying violent spoilers & ending arbitrary arrests. Now is the time to act, incl. on

meaningful reforms (such as electoral framework). Window dressing will not do."

Baghdad, 21 November 2019 - UN-AMI welcomes the lifting of the weeks-

long ban on social media. Access to social media is essential for people to

keep informed, speak their mind, exchange views and do business.

Baghdad, 24 November 2019 — "Visit to al-Kindi hospital: moving conversations with injured peaceful protesters determined to achieve freedom and dignity. Greatest respect for medical staff working tirelessly under difficult circumstances."



Baghdad, 26 November 2019 — Visited the Neurosurgery Teaching Hospital in Baghdad. Remarkable work in a most challenging environment by medical staff for whom I have the greatest respect. Extremely saddened to witness the horrific injuries. Freedom of expression should never come at this price".



Excerpt on Iraq from the daily press briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General

New York, 26 November 2019 - The following is a near verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary General:

****Iraq**

As part of her continued efforts in the search for political solutions for Iraq's crisis, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, has held separate meetings with the President of Iraq, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives. She stressed the need to reflect the people's legitimate call for electoral reforms in the legislation that is currently under review by the Council of Representatives. The Special Representative also recently visited two hospitals in Baghdad, where she met some of the people who had been injured during the protests, and she also spoke with some of the health-care workers.

****Security Council**

Back here in the Security Council, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, the Special Adviser and Head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh (UNITAD), briefed the Security Council this morning. Mr. Khan told the Council that the Investigative Team has continued to ensure that the experiences and the needs of the survivors of Da'esh crimes, and the families of its victims, are placed at the centre of its work. He said that, one year following the arrival in Iraq, the Team is now fully operational.

****Questions and Answers**

Question: Thank you, Stéphane. Today, you know, because of the meeting of ISIS accountability, I want to ask you about this. As you know, the work of the team is to gather evidence mainly, but the biggest question is not ad-

ressed yet — what to do with these foreign ISIS fighters that, some of them, this evidence shows that they are... committed these crimes. Should there be a multilateral solution for this? Should they just be returned to their countries, mostly in Europe? I wanted to know, what is the Secretary-General's position about this? Does he think there should be a multilateral solution for the issue of foreign terrorist fighters in Syria and in Iraq?

Spokesman: I think what the Secretary-General has said publicly not too long ago is there needs to be better cooperation, global cooperation, on this issue. There needs to be accountability. There also needs to be respect for human rights, in the sense of anyone who's accused also has certain rights. I think, as Mr. Khan said in his remarks, they have been cooperating with Iraq. They've also been cooperating with a number of other countries in order to help them prosecute these horrendous crimes.

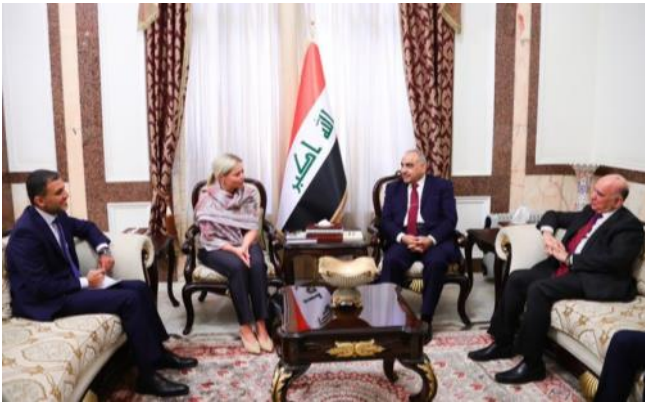
The Secretary-General is deeply concerned over reports of the continued use of live ammunition against demonstrators in Iraq

New York, 28 November 2019 - The Secretary-General is deeply concerned over reports of the continued use of live ammunition against demonstrators in Iraq, which has led to a rising number of deaths and injuries, including today in Nasiriyah. He urges all actors to refrain from violence and to engage in

peaceful and meaningful dialogue for the benefit of Iraq and the Iraqi people. The Secretary-General reiterates his call on the Iraqi authorities to exercise maximum restraint, protect the lives of demonstrators, respect the rights to freedom of expression and assembly, and swiftly to investigate all acts of

violence.

The Secretary-General also reminds the Iraqi authorities of their obligation to protect diplomatic and consular facilities and personnel, as well as public and private property.



Baghdad, 30 November 2019 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi. They discussed the current political situation in the country. Photo courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister.



Baghdad, 4 December 2019 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the head and members of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR).

UN strongly condemns attacks by armed entities on peaceful protesters

Baghdad, 7 December 2019 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, condemns in the strongest terms the shooting of unarmed protesters in central Baghdad on Friday night, which left a high number of deaths and injuries among innocent citizens: “The deliberate killing of unarmed protesters by armed elements is nothing less than an atrocity against the people of Iraq. The perpetrators must be identified and brought to justice without delay”.

The Special Representative urges Iraqi Armed Forces to spare no effort to protect the peaceful protesters from violence by armed elements operating outside state control. She calls on peaceful protesters to cooperate constructively to ensure the peaceful protests can be duly protected.



Baghdad, 8 December 2019 – The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today in Baghdad by H.E. Dr Barham Salih, President of the Republic of Iraq. Discussion centered on the current political and security developments in the country.

Acts of violence that are gang-driven, arising from external loyalties, politically motivated or intended to settle scores, risk placing Iraq on a dangerous trajectory. It is essential to join hands in defending fundamental rights, such

as the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of speech.

The Special Representative expresses her deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

UNAMI Third special report on the demonstrations in Iraq issued today

Baghdad, 11 December 2019 – UNAMI issued today the third Special Report on the demonstration in Iraq. The report was prepared by the UNAMI Human Rights Office and it follows two earlier special reports published on 22 October and 5 November 2019.

UNAMI third Special Report on the demonstrations in Iraq is available at <https://bit.ly/2pQthnR>



Tweet by UNAMI

Baghdad, 12 December 2019 - Events in Wathba square another absolute low. Violence, abductions and bar-

barism must stop. Call on security forces to ensure full protection of peaceful demonstrators. Perpetrators must be

brought to justice.



UN Security Council Press Statement on Iraq

New York, 13 December 2019 - The members of the Security Council welcomed efforts for an inclusive dialogue between the Government and people of Iraq to urgently deliver reforms aimed at addressing legitimate demands over economic opportunity, governance, and electoral legislation. The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, and prosperity of Iraq.

The members of the Security Council expressed grave concern at the loss of life of those demonstrating and at the killing, maiming, and arbitrary arrests of unarmed demonstrators. The members of the Security Council acknowledged the right to peaceful assembly in Iraq and called for Iraqi authorities to promptly conduct transparent investigations into the violence against those demonstrating. They expressed concern over the killing or maiming of unarmed demonstrators and security forces. The members of the Security Council ex-

pressed concern over the involvement of armed groups in extrajudicial killings and kidnappings. The members of the Security Council called for maximum restraint and urged all to refrain from violence or the destruction of critical infrastructure.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed their support for efforts led by the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Henniss-Plasschaert, in accordance with resolution 2470 (2019), to support and assist the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi people with inclusive political dialogue, national- and community-level reconciliation, and electoral assistance to the Government of Iraq and Independent High Electoral Commission.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for Iraq's continued post-conflict recovery, stabilization, reconstruction, reconciliation, development, and reform efforts to meet the needs of all Iraqis and reaf-

firmed the security of Iraq, particularly in light of Iraq's territorial victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh). The members of the Security Council recognized the importance of the Government of Iraq upholding the values set forth in the Iraqi Constitution and responding to the needs of all Iraqis, including women, youth, children, displaced persons and persons belonging to all ethnic and religious groups.



Appointment of PM-designate: now is the time to act in the interest of the Iraqi people

Baghdad, 18 December 2019 - As the constitutional timeline for the nomination of the Prime Minister-designate expires tomorrow, UNAMI urges political leaders to reach consensus on the nomination of a candidate who meets the expectations and aspirations of the Iraqi people. The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Henniss-Plasschaert, emphasizes the urgency of

current circumstances: "At this stage, time is of the essence, and the situation calls for decisive action. Iraq cannot afford band-aid solutions or coercive measures".

While talks about the Prime Minister-designate are ongoing, the country faces an emerging pattern of abductions and targeted killings of human rights defenders and demonstrators. SRSG Henniss-Plasschaert: "It is the ultimate

responsibility of the State to protect its people. Abductions, unlawful arrests and heinous killings have no place in a democracy. They must not become 'the new normal' in Iraq". Iraq's political leaders must assume this responsibility by responding to the rightful demands for reform without further delay."



Youth come together to discuss issues of reconciliation and stability



Kirkuk, 12 December 2019 - Twenty-four young women and men, representing the youth of Kirkuk Governorate, recently met in Kirkuk city to discuss what the youth see as key issues in the context of their Governorate.

In the presence of the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Kirkuk Office, Ms. Laura Romanazzi, the Acting Governor of Kirkuk, Mr. Rakan Al-Jubouri, several local officials, politicians and UNAMI representatives from the Office of Political Affairs, the energetic and inspiring

youth delegates discussed issues pertaining to unemployment, youth participation in decision making and supporting youth projects, the current security situation in the country, provision of basic services including the right to education, combatting corruption and the role of oversight institutions.

In her address to the workshop, Ms. Laura Romanazzi said that Kirkuk was “a Governorate which showcases all of the complexity, diversity, potential, conflict and promise of Iraq”. Therefore, “inclusive and honest discussions must

take place between communities to address past legacies”. This, she added, “cannot be done without the political, social and economic participation of young people - and your involvement in reconciliation efforts to bridge differences and address grievances”.

The youth workshop held from 13-15 December 2019 was organised by UN-AMI, in cooperation with the Coexistence and Social Peace Committee under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Iraqi Al-Amal Association. The activity is in line with UN-AMI’s mandate to support youth and their valuable contributions to the country.



Partners and leaders to build a peaceful, sustainable future Iraq

Salah al-Din, 21 December 2019 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in cooperation with the national Committee for Coexistence and Societal Peace and the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, organized a workshop in Salah al-Din governorate from 19 to 21 December for a group of Iraqi youth under the ongoing project “Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability”.

Ten young women and seventeen young men from all parts of the governorate gathered to discuss how youth can promote peace and progress in their communities. Expressing their sense of disempowerment and exclusion, they



highlighted their desire for more active youth involvement in decision-making processes, the empowerment of women, reintegration of marginalised or stigmatised communities, and greater youth employment.

Participants agreed that dialogue is an effective tool in finding common interests and concerns among youth. At the same time, they rejected extremism, discrimination and negative stereo-

types that provoked so much suffering in this country.

The meeting was joined on the final day by UN Deputy Special Representative for Iraq Ms. Alice Walpole, Mr. Ammar Hikmat al Baldawi (Second Deputy Governor of Salah al-Din) and Mr. Mohammed Kareem, MP from the State of Law coalition, who debated with the youth participants on topics of interest in an open and frank way.



DSRSG Walpole visited KIHEC

Erbil, 4 November 2019 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole visited today the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission (KIHEC). During her visit she reiterated UNAMI's support to KIHEC and encouraged them to establish Gender Unit to deal with gender issues in electoral processes.



Capacity building workshop on Gender Electoral processes held in Erbil

Erbil, 7 November 2019 - UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance conducted a 3-day capacity building workshop on Gender Electoral processes for the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission (KIHEC) in Dedeman Hotel in Erbil from 5 to 7 November 2019. Ms. Alice Walpole, the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, attended the workshop on the final day and addressed the attendees.



Consultations on the drafts of the Electoral and IHEC laws held

Baghdad, 20 November 2019 - The first deputy speaker of Iraq's parliament, Hassan Al-Kaabi, discussed today with the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Iraq, Ms. Alice Walpole, drafts of the Electoral and IHEC laws.



Draft election law: UN calls for improvements to meet public demands

Baghdad, 20 November 2019 – Electoral reform has been a central demand of many peaceful protesters. In recent weeks, Iraqi authorities have sought to find legislative solutions that address public calls for credible, free and fair elections. This process is Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led, as it must be. United Nations electoral experts have provided additional technical support, including by sharing international best practices.

The draft electoral legislation - currently under review by the Council of Representatives - requires improvements to meet public demands. The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, noted that: "It is the prerogative of the Council of Representatives to examine this legislation as it sees fit. However, I would like to urge the parliamentarians

to act on their constituents' legitimate demands for credible, free and fair elections. I sincerely hope that their choices will reflect the public appetite for a new and different way of conducting politics, restoring the hope of many Iraqis in a brighter tomorrow. The United Nations stands ready to assist in the development of electoral legislation which fully meets the aspirations of the Iraqi people".

Training workshop on importance of economic empowerment of women held in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 5 November 2019 - As part of "Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP)" project in Iraq, supported by UN Women and Japan, the Women Leadership Institute organized training workshop for Kirkuk Women's Committee on importance of economic empowerment of women.

Within the same program, 30-day sewing course conducted by Women Empowerment Organization concluded at Laylan camp in Kirkuk on 31 October 2019.



Gender-responsive planning and budgeting discussed with Iraqi authorities

Baghdad, 12 November 2019 – The Baghdad Women Association convened separate meetings with the Health Ministry and the Ministry of Labor and

Social Affairs to discuss gender-responsive planning and budgeting as part of project "Strengthening resilience of Syrian women, girls and host

communities in Iraq", supported by UN Women and European Trust Fund "MADAD".



UN Women team visits Germian Women Shelter

Erbil, 17 November 2019 - UN Women programme team visited the Germian Women Shelter. The shelter is the only one existing in the Germian administrative area, in the southern part of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, providing immediate basic support as well as legal and psychological assistance to female survivors of violence.

The team met eight officials from the center, including Director Shler Omar, legal staff and psychologists. The majority of the survivors who seek support are girls aged under 18 years and have suffered violence by intimate partners or family members.

UN Women's contribution to the shelter falls under the project "Strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls and host communities in Iraq",

which is supported by UN Women and the European Trust Fund "Madad". The visit by the UN Women team

comes as part of continuous efforts to monitor services provided to women beneficiaries across Iraq.



UN Women team visits women's shelter in Sulaymaniyah

Sulaymaniyah, 18 November 2019 -

UN Women Iraq programme team on Monday visited the women shelter in Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which is run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The shelter provides legal and psychosocial support and medical care for woman and girl survivors of violence.

After a meeting with officials from the centre, the team conducted a focus group discussion with 12 woman and girl survivors (aged from 13 to 40 years old) on gender-based violence case management services provided under the project "Strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls and host com-



munities in Iraq", which is supported by UN Women and the European Trust Fund Madad. The majority of the participants in the meeting expressed satisfaction with the level of services of-

ferred. The visit by the UN Women team to the Sulaymaniyah centre is part of ongoing efforts to monitor services provided under various projects to woman and girl beneficiaries across Iraq.

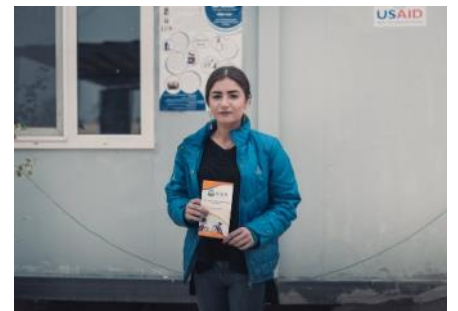
Raising awareness on early marriage, gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse

Duhok, 10 December 2019 - "Many of my peers were pushed by their parents to get married at a young age, and this comes with disadvantages and health problems," said Zozan, a displaced 18-year-old from Sinjar. She has lived with her family in Duhok Governorate's Shariya Camp since 2014.

Zozan attended an awareness session with a group of camp residents on early marriage, gender-based violence, sexu-

al harassment, and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse. The session was organized by IOM as part of the global campaign "16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls."

"I will pass on what I learned through these sessions to the rest of my friends and relatives and educate them on the consequences that result from early marriage," Zozan added.



Erbil's cyclists roll through the city for the Ride On! Marathon

Erbil, 13 December 2019 - More than 300 bikers from different backgrounds, including 140 women, took part in the Ride On! Erbil International Bike Marathon on 13 December 2019. The race was the second annual bike marathon in the city.

The Ride On! Erbil International Bike Marathon promoted women's empowerment, and biking as an eco-friendly mode of transport.

"I got my first bicycle when I was eight years old and I have not stopped riding since then. I am now a professional cyclist and I hope one day I will represent my country in a big tournament," said Darya. "When I am on my bike I feel free, happy and strong," she added. The bikers included a member of parliament; renowned artist and humanitarian activist Dashni Morad; professional bikers; local and international community members; displaced Iraqis; and members of minority groups. Anyone who can ride a bike was invited to participate, and community members were also welcome as spectators.

"I have been advocating for a legislation in the parliament that will push the government to create biking lanes

in the city. We need the government to get behind this because with the current infrastructure, it's difficult to cycle in Erbil," said Jalal Parishan, a member of parliament for the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The seven-kilometer route started in the Gulan neighborhood and ended at Erbil's world-renowned Citadel – a UNESCO world heritage site.

"Seeing women taking a proactive stance, participating in all kinds of sports, and publicizing their participation in mass media helps break down gender-allocated roles in the society,"

said Dashni Murad, a renowned artist and humanitarian activist.

The event was organized by IOM with support from Asiaccell, Kurdistan24, The Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Erbil, and the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG).

The event also brought together local women's rights advocates, civil society activists and members of the international community for a lively panel discussion about "Sport as a Powerful Social Equalizer", with a focus on women's empowerment.

By Avand Hasan, IOM Iraq



Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with UNESCO, activated a hotline for the protection of Iraqi journalists

Baghdad, 25 October 2019 - During his meeting with a UNESCO Delegation, the Iraqi Minister of the Interior, H.E. Yassin al-Yasiri, emphasized the importance of the protection of media institutions and journalists in Iraq. The Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with UNESCO, activated a hotline for the protection of Iraqi journalists with the short code 5555. This project is funded by the Government of The Netherlands.



On the International Day to End Impunity, UNESCO holds a round table in Baghdad to protect journalists



Baghdad, 6 November 2019 - UNESCO Iraq office, in collaboration with Iraqi Communication and Media Commission, organized a National Roundtable in Baghdad to discuss the issue of impunity. The roundtable sheds light on the mechanisms of journalists' safety and prosecution to bring justice to murdered journalists and review the challenges and achievements of the fight against impunity in Iraq.

CMC hosted the event of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI), which was attended by the Members of the Iraqi National Committee of Safety of Journalists and Issue of Impunity, and media outlets as well as several journalists who have been attacked in Baghdad during the October's protests.

The Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice answered the questions of the safety committee and the media repre-

sentatives while the main question was the (Distrust and Fear) with around 90 attacks against the journalists in one month as the Committee of journalists' safety registered via their monitoring



tools.

Ministry of Interior representative said that the reason is there are many unknown committed violations against the journalists and the reluctance of journalists to report or sue the attackers. The participants shared a call to the international community to support Iraqi journalism community raising awareness and strengthening the capacities of key actors in the national committee of journalist's safety.

The roundtable was chaired by Dhea Subhee, UNESCO CI Associate Officer, who was supported by the Head of Information and Communication Monitoring Department Ahmed Al Asadi, Special Investigation Unit of Journalists cases in MoI Raad Hamdan, Ministry of Justice Director-General Kamel Ameen; Representative of the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate Hassan Abodi and the media outlets representatives. #Keeptruthlive was the theme of the event and all invitees called for justice to the Iraqi journalists killed since 2004 and to stop the violence against journalists that started since 1st of October 2019.

The National Committee of Journalists safety of Iraq show their readiness to start working on the Director-General of UNESCO report on killings of journalists and the issue of impunity for 2020. The most recent report that was issued in (2019) presents an analysis of cases condemned by the Director-General. Based on the information provided by committee members, the report also takes stock of the judicial investigations undertaken into each of the murders recorded by UNESCO from 2006 to 2019.

Joint statement on human rights and humanitarian concerns related to conflict affected women and children in Syria and Iraq

New York, 11 November 2019 - Four United Nations High-Level Advocates express their concerns about the precarious human rights, humanitarian and security situation faced by thousands of people, mainly composed of women and children, who are being held in inhumane conditions in overcrowded camps or other settings in northern Syria and Iraq.

“We are deeply concerned about the uncertainty of detention and security arrangements in this region including possible lack of due process, arbitrary detention, imposition of the death penalty, torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, sexual violence, among others, as well as limited access to basic humanitarian services such as food, water, medical care and other essential services. We stress that children should not be detained, except as a matter of last resort and only for the shortest possible period, in line with international, human rights and humanitarian laws including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols.”

The recent ongoing hostilities can further exacerbate the dire conditions of this highly vulnerable group and the four UN advocates express their concern at the possible consequences for the whole region. “We urge positive and cooperative action by States to ensure the full protection of human rights and ensure humanitarian needs of these

civilians are met.”

“Recognizing that acts of sexual violence have been used as a tactic of terror, we urge that women, boys and girls who have suffered sexual violence and/or have been trafficked or otherwise forced into marriage, sexual slavery and exploitation by UN-listed terrorist groups are not re-victimized by being punished for offences resulting from their exploitation. Survivors of sexual violence committed by UN-listed terrorist groups must be treated as victims of terrorism and should be entitled to holistic support including reparations and redress.”

“States should also take all necessary measures to avoid the stigmatization of children, including those who were born of conflict-related sexual violence or children who were recruited or used by parties to conflict. States must also prevent discrimination of these children based on nationality, birth and immigration status, and should take all measures to prevent statelessness.”

The four UN advocates remind States that they have the obligation to take all the necessary steps to intervene in favour of their nationals abroad, including through the safe repatriation of women and children to their countries of origin with full respect of non-refoulement. The situation of women and children deprived of their liberty in northern Syria and Iraq must be assessed on an individual basis. Any deci-

sion regarding children should be guided by the best interests of the child as well as principles of family unity, including in the context of repatriation.

“We commend the action of States who have already facilitated the return of their citizens, acknowledging the vulnerability of women and children trapped in displacement camps. We call on States to fully implement their legal obligations by accepting those citizens who wish to return to their country of citizenship, granting due process to those who should be prosecuted and reintegrating individuals as appropriate into society. We call on States to treat all survivors of violations, specifically boys and girls, humanely and fairly, so to affirm their dignity and rights. We offer our collective support and assistance to all Member States to work towards this end.”

This statement has been signed by: The United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children in Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (OSRSG-VAC) and the Special Rapporteur on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism.



Iraq presents its actions on children affected by terrorism at an UNODC meeting

Geneva, 21 November 2019 - The Permanent Representative of Iraq in Geneva Mr. Hussein Al-Khateeb briefed on the actions taken by Iraq on children affected by terrorism at an event titled “Children affected by terrorism: a road map for action” on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child organized by the United Nations Office

on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Permanent Representative of the República Oriental del Uruguay, European Commission to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

The aim of the event is to promote global awareness of the impact of terrorism on children and to discuss the complex phenomenon of child recruitment and its implications.



International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women marked in Sinjar

Erbil, 25 November 2019 - 5000 women, men and children killed. 7000 women kidnapped, 2800 still in captivity as a result of the latest genocide by ISIS. Yazidi women have suffered through various physiological and physical violence against them.

Today, on the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women, Yazda held an event in Sinjar to mark the occasion.

Several women activists attended the event and gave speeches in addition to international NGO and government officials and members of the local community.

The audience also suggested several tips and ideas for Yazda in moving forward and raising awareness on the issues for the 16 days of activism. This event was part of the IOM Iraq supported and USAID Iraq funded Safe Return Project.



Yazda organized a workshop on “Designing an Internationalized Justice Mechanism in Iraq”

Sinjar, 26 November 2019 - Yazda organized a workshop on “Designing an Internationalized Justice Mechanism in Iraq”. Two legal experts from the Open Society Justice Initiative, Beini Ye and Eric Witte (OSJI) and Yazda Documentation Project Manager, Natia Navrouzov, presented and discussed with the participants different justice mechanisms implemented in post-conflict areas around the world. The aim was to analyze how such mechanisms were designed, the lessons learned and options that could be applicable to Iraq.

Over 40 participants attended the workshop including Yazidi survivors who were previously trained by Yazda

on Transitional Justice, Yazidi NGOs and representatives of other minorities (Shabak, Christian, Kaka'i and Turk-

men).

This event was generously funded and supported by GIZ and IOM Iraq.



UNHCR marks 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence

Baghdad, 30 November 2019 – UNHCR Iraq, along with partners, contin-

ue to organise activities for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)

in camps and urban areas to mark the annual campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. The activities include seminars, art exhibitions, awareness sessions, cultural dances, songs, and dramas that call for the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence.

16 Days of Activism against Gender based Violence is an international campaign which runs annually from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day).



IOM: Othman al-Kinani lost his eyesight, and gained a new sense of clarity

Erbil, 2 December 2019 - Othman al-Kinani is a teacher from Karbala, in central Iraq. Until his mid-thirties he considered himself to be fit and strong, and he never had any complaints about his vision. But that all changed unexpectedly 11 years ago.

“During the first 36 years of my life, I was healthy and could see well,” al-Kinani explained. “When I was 37 years old, I was diagnosed with glaucoma and I later lost my sight completely.”

When al-Kinani first started losing his sight, he admitted that it felt weird because he had lived without a disability for over three decades and then lost his vision in a matter of months. He also wondered how his family would cope with the change, especially his four children who were very young when he was diagnosed with glaucoma. Al-Kinani also worried about his livelihood.

“When I first started working, I had two jobs. In the morning, I was a schoolteacher, and in the evenings, I worked in the private sector,” he recalled. “When I became disabled, I worried about losing my job, and thought about how I could go on with my life without feeling belittled or like I was a burden on others.”

The year that he lost his sight was very difficult for al-Kinani, but it also marked a turning point in his life.

“I went from being a normal person to an outstanding one,” he said. “I consider myself outstanding, because some people with disabilities have a negative perception of themselves, which brings them down. For me, the process was the exact opposite.”

Through determination and a strong support system, al-Kinani was able to continue teaching and find energy for new projects. He discovered another world — the world of the visually impaired, as he calls it — and established an association for others with similar visual impairments in Karbala. He

then set up the Amal Karbala Club for people with disabilities of all genders and ages; amal means hope in Arabic.

“We also started a theatre group, unique in Iraq and the Arab world, that has become a registered trademark — the Sarraj Group for the Visually Impaired,” he added.

Kenan Othman al-Kinani is clear about the fact that the change from living with no disabilities to suddenly having one was big, but he views the shift in a positive way; the groups and associations that he started bring him comfort, and he is keen for his positive message to reach those who may find themselves in his situation. Most of all, he credits his strength and success to his family, reserving special praise for his wife.

“To be honest, after God’s help came that of my family, especially my wife, who has played a huge role in supporting me. I like to mention her in every interview,” he said, before adding that he could rise to any new challenge as long as she is by his side.

“Some may say that my words are exaggerated, but my response to them is: Come and live with me and see what I do out of confidence and excellence,” he added. “What I say comes from deep within, and those around me are witnesses to that.”

Though much of his experience would be relatable to someone with a visual impairment in another country, al-Kinani has a special message and words of encouragement for Iraqis in particular.

“I would like to tell all Iraqis that despite the [things] that our country has been going through for a long time, with ongoing difficult situations and an increasing number of people with disabilities, life goes on,” he said. “We must continue working and striving to the best of our abilities and means, so we can be heard.”

“This is my message, conveyed from my beloved Iraq to the rest of the world,” he continued. “Iraq is full of vibrant,



diverse people, from different groups and backgrounds, whether disabled or not. My message to the world: look at Iraqis! See how they deal with hardship and how they emerge from the ashes, to prove to the world they are alive and kicking, through it all.”

The work he does through his different associations and cultural groups empowers al-Kinani to be an advocate for those with disabilities, but he knows that part of the routine involves battling stereotypes.

“Stereotypes exist and that’s a fact, but their intensity varies according to culture. For example, some might be prejudiced towards those of us with disabilities and believe that we are unable to do our jobs properly and that the best thing for us is to stay home,” he explained.

“We have to change this perception – it hurts us because those people do not know our strength and what we can achieve. We are the ones who can bring about this change, as we have proven numerous times.”

By Vanessa Okoth-Obbo, IOM Iraq Public Information Officer

IOM Iraq launches countrywide strategy for disability inclusion

Erbil, 3 December 2019 - The International Organization for Migration’s Iraq mission marked International Day of Persons with Disabilities by launching the Organization’s first countrywide disability inclusion strategy to help the government develop programmes that support the needs of migrants with disabilities.

The two-year strategy will also guide

the mission in supporting the Government of Iraq with data collection and policy design that are inclusive of persons with disabilities.

“This document is an essential supplement to IOM Iraq’s strategic priorities,” said Chief of Mission Gerard Waite.

“It will guide us as we improve our programming approach to support the Government in addressing the needs of

Iraqis, including migrants and internally displaced persons with disabilities.”

The presence of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) between 2014 and 2017 led to increased levels of violence and economic destabilisation in the country. Persons with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by conflict, violence and economic hard-

IOM Iraq launches countrywide strategy for disability inclusion *(continued)*

ship in Iraq; it is also understood that the rate of disability is expected to rise in a country during and after conflict.

The Government of Iraq, UN, international NGOs and civil society actors are making efforts towards addressing the multiple and intersecting barriers faced by persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, at a national level these efforts have been hampered by a lack of resources and insufficient institutional capacity, rather than a rights-based model of disability inclusion and mainstreaming.

The 2019-2021 Disability Inclusion Strategy will work to better include the needs of persons with disabilities across internal policies, projects and program-

ming, and leverage attention and funding to support quality disability inclusion across its work.

The strategy draws from the accountability framework of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) launched in June 2019 — and prioritizes input from IOM Iraq staff and Iraqi persons with disabilities. The UNDIS is a five-year policy, action plan and accountability framework designed to increase accessibility and mainstreaming across the UN.

IOM Iraq's Disability Inclusion Strategy is available at:

<https://iraq.iom.int/publications/disability-inclusion-strategy-2019-2021>



UNAMI Human Rights Office conducts training on national and international fair trial rights

Kirkuk, 5 December 2019 - On 5 December, the Human Rights Office (HRO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Iraqi Bar Association-Kirkuk Chapter jointly conducted a training session on "Understanding national and international fair trial guarantees.

"Nine defence lawyers, including five women, participated in the training, which was followed by an interactive plenary discussion. The training is the last of the series of similar training sessions that HRO spearheaded this year for members of the Iraqi Bar Association in Kirkuk.

The training included a presentation on the rights of an accused person under Iraqi law and procedure, which was delivered by a prominent Iraqi criminal law expert and professor. It also included a presentation by HRO on the inter-

national fair trial guarantees as provided for in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iraq is a state party.

The training stressed that justice de-

livered in accordance with domestic and international human rights standards is the most effective way to ensure accountability, uphold the rights of victims, and prevent future violations.



UNFPA, FBA hold consultative meeting on the implementation of UNSC Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security in Iraq

Baghdad, 10 December 2019 – "If young people are considered good

enough to fight wars, they certainly deserve the chance to make peace," said

former deputy UN Security General, Jan Eliasson.

For that reason, UNFPA with the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), organised, on 5 December, a two-day consultative meeting in Erbil, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, on UN Security Council Resolution 2250, on Youth, Peace & Security.

The meeting aims to advocate for and work with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the Federal Government and the Ministry of Youth and Culture in the Kurdistan Region Government towards a new narrative where young people are peace ambassadors, peace-



UNFPA, FBA hold consultative meeting ... (continued)

builders and agents for positive change. Participants from the youth Directorates across the country discussed the roadmap towards a national strategy on youth, peace and security and the ways to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 in Iraq.

“If we want to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and if we want to build peace, then we have to put young people at the centre; we have to embrace them as equal partners on this journey together”, said Mr Himyar Abdulmoghni, UNFPA Deputy Representative to Iraq.”

“For this reason, UNFPA with the Folke Bernadotte Academy conducted several activities to strengthen young people’s capacities and equip them with

the necessary tools to participate in the reconciliation and peacebuilding processes in Iraq. With our partners, we will work with and for young people in Iraq”, he added.

Commenting, the Project Manager for Iraq at Folke Bernadotte Academy, Taleb Sobeh, said: “Young people in Iraq are already leaders and peacebuilders in their communities and in society at large. This workshop will be a unique opportunity to review young people’s crucial contribution to peace and security, and discuss concrete steps different parts of society can take to even further ensure young people’s participation and empowerment as equal partners for inclusive and sustainable peace in Iraq.”

The consultative meeting is followed by a five-day training in partnership with the FBA on inclusive dialogue processes in peacebuilding. The training is part of a three week-programme laid out over seven months (September 2019-March 2020). The first training took place in September where sessions focused on enhancing the knowledge and practical ability of 25 young men and women in the areas of peacebuilding, mindful communication, gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding, conflict analysis; inclusive dialogue, as well as the design and facilitation of dialogue sessions within their communities.

International Human Rights Day commemorated across Iraq



Baghdad, 11 December 2019 – UNAMI held events across Iraq on 10 December to commemorate International Human Rights Day.

Marking this year’s global theme “Youth Standing Up for Human Rights” - “Young people are powerful”, UNAMI facilitated an event in Baghdad, bringing together a group of youth artists who stand up for human rights through visual arts and murals. The event aimed to celebrate the potential of young people in Iraq, encouraging youth to keep human rights central – including respect for the dignity and freedom of others – in their demands to be heard.

In the Kurdistan Region, UN Deputy Special Representative Alice Walpole joined officials in Halabja to mark the closure of the 28th annual campaign of ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence,’ which ends each year on 10 December, and to celebrate the role of youth in promoting human

rights.

“In Iraq, a historical legacy of discrimination against women, combined with the societal trauma resulting from years of conflict, have left women and girls particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence,” she said. DSRSG Walpole welcomed Iraq’s National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence and encouraged strengthening of the national legal framework prohibiting gender-based violence.

Also, as part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, the UNAMI Human Rights Office delivered a training “Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence (GBV)” to staff of the Family Protection Unit of the Kirkuk police and youth human rights activists from local civil society organizations. In line with this year’s theme “Youth Standing Up for Human Rights,” the voice and efforts of young Iraqis is critical to building a future free from gender-based violence. Ms. Danielle Bell, the Chief of the Hu-

man Rights Office at UNAMI, said this year’s Human Rights Day themes are fitting for Iraq. “This event is about celebrating the potential of young people in Iraq and encouraging active dialogue on the protection of human rights,” she said at the opening of the event in Baghdad.

In Basra, the UNAMI Human Rights Office brought together 50 youths, representing religious minorities, human rights defenders and civil society, to celebrate the leadership role of youth and their collective movements as a source of inspiration for a better future. Participants discussed the role of the young people in standing up for human rights.

In Ninewa, the UNAMI Human Rights Office brought together a group of human rights defenders in the recently opened Mosul Field Office of UNAMI. The roundtable event included discussion on the challenges of acting in the civic space and the work of human rights defenders in Ninewa governorate.

UNAMI reiterates its support to all the people of Iraq in their aspiration to enjoy their full human rights and fundamental freedoms, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



KRG, UNFPA increase efforts for ending Female Genital Mutilation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 15 December 2019 - The Kurdistan Regional Government, represented by the Kurdistan High Council for Women Affairs (KHCWA), launched, with the support of UNFPA, the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Communication for Behavioural Impact (COMBI) plan for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, on 15 December.

In the Kurdistan Region alone, close to 15,000 girls have been circumcised in the last year. The prevalence of FGM has been higher in the Kurdistan region than in the rest of Iraq.

UNFPA Deputy Representative to Iraq, Mr Himyar Abdulmoghni, said: "UNFPA is determined to end gender-based violence and harmful practices, especially Female Genital Mutilation. This practice is not only unnecessary and painful but is non-medical and has zero health benefits for girls. In fact, FGM practice threatens a girl's ability to build a better future for herself, her

family and her community".

In Iraq, with the support of the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq (RDPP), UNFPA and KHCWA developed a communication for behavioural impact plan for this purpose.

The COMBI plan stipulates that teams from the Ministries of Religious Affairs, Interior (GDCVAW), Justice, Health, Education and Labour and Social Affairs will approach an initial 7,500 mothers in the next 12 months with awareness-raising campaigns in order to save young girls from this harmful practice in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, especially in the areas of Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, Duhok and Halabja Governorates.

"Our goal is not only to protect girls who are currently at risk but to also ensure that those to be born in the future will be free from the dangers of the practice," concluded Mr Abdulmoghni.

The event was attended by Ms Kwestan Mohamad Abdulla Maarouf, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, members of the Parliament, representatives of the diplomatic corps and members of the civil society. The launch included speeches, a presentation of the COMBI plan, a short film on the risks of FGM and its repercussions, and as well as panels discussions on the risks and best approaches to end FGM.



UNESCO organized study tour to Netherlands for journalist's safety committee



Baghdad, 16 December 2019 - UNESCO Iraq office, in cooperation with FreePressUnlimited (FPU), organized a five-day study tour to The Netherlands, to learn about the platform Persveilig. This study tour comes within the context of the project Breaking the silence: Enhancing Public Accountability on Freedom of Expression and the Safety of Journalists in Iraq, funded by the Dutch government and implemented by UNESCO in Iraq with an active partnership of FPU.

Twelve participants from the Special Investigation Unit on Crimes against Journalists, and the members of the Iraqi National Committee for the Safety of Journalists, exchanged their ideas and knowledge with the Netherlands Journalists Union, National Police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands) and FPU.

The study tour provided the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge and experiences to further enhance the understanding of the Iraqi National Committee for the Safety of Journalists and Combating Impunity of Persveilig, which is a common platform for a number of institutions concerned with the safety of journalists, such as the Dutch police, the Netherlands Journalists' Union, the judiciary and some civil organizations. The study tour included meetings and visits, including with the Netherlands Journalists' Union which explained their experience in protecting journalists. The Iraqi team expressed its admiration for the Dutch experience emphasizing the need for future cooperation to strengthen the mechanism of protecting journalists in Iraq, which is in process since a year.

The second day of the study tour was

with the Representatives of the Dutch Foreign Ministry (Middle East and North Africa Policy Division, Iraq desk and Human Rights focal point) at the Foreign Ministry in The Hague. During the meeting, the two sides expressed their mutual views while the Iraqi team asked the Dutch government to support the efforts to protect journalists in Iraq and fighting impunity. Ms. Anneke Luwema, deputy head of the Middle East North Africa Department, stressed the need to protect Iraqi journalists, especially in the events that have been going on since the beginning of October 2019.

On the third day, the Iraqi team met with the assistant of the Dutch national police chief who held the Iraqi flag-raising ceremony at the Dutch police building in The Hague. The Iraqi team got acquainted with the work of Persveilig's journalists' platform and its details. The two parties discussed all the challenges facing policemen in Iraq while providing all the protocols for this platform and possible future assistance to the Iraqi police.

The Iraqi delegation met with the Iraqi ambassador in the Netherlands and briefed him on the contents of the tour and the benefits accrued from them. The Iraqi ambassador to the Netherlands also promised to follow up on this project and provide the necessary support in coordination with the Dutch

UNESCO organized study tour to Netherlands for journalist's safety committee *(continued)*

government.

The last day witnessed intensive meetings with FreePressUnlimited (FPU), focusing on cooperation frameworks in protecting journalists and combating impunity. The two sides agreed to activate cooperation in terms of FPU program in assisting journalists that are in need. Financial, health assistance and legal aid (advocacy and legal protec-

tion) were discussed in addition to the development of a mechanism to protect Iraqi journalists.

The study tour has achieved many benefits, most notably access to safety, security and protection techniques: the three Ps: Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution. The mechanisms for gathering evidence, forensic investigations and organizing the files of journalists'

cases were learned by the officers present on the tour. Breaking the barrier of fear among journalists by providing a virtual electronic platform was one of the main lessons learned that the National Committee promised to implement once they return to Iraq, ensuring a safe way to record cases and report crimes against journalists.

RDPP contributes US\$ 3.36 m to support women, girls and boys in Iraq

Baghdad, 18 December 2019 – UNFPA renews its partnership with the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) with a multi-year grant of a total of DKK 22,056,446, equivalent of US\$ 3.36 million to the Fund's on-going interventions to mitigate and respond to gender-based violence in Iraq.

The conflict in Iraq and the subsequent humanitarian crisis have exponentially exposed the population, particularly women, girls and boys, to various forms of gender-based violence, including in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

RDPP's contribution supports training, capacity building and system strengthening initiatives targeting institutions and government entities. This partnership ensures the continuity of mentored

service provision related to survivors and well-being of women and girls from refugee, internally displaced and host communities across the country. Furthermore, this new funding enables UNFPA to work with partners on strengthening the legal framework and enhancing behavioral changes through evidence-based advocacy.

"This partnership aims to support government institutions in strengthening their capacity to respond to the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and enhance the prevention of violence against women", said Vincenzo Schiano-Lomoriello, RDPP Liaison and Project Manager, "This approach also ensures the active engagement of local partners and community leaders in the response to women and girl GBV survivors through the development of tools,

national systems, and other capacity-building initiatives".

"I am grateful for RDPP's renewed trust in our interventions in Iraq," said Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq. "UNFPA and RDPP's partnership dates from 2017 and has allowed the Fund to support the establishment of a helpline "119" for GBV survivors and put together a communication for behavioural impact (COMBI) plan to end Female Genital Mutilation's in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq". "With RDPP, we aim at strengthening education, individual training, and national data systems as well as improving individual rights and freedoms across Iraq: We shall leave no one behind", he concluded.

Press briefing on Iraq by the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Rupert Colville

Geneva, 20 December 2019 – Excerpts from the press briefing on Iraq by the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

We are concerned by the continued pattern of deadly attacks in Iraq against human rights defenders, civil society activists and protesters. During the past 10 days alone, we have received credible reports of at least six separate incidents in Baghdad, Missan, Karbala and Diwaniya, resulting in three deaths and six people injured.

On 8 December and again, seven days later, on 15 December, improvised explosive devices attached to vehicles detonated in Diwaniya and Karbala, injuring three civil society activists, who had participated in demonstrations and appear to have been directly targeted.

On 8 December, in Amara city in Missan governorate, a human rights activist survived an attempt to kill him while on his way to visit a friend, but was seriously injured in the attack.

Also on 8 December, in Karbala city, a civil society activist was shot dead while riding his motorbike. Two other people on the motorbike were unharmed.

On 10 December, another human rights activist was shot and killed in Baghdad when leaving a protest site.

On 14 December, three civil society activists were gunned down from a pickup truck in Baghdad. One of them was killed, and the other two wounded. All three had been volunteers providing bread to protesters during the demonstrations.

We are following-up other allegations of targeted killings.

Currently, we have insufficient information to determine who the perpetrators of these latest attacks are, but witnesses and local people we have spoken to say they believe groups whom they describe as 'militias' are responsible. We are not aware of any progress made by the Iraqi authorities in tracking those responsible for these

attacks.

The killings of civil society activists are occurring against a backdrop of disappearances of high-profile protesters in Baghdad. Many of those arrested by Iraqi security forces are being held in what may amount to incommunicado detention. Others are believed to have been abducted by groups referred to as 'militias', and they are at serious risk of ill-treatment. Both security forces and these so-called 'militias' are clearly targeting well-known demonstrators and activists. We are closely monitoring all cases that come to our attention.

A report issued last week by the Human Rights Office of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) called for prompt and independent investigations into all demonstration-related deaths since 1 October. The report also called for immediate steps to prevent deliberate killings of human rights defenders and immediate action to release abductees from any form of unlawful detention.

Norway contributes NOK 17 M to end gender-based violence in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 December 2019 – “We had to run quickly: they were coming in at us. We could hear them from far. My whole life crumbled that same moment. I froze but I could hear my sister screaming: “move or they will kill you, or worse take you,” said Minar from Qamishli, in Syria, recollecting the moment she and her family had to flee their home in Syria and seek refuge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

To protect girls like Minar and ensure that no woman suffers or dies from gender-based violence in Iraq, the Government of Norway contributed to NOK 17 million (US\$ 1,872,452 million) to UNFPA interventions aiming at mitigating, preventing and responding to gender-based violence in humanitarian crisis.

This contribution is part of the Government of Norway’s agreement to provide funding against the appeals in different countries including Iraq for a total amount of (approximately US\$ 12,344,685 million) NOK 111.5 Million and (approximately US\$ 2,7 million) NOK 25 million to the Humanitarian Thematic Fund. Norway is the top do-

nor to UNFPA core resources in 2019. In Iraq, UNFPA will utilise the funding to build the capacity of GBV actors, to prevent and respond to GBV through quality services provision targeting vulnerable survivors, including refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities. Norway’s contribution will also support UNFPA’s efforts to strengthen policies and the legal framework on gender-based violence, as well as to change behaviours towards survivors of GBV.

“Protection against sexual and gender based violence and empowerment of women and girls is a top priority in Norway’s humanitarian efforts. UN-

FPA is a trusted partner in this work”, says Tone Allers, the Norwegian Ambassador to Jordan and Iraq.

On his end, Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, thanks the Government of Norway, for their continuous support to the Fund’s GBV programmes. “Norway has been a steady partner to UNFPA throughout the humanitarian crises that hit Iraq. I thank the Government of Norway for leaving no woman and girl behind by renewing its trust in our gender-based violence programmes. Together, we will ensure that women and girls across Iraq are protected and are given the opportunity to thrive.”



UNHCR workshop for local journalists on international refugee protection held in Duhok

Duhok, 23 December 2019 - UNHCR in Duhok, in collaboration with BRHA Duhok and Syndicate of Duhok’s Journalists, conducted a workshop for local journalists on international refugee protection and guidelines that comply with UNHCR instructions to protect the dignity, privacy, and security of the persons of concerns to UNHCR.

The attendees were journalists from different local media agencies who regularly report about refugees and internally displaced persons in camps and urban areas.



Children’s voices - ‘right to peaceful assembly’

Baghdad, 26 December 2019 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) jointly with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) brought together 15 youth to voice their opinion on ‘right to peaceful assembly’ in Baghdad, on 26 December. The aim of the event was to provide a platform for the participants to discuss draft General Comment Nr. 37 ‘right to peaceful assembly’, interpreting Art 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The participants came from Baghdad and Babel, including 8 girls and 7 boys between the ages of 12 and 17 years, as well as civil society activists and NGOs. [Article 21 – right to peaceful assembly](#) [ICCPR](#)

The right of peaceful assembly shall be

recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

The discussion highlighted that the ‘right to peaceful assembly’ constitutes a fundamental right and participants expressed their views on what constitutes important elements of it, including to have an enabling environment to demonstrate and access to internet. Participants shared their experiences voicing their commitment to peaceful demonstrations, affirming that ‘ideas



cannot be killed by bullets’ and that ‘there is a time for play and a time for thinking’.

The UNAMI human rights office will submit the compiled inputs to the Human Rights Committee to inform the draft General Comment Nr. 37, which is expected to be finalized in the coming year.

Training on human rights and principles held in Basra

Basra, 30 December 2019 - UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a two-day training on "Human Rights Principles and Standards Related to Due Process and Fair Trial" for representatives from BAR Association, Jurists Union and Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights.



UNESCO Director-General condemns murder of journalist Ahmed Muhana al-Lami in Iraq

Paris, 30 December 2019 - The Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, has called on the Iraqi authorities to investigate the death of journalist Ahmed Muhana al-Lami, who was shot dead during a demonstration in Baghdad on 6 December.

"I condemn the use of live ammunition during the demonstration in Baghdad that led to the death of photographer Ahmed Muhana al-Lami alongside some 15 other people. I call on the Iraqi authorities to investigate this brutal attack on civilians and ensure that those responsible are brought to trial." News photographer Ahmed Muhana al-Lami was covering a demonstration in

a public square when he was hit and injured by gunshot fire that killed him shortly thereafter in hospital.

Al-Lami, a freelance journalist, had recently published pictures of the demonstrations that have been taking place in the Iraqi capital for several weeks on social media. From 2015 to 2017, he had covered military operations that led to the reclaiming of the territory held by Daech.

UNESCO promotes the safety of journalists through global awareness-raising, capacity building and a range of actions, notably in the framework of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.



Baghdad, 31 October 2019 - Special Advisor Karim Khan QC met today with Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Council, Judge Faik Zeidan. During the meeting the UN envoy stressed that the mandate of the UNITAD team is limited to investigating crimes committed by ISIS, as they discussed ways to develop the Iraqi capabilities in the field of preserving and archiving evidence.



Baghdad, 3 November 2019 - Special Advisor Karim Khan QC met with the Minister of Displacement and Migration, Mr. Nawfal Baha Mousa. The discussion focused on possible cooperation to ensure that UNITAD documents all crimes committed by ISIS against all Iraqi communities in order to ensure accountability for crimes committed.



Baghdad, 3 November 2019 - Special Adviser Karim Khan QC met with Dr. Ole Diehl, the German Ambassador to Iraq. Both parties stressed the need to collaborate and support Iraqi efforts to hold Da'esh accountable for the crimes they committed in Iraq.



Baghdad, 20 November 2019 - Special Adviser Karim Khan QC met with H.E. Mr. Vesa Häkkinen, Ambassador of Finland to Iraq, to provide an update on the ongoing cooperation with Finnish judicial authorities, and to discuss ways in which Finland can support UNITAD.



Dohuk, 19 November 2019 - During his visit to Sharya and Qadiya IDP Camps in the Dohuk governorate, Special Adviser Karim Khan QC expressed solidarity with Da'esh's victims, survivors, and the families of those who remain missing. "The suffering you have endured from the crimes and scale of brutality Da'esh members committed against you exceeds what any person should ever endure over the span of several lifetimes", Mr. Khan stated. He assured them that the Investigative Team remains steadfast in carrying out its mandate to collect, preserve and store evidence in line with international standards so that Da'esh perpetrators are held accountable for the crimes they committed in Iraq. The Special Adviser highlighted that the investigative procedures of the Team safeguard the confidential process of engaging with witnesses and provides them with psychosocial support. "There is no hierarchy of victims, all Iraqis suffered at the hands of Da'esh", Mr. Khan said, reaffirming the impartial, independent and neutral status of UNITAD.



Baghdad, 20 November 2019 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with Iraqi Batonnier, Mr. Diyaa Al-Saadi. They discussed possible avenues for cooperation between the Investigative Team and Iraqi lawyers in areas relevant to the mandate of UNITAD.



Baghdad, 8 December 2019 - Special Adviser Karim Khan QC met with H.E. Mr. Saleem Shah Maidanwall, Ambassador of Afghanistan in Iraq. They discussed recent developments against ISIL – Khorosan and the strategic linkages with core ISIL.

Victims' Testimony Steering United Nations Team Investigating ISIL/Da'esh Atrocity Crimes in Iraq, Special Adviser Tells Security Council

Perpetrators Must Face Iraqi Justice, Baghdad Representative Stresses; 'I Survived to Be a Witness,' Says Yazidi Survivor

New York, 26 November 2019 - Testimony from victims of terrorist crimes in Iraq — including mass murder, abductions and sexual slavery — is now steering the work of a newly operational United Nations investigative team, its chief told the Security Council today, while also outlining a range of forensics and other tools being used to build cases against perpetrators.

Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), known as UNITAD, told the 15-nation Council that communities across Iraq are courageously relaying stories of unspeakable treatment to the Team's investigators. Spotlighting UNITAD's mandate to identify criminal perpetrators for prosecution under Iraqi law, he said victims are willing to "re-live hell on earth" in order to preserve evidence and achieve justice. "It is our responsibility to honour their strength by delivering on the promise [...] that those who inflicted their suffering will be held accountable," he stressed.

A renewed sense of common purpose followed the unanimous renewal of UNITAD's mandate at the request of the Government of Iraq in September, he continued, adding that the Team is now fully operational and actively collecting documentary, digital, testimonial and forensic evidence. Methods include forensic scanning of crimes scenes, the documentation and digitiza-



tion of evidence and ballistics analysis, as well as efforts to retrieve DNA profiles from the remains of victims in mass grave sites. Noting that several individual ISIL/Da'esh members have been identified as primary investigative targets, he said work is underway to build case-files for presentation to Iraqi courts. "Our capacity to demonstrate continued value to Iraqi counterparts, and the people of Iraq more broadly, will be essential," he said.

Mr. Kachi, a member of Iraqi civil society, speaking by video-teleconference from Iraq, recounted his personal experience as a survivor of mass executions which had been carried out in his Yazidi village located in Sinjar District. It was there, in August 2014, that ISIL/Da'esh overwhelmed the town and separated the men and women. The men were then killed in a mass shooting. He escaped from a pile of dead bodies that included three of his brothers. His elderly step-mother was also executed, along with other older women, and his wife and daughters taken to a slave market and sold. His three-month-old daughter died of thirst and hunger.

"I can still hear my wife and daughters screaming," he said, describing the lingering psychological effects on survivors. Thanking the Council for creating UNITAD to establish accountability for such crimes, he nevertheless said that prosecuting those responsible is not enough. The international community must also acknowledge that the crimes committed against the Yazidi community amount to genocide. The Council must support the Team and

work to prevent similar crimes in the future, he stressed, adding: "I survived by God's will to be a witness."

As Council members took the floor, many expressed their strong support for UNITAD's work and praised efforts to translate the international community's many condemnations of war crimes into concrete action. Several also hailed the exemplary cooperation of the Government of Iraq — under whose jurisdiction the investigations fall — as well as that of the Kurdistan Regional Government and local communities. However, some delegates cautioned that all of UNITAD's work, and any other efforts carried out by international partners in Iraq, must fully respect the principles of national sovereignty and criminal jurisdiction.

France's representative was among those speakers who welcomed strides made by UNITAD while calling for the full recognition of victims and the application of the highest standards of protection for them. She emphasized the need to ensure that the Team abides strictly by United Nations principles and not transmit any cases to jurisdictions where there is a chance that the death penalty will be applied. Meanwhile, the Council must remain mobilized to prevent any resurgence of ISIL/Da'esh, she said.

The representative of the Dominican Republic, echoing many of those points, also joined speakers who praised a number of legal strides made by Iraq at the national level. Those include the introduction of new legislation that will allow for the prosecution of crimes committed by terrorist groups, including

Victims' Testimony Steering United Nations Team Investigating ISIL/Da'esh Atrocity Crimes in Iraq... *(continued)*

war crimes and genocide.

Kuwait's representative added his full support for UNITAD, whose mandate is critical in the fight against terrorism. Among other things, the Team deters future crimes by setting out lessons to potential perpetrators. Emphasizing that eradicating terrorism is an international responsibility, he described Kuwait's own counter-terrorism activities and expressed hope that all countries will intensify cooperation in that endeavour — including the repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters.

While praising UNITAD's work, Côte d'Ivoire's representative also noted that the Team continues to face many challenges on the ground. Spotlighting the transnational character of the activities of ISIL/Da'esh as one example, he urged partners to strengthen cooperation in order to allow relevant crimes to be covered by the Iraqi legal arsenal. Efforts to translate the condemnation of war crimes into concrete action are crucial and they go beyond the case of Iraq. There must be a renewed focus on socioeconomic development, which will help to prevent radicalization, he stressed.

Iraq's representative welcomed the renewal of UNITAD's mandate by the Council at his Government's request

and praised the Team for its work to date. Following the military defeat of terrorist groups in Iraq, strong international support is needed to rebuild what was destroyed, prosecute war crimes and thwart any future attacks. Calling on countries around the globe to monitor airports, dry up sources of terrorist funding and end the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, he added he agreed with other speakers that UNITAD's work must be built on the principle of respect for Iraq's sovereignty and its jurisdiction over crimes committed on its territory. "Perpetrators must be

brought to Iraqi justice," he stated, emphasizing: "We must turn this page as quickly as possible."

Throughout the meeting, delegates also conveyed their condolences to the Government and people of France, following the death of 13 soldiers in a 25 November helicopter crash in Mali.

Also speaking were the representatives of the United States, Germany, Peru, South Africa, China, Indonesia, Equatorial Guinea, Belgium, Poland, Russian Federation and the United Kingdom.

By UN News



Message from UNITAD Special Adviser on the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the crime of genocide and of the prevention of this crime

Baghdad, 9 December 2019 – On the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, and the 71st anniversary of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Special Adviser Karim A.A. Khan QC joins in remembering and honoring the victims of this horrendous crime. Genocide has a devastating impact on the families of victims, communities and society as a whole that can last for generations.

In addition to the immense sense of moral responsibility that emerges in response to the catastrophic humanitarian toll, legal obligations remain in the heart of national and international efforts to prevent this crime and punish the perpetrators as set out in Article I of the Convention.

The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD)

was established by the Security Council to support domestic accountability efforts, requiring the Team to collect, gather, analyze and preserve evidence in Iraq of crimes that may constitute genocide as well as crimes against humanity or war crimes.

"In Iraq, all communities have been impacted by the crimes of Da'esh. Their message has been clear and consistent, and they are united behind one simple demand: Da'esh must be held responsible for the crimes that were committed," Mr. Khan said.

He noted that Da'esh made no distinction in the brutality of its attacks against different communities in Iraq, adding that "no preference or mercy was shown regardless of whether individuals were Christian, Yazidi, Shia, Sunni, Kaka'i, Turkmen or Shabak."

On this day, the Special Adviser reaffirms his commitment and that of his Team to fully deliver on the mandate entrusted to them by the Security

Council, ensuring that the work of UNITAD contributes tangibly to domestic accountability efforts, and ultimately, to deliver justice to the victims through holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes.

Mr. Khan also underlined his commitment to continue to support the efforts of the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention on Genocide and work cooperatively with his Office in implementation of the mandate of the Investigative Team.

"Only through holding fair trials can the corrupt and perverted Da'esh ideology be fully and completely exposed in a manner that will brook no answer at all," the Special Adviser stressed. Justice, he added, "can be delivered through the provision of soiled evidence to courts where they are challenged in a process that allows independent and impartial judges to make determinations that will stand the test of time."

UNITAD reaffirms its commitment to upholding victims’ rights regardless of religion, tribe or ethnic origins

Doha, Qatar, 15 December 2019 - UNITAD reaffirms its commitment to upholding victims’ rights regardless of religion, tribe or ethnic origins by ensuring access to justice and holding Da’esh perpetrators accountable for their crimes committed in Iraq. “Our quest is to collect evidence to establish justice and prevent revisionism. In the courtroom, we can expose the baseless ideology of Da’esh” - Special Adviser Karim Khan QC said during the panel on Advancing the Repatriation of Terrorist Foreign Fighters during Doha Forum.



Identified ways to strengthen cooperation and deliver support to Iraqi authorities to ensure ISIL accountability

Baghdad, 18 December 2019 - Special Adviser Karim Khan QC met today with Major General Talib Khalil Rahi, Director of Interior's Directorate of Forensic Evidence Investigation. They identified ways to strengthen cooperation and deliver support to Iraqi authorities to ensure ISIL accountability.



Humanitarian

UNHCR Iraq Representative meets KRG officials; visits Bardarash Camp

Erbil, 22 October 2019 - “UNHCR is receiving excellent cooperation from Kurdistan Region of Iraq authorities to help us manage together the current refugee influx from North-East Syria,” said Ayman Gharaibeh, UNHCR Rep-

resentative in Iraq after a meeting with Minister Safeen Muhsin Dizayee, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Later, Mr. Gharaibeh, visited Bardarash Camp, and passed by one of the

Barzani Foundation kitchens where hot meals are prepared and provided three times a day for all the refugees residing in the Camp, including the new arrivals at the reception sites.



Latest refugee influx to Iraq passes 10,000 mark as humanitarian needs mount in Syria

Geneva, 25 October 2019 - This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at today's press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

Teams from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, in northern Iraq report that last night more than 900 Syrian refugees arrived at the Bardarash camp on 45 buses, bringing the camp population to nearly 9,700.

So far more than 10,100 Syrian refugees have crossed into Iraq seeking safety. Nearly 75 per cent of all registered refugees are women and children. More than a quarter of refugee families are female-headed households. Arrivals also include unaccompanied children.

UNHCR and partners continue to provide life-saving assistance to them. Our technical teams, protection and registration staff as well as our partners are in the camp every single day, assessing and meeting the needs as early as possible.

They also ensure that all services in the camp are running and that new arrivals are immediately attended to and provided with the necessary aid and services.

UNHCR stresses the importance of freedom of movement for fleeing civilians and that the borders remain open so that refugees can seek safety and protection. UNHCR and other humanitarian partners are working with authorities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and are committed to supporting their response to the latest refugee influx.

Bardarash camp, in Dohuk governorate, is ready to receive up to 11,000 people. Other nearby sites have been identified to shelter more refugees. We are grateful for the response of the local authorities, especially those of Dohuk Governorate, for receiving and assisting the newly arrived Syrian refugees, in addition to more than 230,000 already there.

Many new arrivals need psycho-social support, children and adults alike. Last week at Bardarash camp, our psycho-social support team came across Dilwar, a three-year-old boy. He was in tears as he got lost from his mother upon arrival to the camp. Even after being reunited with his mum, Dilwar continued crying. She explained that Dilwar experienced loud explosions as they were fleeing their home. This made him agitated and sad and he could not stop crying. Our team attended to Dilwar, worked with him and their efforts were ultimately rewarded with a smile. UNHCR is coordinating with partners and other actors to ensure a blanket coverage of psychosocial first aid to all the new arrivals.

UNHCR estimates its initial additional funding needs inside Syria at US\$31.5 million within the existing appeal for Syria (HRP).

UNHCR expanding response in northern Iraq amid continuing Syrian refugee influx

Geneva, 29 October 2019 - This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at today's press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

More than 12,000 Syrian refugees have sought shelter in neighbouring Iraq since the latest influx began a fortnight ago, according to teams from UNHCR, the UN refugee agency. The refugee population at recently opened Bardarash camp has exceeded 11,000 people and more than 800 are now sheltered at Gawilan transit site. Both sites are approximately 150 kilometres east of Syria-Iraq border. UNHCR and the

authorities are working on reuniting refugees from the camp with their family members residing in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI).

UNHCR is supporting the response led by the KRI authorities and it is working closely with them to ready other locations, in the event that both sites reach their capacity.

Refugee families at both locations are receiving the same services and humanitarian assistance. These include hot meals, transportation, registration, shelter and protection services. UNHCR teams also conduct protection monitoring, child protection and identification of unaccompanied children

and persons with specific needs, starting already at border reception centres. We are maintaining this support and relief for all the newly arrived refugees.

We are grateful to all those involved in this ongoing humanitarian response, including the KRI authorities and all of our partners, who are working 24/7 to accommodate refugees and provide them with safe shelter, basic services and protection. We have also deployed additional UNHCR staff from our Baghdad office to support our teams in Erbil and Dohuk to respond to the needs of the newly arrived refugees.

Swiss visit to the Bardarash refugee camp

Baghdad, 30 October 2019 - Ambassador Urs von Arb, from Switzerland State Secretariat of Migration, visited Bardarash refugee camp in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. He saw how UNHCR and partners are providing support and protection for over 11,000 Syrian refugees that fled new violence in northeast Syria.



Kurdistan Region Prime Minister visited the Bardarash refugee camp

Erbil, 9 November 2019 - H.E. Mr Masrour Barzani, the Kurdistan Region (KRG) Prime Minister visited the Bardarash refugee camp today. He was briefed by camp management on developments, refugee needs and the flow of operations. He met with UNHCR staff, humanitarian partners and saw different operational aspects and areas of the camp where the response to the refugees is taking place.

He later visited some Syrian refugee families and listened to their concerns and asked them about their living conditions.

His Excellency spoke to humanitarian partners and said that KRG is sharing a huge burden for managing these camps and until refugees can find a suitable situation for a dignified return to their areas of origin, we are trying as much as possible to support these refugee families.

“We value the effort of UNHCR and



other humanitarian agencies in responding to this emergency. Their contributions have helped us carry the burden.” He added.

UNHCR and on behalf of all the humanitarian partners working on this refugee response acknowledges the

vital role of the Government and authorities of KRG as well as its people in providing assistance and support to the refugee response. We appreciate all the help, support, and generosity they have given over the years to our agencies and to refugees in KRI.

UNHCR Jordan registration teams offer a helping hand at Bardarash refugee camp!

Erbil, 12 November 2019 - Haneen-a registration staff member deployed from the UNHCR Jordan operation to Iraq- received a Syrian refugee woman at Bardarash refugee camp who came with her child today. Haneen offered her help by holding baby Even while her mother finished her iris scan.

Syrian refugees who newly arrived in Iraq fleeing new violence in northeast Syria, are registered daily at the registration centre in Bardarash refugee camp.

To respond to the influx and quickly register refugees, UNHCR Iraq had to triple the number of registration staff, asking other offices to deploy staff from

the region. The Jordan office responded by sending staff members from Amman, Zaatari, Irbid, Mafraq and Azraq offices.

Haneen and her colleagues from the Jordan operation are in the camp daily helping to speed up the registration process so that all refugees can be registered in the next few days. Bardarash refugee camp hosts over 11,600 Syrian refugees today.

Registering Syrian refugees is a key element in their protection. This provides them with proof of identity, the right to reside in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and access to services.



UNHCR hosts a Dutch delegation at the Bardarash refugee camp

Dohuk, 20 November 2019 - UNHCR hosted Eric Strating, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Iraq, and visiting delegation in Bardarash refugee camp. They were briefed about refugee situation and response and did a tour of the camp.



Winter adds to fears of Syrians fleeing conflict in north-east



Residents of Bardarash camp in Kurdistan Region of Iraq brace for harsh weather as US\$222m needed to help millions of displaced Syrians and Iraqis survive winter.

Erbil, 22 November 2019 - Sitting on a concrete slab outside her tent in Bardarash camp – home to more than 13,000 recently-arrived refugees from north-east Syria – Jamila watches her adopted son Arosh playing in the unseasonable sunshine that still warms this part of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). But she knows that even this small mercy will not last.

“It rained here last week, and the water entered through the side of my tent,” she said. “It was only a short shower, but you could feel the mood in the camp change as people realized where they are now, and what they are facing.”

Until last month, 50-year-old Jamila had lived all her life in Ras al-Ain, a city on Syria’s northern border with Turkey. Despite long periods of hardship and insecurity during the country’s nearly nine-year conflict, she had remained in her home even when others from the town opted to leave.

In early October, however, the day came when she was no longer able to stay put. “It happened in the late afternoon, they started shelling the city,” Jamila said. “I took my son and the things I was able to carry and left town with my sister and her family at dusk. As we drove away we saw bodies at the side of the road.”

Jamila spent several days near the Iraqi border before walking across in the dead of night, keeping eight-year-old Arosh close by. They were taken on buses along with hundreds of other new arrivals to Bardarash camp, which lies between the city of Duhok and KRI’s capital, Erbil.

The latest escalation of violence in north-east Syria has left more than 74,000 people displaced from their homes inside the country, and driven some 15,500 refugees to seek safety in neighbouring Iraq.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has immediately responded to this new emergency by providing life-saving protection and assistance to those in need. But the imminent arrival of winter storms and plummeting temperatures threatens to exacerbate an already dire situation.

In Bardarash camp, working alongside the Kurdish authorities and local NGO partners, UNHCR is providing all refugees in the camp with a tent, essentials such as kitchen sets and mattresses, as well as health care and protection services including psychosocial support.

To help prepare them for the coming winter, when the area regularly experiences heavy rains and near-zero-degree temperatures, families are also provided with high-thermal blankets and floor mats, insulated tent linings, plastic sheeting, and kerosene stoves and fuel.

Despite these preparations, Jamila still feels a sense of foreboding about the coming winter. “We are safe now, but safety is not the only concern when you are facing so many risks,” she says. “This is my first time living in a tent, and I don’t think this is going to be an easy winter for us and many others in this camp.”

Across the wider region, UNHCR estimates that 3.8 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees and internally displaced people require assistance to prepare for the coming winter in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. For many, this will be their ninth consecutive winter in displacement.

UNHCR requires US\$222 million to

provide timely assistance to all those in need through its winterization programme, which covers the period from September 2019 to March 2020. Support includes the provision of core relief and winter items, as well as seasonal cash assistance to help families cover the cost of heating and other needs during the cold months.

“Ongoing preparations for assistance began in September and support will continue throughout winter,” UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic told reporters in Geneva on Friday. “Preparations include deliveries of core winter relief items such as high-thermal blankets, plastic sheets and warm clothing.”

In Bardarash, fear over the arrival of winter was shared by another lone mother caring for her two young children in the camp. Nadira, 25, spent a winter under canvass during the early years of the conflict when she was displaced from her home in rural Aleppo, so knows what to expect.

“I know that winter in a tent is hard, and the weather here is harsh,” she said. “I am concerned that my children may get sick. Several times a night they wake up and tell me they are cold, so I cover them up [with more blankets].”

“When we first arrived at the camp, they gave us blankets, mattresses, insulation mats, a heater and kerosene,” Nadira added. “In the morning when we wake up it is already cold, but I don’t want to waste the kerosene. I know that soon, it is going to get colder.”

By Charlie Dunmore, UNHCR Iraq



France welcomes final Yazidi families from Iraq through Humanitarian Admissions Programme

Paris/Erbil, 22 November 2019 - One hundred members of Iraq's Yazidi community arrived safely in Paris, France, on Wednesday (20/11), the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) final operation in support of French President Emmanuel Macron's 2018 commitment to receive 100 families from the ethno-religious minority group.

"These families have been through unimaginable trials and IOM Iraq has been proud to assist the French authorities with this important initiative," said Giovanni Cassani, IOM Iraq's Head of Programmes and Head of the Erbil Office.

"Many more families across Iraq remain in displacement. We will continue to support these populations, as well as host communities and returnees, during the recovery and stabilization process."

Yazidis are found primarily in northern Iraq. In August 2014 the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) swept through Sinjar, the stronghold of Iraq's Yazidi community; hundreds of civilians are believed to have died as a consequence. One of the enduring images of that period was the plight of tens of thousands of Yazidis who were forced to flee to Mount Sinjar. Many have yet to return home.

The Humanitarian Admissions Pro-

gramme (HAP) was launched at the request of the French President in October 2018, with the support of 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad, who has advocated for vulnerable Yazidi women worldwide.

"Less than a year after the first families were welcomed in France, the arrival of 27 Yazidi women and their children in Paris yesterday is a testament to the implementation of the commitment made by President Emmanuel Macron to Nadia Murad," said Ambassador Eric Chevallier, Director of the French Crisis and Support Centre.

"In France these families receive protection, security and education, as well as medical and social support. Their integration into the host communities is facilitated by local non-governmental organizations, a process that is quite successful so far. Along with the emergency humanitarian assistance and stabilization efforts in Iraq that contribute to preserve the cultural diversity of the country, this programme is part of France's action to help the victims of ethnic and religious persecution by ISIL in the Middle East."

Prior to their departure for France, IOM assisted the families with transportation to Erbil, short-term accommodation, and medical check-ups. Along the journey from Duhok Governate to Erbil, the families stopped at Lalish, a

Yazidi temple and pilgrimage site. IOM teams also organized cultural orientation sessions, facilitated their travel to France and were on hand at Charles de Gaulle Airport when they arrived. French NGOs provide the families with housing and provisions for long-term social support to support their path to integration into their host communities and French society.

"Today's safe arrival of the families is proof that the Humanitarian Admissions Programme is a flexible and responsive tool that offers a safe and legal avenue for people in need," said Sara Abbas, head of IOM's office in France. "The programme is designed to complement resettlement in solidarity with them and share responsibility with countries hosting the majority of forcibly displaced persons."



DSRSG and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Marta Ruedas visit to Sulaymaniyah

Sulaymania, 27 November 2019 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, travelled to Sulaymaniyah, where she met with Dr. Haval Abubaker, Governor of Sulaymaniyah, to

resolve issues affecting the delivery of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons and Syrian refugees. DSRSG Ruedas later visited a hospital in Sulaymaniyah, where the World Health Organization (WHO) recently provided the emergency ward with 50 electric bed units to expand services for

the community. The DSRSG also met with representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and UN agencies, funds, and programs delivering humanitarian aid and development projects in Sulaymaniyah.



Photo: WHO Iraq



Humanitarian assistance, case by case

Baghdad, 9 December 2019 – “When my nine-member family and I returned from Sulaymaniyah Governorate in 2017 after three years in displacement, we found our house largely destroyed, but we repaired it. When the winter arrived, my children were cold because we did not have blankets, as we lost most of our household items. These items will help my children and I to go through the winter,” said Hazem Nayef, a returnee to Abu Bakr village in Diyala Governorate.

IOM - UN Migration distributed 157 parcels of non-food item winter kits to help families who have returned to their places of origin. Items include an oil heater, blankets and a jerry cane, all useful to fight the cold. The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance has funded the winter kits.

Mohammed is a Syrian refugee from Qamishly. He is a baker. He fled with his family some 8 years ago and is now living in Kawergosk Syrian refugee camp near Erbil in Kurdistan Region.



He was a baker in Syria and has opened a bakery in the camp, selling fresh bread to camp residents. His bread became so famous that residents of the host community in Kawergosk buy his bread. He even delivers to Erbil city some orders for his famous bread. Kawergosk Camp was opened in 2013, by September 2019 it housed 7,800 Syrian refugees.

Only 24% of refugee children attend school, compared to 84% globally. Despite this fact, children at Kawergosk camp attend school at an above-average rate.

Some refugees have opened up shops in Kawergosk, helping boost their livelihood, providing services to camp residents and to residents of the host community as well.

Government of Iraq and IOM share findings of first ever nationwide migration profile

Baghdad, 19 December 2019 - Iraq, compared to neighboring countries in the Middle East like Jordan and Lebanon, hosts the lowest number of immigrants relevant to the population. However, the country's foreign population increased 338 per cent between 1990 and 2017, due largely to the influx of refugees from Syria.

Migration in northern Iraq is largely driven by conflict, while migration in southern Iraq is more often linked to livelihood factors such as the loss of arable land and water scarcity.

These, and other findings from the first Migration Profile for Iraq, were revealed on Thursday (19/12) during a press briefing at Baghdad's Babylon Hotel. The Migration Profile was developed through a capacity-building process overseen by a Technical Working Group established by the Government of Iraq's Ministries of Migration and Displacement; Interior; Foreign Affairs; Justice; Labour and Social Affairs; and Planning; as well as the Central Statis-

tics Office alongside the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Migration Profile presents facts and figures about migration; it is the first-ever statistical overview of migration in Iraq and will help establish an evidence base that will influence national migration policies and strategies including a National Migration Strategy. In October 2019 IOM also completed the Migration Governance Indicator (MGI) assessment that measures national capacities across 90 governance indicators in six thematic areas.

"The Migration Profile is the result of the first-year meetings between Iraqi ministries and IOM. It will influence both near and far-reaching migration policies," said Ahmed Rahim, Director of the Department of Foreign Immigration at the Government of Iraq's Ministry of Displacement and Migration.

"The Migration Profile demonstrates the Government of Iraq's commitment to harnessing evidence-based and whole-of-Government approaches towards strong migration governance" said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "The Migration data it contains can be leveraged in years to come to mainstream migration into policies and strategies."

The profile shows that patterns of out migration have shifted significantly since 2003. During the period between

the Gulf War and 2003, the primary destination for Iraqis migrating abroad was Iran; after 2003, Jordan and Syria emerged as primary destinations. Europe became a major destination after 2014, with Sweden, Germany and the UK standing out as significant destination countries.

In recent years, internal displacement has been a prime concern. Displacement driven by the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) presents a peculiar case, in that it has provoked more internal displacement than international migration — in part because previous countries of refuge were in crisis themselves (Syria) or inaccessible (Jordan). Emigration as a result of ISIL's presence has reached Turkey, Europe and Western countries, rather than former asylum countries (Iran, Jordan, Syria).

Other findings of the profile relate to the Iraqi diaspora; trends of irregular migration; Iraqi students studying abroad; and more. IOM has carried out similar studies in over 80 countries around the world using a standard approach to the research. The profile uses existing knowledge and literature; interviews with government and international organizations; publicly available quantitative data; and non-public data shared both by Iraqi authorities and international organizations.



When affordability matters: the political economy and economic decision making of Iraqi IDPs

Baghdad, 24 December 2019 - This study by IOM Iraq, Returns Working Group (RWG), and Social Inquiry Group delves into the various issues and challenges that IDPs consider when assessing the affordability of return, and accordingly, the calculations they make when considering whether or not to remain in displacement.

According to the report findings, affordability is less an economic calculation than a holistic concept comprised of multiple factors that determine safety and wellbeing. While barriers to return,

such as destroyed housing and inadequate economic opportunities, are critical components of affordability, it is crucial also to consider the tenuous yet viable networks and safety nets constructed by IDPs in displacement that also contribute to their decision to remain. The notion of overcoming not only financial losses but destroyed social resources and stressful memories all factor into the analysis that IDPs make when they consider the affordability of return. Thus, the interviewed IDPs understand affordability based on

perceptions of conditions at home as well as the resources and mitigation measures available in areas of displacement.

Understanding the context behind an internally displaced person's (IDP) stated financial inability to return helps to elucidate their reasons for not returning, as well as the impact of other related political and economic factors on their decision-making process and the pursuit of durable solutions.

UNHCR welcomes new funding from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to assist vulnerable displaced persons in Iraq



Baghdad, 26 December 2019 - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, welcomes a new donation of USD 5.6 million from the Kingdom of the Netherlands for 2019 and 2020 to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and Syrian refugees in Iraq. This contribution is part of the global PROSPECTS Partnership aiming at joining partners' efforts to develop a new paradigm in responding to forced displacement crises through the involvement of development actors.

While Iraq recovers from conflict, the needs of its population diversify. Some 4.4 million people have returned to their homes and are restarting their lives; however, the conditions for sustainable return are not yet met across all the country. Continued assistance for the 1.4 million displaced Iraqis and over 286,000 refugees, and the host communities, is essential to ensure a stable and peaceful recovery. The generous contribution from the Kingdom of the Netherlands will ensure the provision of legal assistance and civil documentation to internally displaced per-

sons across Iraq, along with the provision of specialized individual and group-based psychosocial support for children.

In addition, the donation will contribute to improve the access to formal primary and secondary education for Syrian refugee children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

H.E. Mr. Eric Strating, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Iraq, emphasized the importance of the urgent recovery and strengthened resilience of those who have been affected and displaced by conflict. "If we truly want to assist Iraq in achieving durable stability, we cannot leave anyone behind. Assistance in the field of civil documentation, access to education, but also psychosocial support, is part of the most basic needs for people who are trying to rebuild their lives."

Within this context, the Netherlands initiated the PROSPECTS Partnership in Iraq, aimed at strengthened cooperation of humanitarian and development partners, in order to achieve durable solutions for the 1.4 million displaced

Iraqi's and the 286,000 refugees on Iraqi soil.

The recent Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment conducted from June to August 2019, shows that nearly 2.9 million individuals, including camp-based and out-of-camp IDPs as well as returnees, are missing at least one form of civil documentation. With the generous donation from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, UNHCR will continue assisting IDPs to access legal assistance and civil documentation in collaboration with the Government of Iraq, helping them establish their legal identity, access public services, return to their homes, and exercise their basic rights. Moreover, this contribution will support the provision of case management and psychosocial support for children survivors of violence, exploitation and abuse, and will complement education assistance aimed at ensuring access to formal education opportunities and obtaining official learning accreditation for Syrian refugee children.

"While the situation in Iraq has notably improved during the past years and the country is steadily transitioning and advancing into a new post-conflict phase, we need to continue supporting its people in their recovery and national reconciliation efforts. Particularly the more than 1.4 million Iraqis and over 286,000 refugees still affected by displacement and wishing to rebuild their lives. This generous contribution enables us to be responsive and compassionate with those that continue relying heavily on humanitarian assistance. With ongoing support, we will stand with all those affected by displacement in Iraq until complete recovery is achieved," said Ayman Gharai-beh, UNHCR Representative in Iraq.

UNHCR: Syrian refugee families received winter cash assistance through EyePay system using iris authentication

Baghdad, 30 December 2019 - During the month of November, 10,573 Syrian refugee families received winter cash assistance through EyePay system using iris authentication.

Another 1,376 refugee households received winter cash assistance of whom 32% were female-headed households. In total 4,223 individuals (301 elderly and 154 persons with specific needs) benefited from the winter cash assistance. The remaining beneficiaries will receive cash assistance during the month of December.

Iraqi internally displaced persons: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency through financial service providers started



opening e-wallets for the beneficiaries residing across 25 IDP camps, 25,056

families benefited from the winter cash assistance.

Return and Reintegration

Training of Trainers workshop focused on addressing the risks of irregular migration and on building capacity to arrange public awareness events held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 8 December 2019 - IOM Iraq supports the Government of Iraq in managing safe, orderly and regular migration. Last week, 22 officials from the Ministry of Migration and Displace-

ment (MoMD) participated in a Training of Trainers focused on addressing the risks of irregular migration and building capacity to arrange public awareness events. The event is framed

within the second phase of the German funded project “Voluntary Returnees as Messengers”, which aims to raise awareness of the risks of using irregular migration channels by promoting a peer-to-peer approach and strong community engagement via different media outlets, as well as trainings for Governmental Officials and other relevant multipliers.

A delegation from IOM Germany attended the Training of Trainers to provide an overview of return migration and reintegration, focusing on the dynamics of pre-departure community outreach and virtual counselling done in Germany.

During the last day of the Training of Trainers, representatives from the German Consulate in Erbil joined the activity to meet the MoMD officials and contribute to the discussion.



IOM supports return and reintegration of Iraqis who illegally left Iraq

Erbil, 19 November 2019 - Shalaw Abdulstar owned a clothing shop for four years before several financial crises hit the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in 2014, causing many businesses to fail. “After the crises hit, I was barely making any money. I couldn’t pay the shop’s rent to continue my business, let alone other expenses. I had no choice but to close the shop and stay at home,”

Shalaw said.

Shalaw, 35, is from Erbil. He decided to emigrate to Europe with his brother in late 2017, and sold his car and other belongings to collect money for the journey.

“We first contacted a smuggler here in Erbil and went to Turkey. From there we went to Edirne, which is a city at the border between Turkey and Greece;

we walked for eight hours non-stop before crossing the border into Greece,” Shalaw explained. “The most dangerous part was when we walked in between military camps; we could see the soldiers training. We had to bend down and walk through the dense forest to stay hidden.”

“I regretted embarking on the journey the moment I crossed the Turkish bor-

IOM supports return and reintegration of Iraqis who illegally left Iraq *(continued)*

der. I missed my family and my wife, and wished I had never made the decision to emigrate,” he added.

After their perilous journey to Greece, the brothers still had to travel a long way to reach their intended destination — Germany.

Shalaw and his brother stayed in Athens for four months. During that time, they made several attempts to cross the border into Italy and Germany.

“I missed my family so much, especially after my brother’s incident. I felt their absence and I wanted to come home,” Shalaw said. “My wife was pregnant, and I wanted to be back home before the baby was born.”



Shalaw approached IOM in Athens and applied for voluntary return assistance. IOM took care of the brothers’ travel arrangements and they were able to go home on 1 January 2018.

“IOM treated us well, they gave us pocket money and provided us with accommodation. They also called in a doctor for my brother, to continue treating his ankle,” Shalaw explained.

After returning to Iraq, IOM conducted face-to-face counselling sessions with both brothers and provided them with in-kind assistance. Shalaw was able to re-open his clothing shop and enroll in a two-month vocational training to learn English, while his brother received assistance to open a market stall.

“I was in a very bad situation. I didn’t have any money left. IOM’s assistance helped me get back on my feet,” Shalaw said. “Our situation is so much better now; my brother’s ankle healed, and we are both happy that we decided to come back.”

When asked if he would consider leaving again, Shalaw said: “Never. Maybe only as a tourist. I learned the value of being among friends and family. People in Greece were very good to us, but I don’t want to live away from my family again.”

IOM’s assistance to Shalaw was funded by Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

(GIZ) and the German Center for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration in Iraq (GMAC).

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“I was young and I wanted to be famous, it didn’t matter how. And I thought that wouldn’t happen in Iraq,” said Ashti, 24, who emigrated to Germany in 2013.

Ashti, from Dahuk Governorate, was still a student when he decided to emigrate to Europe. He worked for a few months in a food distribution company and saved the necessary money, then traveled to Istanbul and paid smugglers to get him to Germany.

“The smugglers collected 14 of us and took us to Greece on foot. It was a very cold night, and we got very tired,” said Ashti.

Ashti stayed in Greece for three days, then he and another migrant managed to hide in a trailer that was being ferried to Italy.

“When we met the smuggler’s contact in Milan, I told him that we needed to rest; we had been hiding in an uncomfortable position, in a truck, for 18 hours, but he refused, and we continued the journey,” Ashti said. “I never expected the smugglers to be so cold-hearted, their only goal was to get people to their destination and receive their money.”

Ashti finally arrived in Germany, after a long drive through Italy and Austria. He immediately went to a police station and applied for asylum.

“I was very happy at the beginning, but after I was taken to a camp, I was very disappointed and regretted my decision,” Ashti said. “The camp was in a horrible state. This was not the life I had imagined in Europe.”

Ashti was determined to stay; he learned the language and held a few different jobs. However, he didn’t feel like he was going anywhere in life.

“I worked a lot, but I couldn’t save any money. It was all spent on taxes and personal expenses. I felt like I was wearing myself out for nothing,” Ashti said. “I didn’t have time for anything. By the time I [got home after work] it

was late and I still had to cook, wash my clothes and get ready for the next day.”

Five years went by like but Ashti’s future was still uncertain since his asylum request had not yet been approved. He decided to go back to Iraq and approached IOM.

Ashti went back in October 2018, with the organization’s support. He also received housing assistance, including furniture and several months’ rent, as part of IOM’s reintegration package.

“I’m very happy that I came back. I now work as a decorator and earn a good income. I also have more time to spend with my family and friends,” Ashti said. Ashti now believes that if you can’t find happiness in your country, then you won’t find it anywhere else. This is what he tells his friends and family when they ask him about Europe.

“I tell them that they will ruin their lives in Iraq and won’t gain much in Europe. People should focus on creating a happy life in their own country,” Ashti concluded.

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Ardalan Sabir, a 37-year-old from Erbil Governorate, was a taxi driver with a stable income when he decided to migrate to Europe with his wife and four children in 2015.

“I simply wanted to improve my situation and provide better opportunities for my children; Europe seemed like the best option,” Ardalan explained.

Ardalan had heard the stories of smugglers manipulating and exploiting migrants so he was reluctant to embark on the journey. But one of his close friends, who supposedly knew some smugglers, tried to reassure him.

“I would never have trusted smugglers or considered irregular migration but my friend, who had experience helping migrants, said he would join us on the journey and make sure we arrived safely,” Ardalan said.

Ardalan and his family started their journey to Germany in September 2015. They travelled by boat to a Greek island, where they met with members of an organization who gave them the

IOM supports return and reintegration of Iraqis who illegally left Iraq *(continued)*

necessary paperwork to travel through Europe and reach Germany. From there, they travelled through several countries by bus, train and on foot, until they finally arrived in Germany.

“I regretted my decision as soon as we were at sea. There were 18 of us in a small boat [between Turkey and Greece]. My wife and children were very scared and started crying,” Ardalan recounted. “We had heard many stories of immigrants drowning in the sea, including the two daughters from a family we know well. They drowned when their boat capsized.”

After reaching Germany, the family applied for asylum and stayed at a few different camps. But when Ardalan saw the horrible living conditions in the camps and experienced difficulties adapting to a different culture, he realized that life in Germany was not quite what he had imagined.

“We are a family of six but had to share a house — one bathroom and one kitchen — with five other families. There were constant disputes with the other

families about the use of the [shared spaces],” Ardalan explained.

Six months after arriving in Germany, the family grew tired of their situation. Before the German court reached a decision regarding their asylum request, they relocated to France and applied for asylum there. However, a year later, France rejected their request and the family returned to Germany.

“When we returned to Germany, I had already lost hope in Europe and wanted to go back home, but I decided to try one more time. So, we applied for asylum again but we didn’t have the strength to wait for a reply, and after a few months, we decided to return to Iraq,” Ardalan explained.

The family was directed to the International Organization for Migration; in October 2018 IOM handled all the necessary logistics that allowed the family to go back to their home country.

“I was very happy to be home. Although the kids were a little bit upset that we came back, they soon adapted and are

now happy. They frequently talk about their memories of Europe and talk to their German friends over the phone,” Ardalan said. “My best memory of our time in Germany was when I told my German friends and the children’s teachers that we wanted to go back home. They all offered to help so we could stay, but I knew I wanted to go back.”

Ardalan now lives a dignified life in his community. IOM helped him reintegrate, and provided the family with housing assistance, including furniture and several months’ rent. IOM also supported Ardalan financially so that he could buy a taxi, start working again and earn an income.

“Many people ask me about emigrating to Europe. I always advise against it, especially for families. We were lucky that nothing happened on our way there. So many things could have gone wrong, out there at sea, and we could have died,” Ardalan concluded.

Stabilization and Development

UN-HABITAT supports the peaceful resolution of property disputes through mediation in Hamdaniya and Telkaif in Nineveh

Baghdad, 8 October 2019 - UN-Habitat, through its program ‘Support to Housing, Land and Property Rights (HLP) for IDPs in Nineveh’, aims at enhancing local capacities for peaceful resolution of property disputes, especially concerning vulnerable minorities who face the problem of secondary occupation during and after the conflict. Through UN-Habitat’s collaboration and partnership with Caritas Czech Republic, 14 young men and women from Hamdaniya and Telkaif are currently trained to be certified as mediators.

Coming from diverse backgrounds, trainees are currently studying mediation, an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism. Mediation is an innovative approach in Iraq through which parties in conflict can voluntarily resolve their dispute through a third, impartial party, called Mediator/s, that facilitates the settlement of dispute out of the court, saving them time and legal fees. Building on international expertise and best practices in mediation, participants learn how to apply this approach in their own communities.

This initiative has enjoyed the interest of the community, including representatives of religious groups and local authorities. On 22 September 2019, UN-Habitat HLP Coordinator Mr. Muslim Qazimi attended the training and shared his experience as an international certified mediator, encouraging trainees to learn continuously and reminding them that they are becoming promoters of peace.

After graduation, the newly certified mediators will be ready to approach parties in dispute to facilitate the amicable settlement of conflicts, and their services as mediators will be free of charge. Through this actions UN-Habitat contributes to the stabilization of Iraq, support the sustainable return of IDPs in Nineveh governorate, and fosters peace and dialogue between communities.



U-Report launched in Iraq

Baghdad, 20 October 2019 - UNICEF, the Governments of Iraq and of the Kurdistan Region launched U-Report Iraq last week, a free interactive mobile-based tool for adolescents and young people.

"U-Report will go a long way in engaging children and young people and ensuring that their voices and opinions are heard," said UNICEF Iraq Representative, Ms. Hamida Lasseko at the launch of UReport Iraq last week.



Ministry of Planning and UN-Habitat discussed a way forward for data management on reconstruction and development activities

Baghdad, 22 October 2019 - On 15-17 October 2019, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) held a three-day workshop titled "Towards the Advancement of the Main National Platform for Construction and Development" inviting selected technical staff of GIS Department of the Central Statistical Organization at the Ministry of Planning in Erbil. The main objective of the workshop was to discuss lessons learned a year after launching the Platform, which was developed by UN-Habitat in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning with generous funding from the Iraq UN-DAF Trust Fund, and how to develop the platform work in the next phase.

Ms. Anna Soave welcomed the attendees on behalf of UN-Habitat and commended the distinct role of the Ministry's technical staff for their dedication towards the success of the Plat-

form, which covers a wide range of reconstruction and development activities not only in the liberated areas but in all governorates of Iraq. As of October 2019, the Platform provides information on 6,000 government investment projects, 5,000 regional and local development projects, as well as more than 2,600 projects implemented by the United Nations agencies in Iraq.

Mr. Firas Rasheed, Head of the GIS Department of the Central Statistical Organization, thanked UN-Habitat for its technical and operational support that led to the success of the Platform, which is a strategic project that serves reconstruction efforts and allows evidence-based decision-making.

During the workshop, several topics were discussed, including the current performance of the Platform, the mechanism of data collection, the challenges of updating the database and adding

new analytical tools to enable the user and the decision maker to extract detailed reports and display them in an interactive and smooth manner.

At the end of the workshop, the Central Statistical Organization and UN-Habitat agreed to add new analytical tools and several modifications on the website design to make it more user-friendly, and to activate the communications and media strategy to reach out to wider audience. It was also agreed to work closely to develop the roadmap to enhance the Platform based on the needs discussed during this workshop, especially the possibility of involving all data providers such as related directorates, governorates and line ministries to enable them to use the same technology to facilitate the processes of data collection and updating the databases.

New skills for a new beginning

Baghdad, 31 October 2019 - With funds from the OFDA, IOM recently conducted a 5-day handicrafts training course for 10 displaced women in Ameriyat al - Fallujah camp.

"Our financial situation is very difficult. My husband does not have a job and we have 3 children. I found this course very very useful, as I learned about handicrafts. I would love to sell my products in the future and earn some money from my sales," said Hanaa, a displaced women from west Anbar.

"Farming fruits and vegetables is my life, it's our living" Matra (75), returned home with her family to Yathreb in Iraq, after spending 2 years displaced. UNHCR helps returnees with electric, water and irrigation so they can go back with dignity and restart their lives.

"When I was living in Al Qaim district, west of Anbar, I had a real talent for sewing and would design and sew clothes. This course has taught me new sewing skills and I hope to be able to open a shop one day," said Wafaa, who was displaced to Ameriyat Al-Falluja camp in 2017.

Wafaa and ten other displaced women in Amiriyat Al-Fallujah camp participated in a sewing training course organized by IOM Iraq, to encourage the women to develop their skills. A competition was held for the best design and the first-place prize was a sewing kit.

This project is funded by the Office of Foreign Development Assistance (OFDA).

IOM also supported the Mosul International Job Fair. Economic recovery and job-creation are at the forefront of IOM programmes and its strategic vision to

support recovery efforts in Iraq. During the fair, IOM's business advisors conducted sessions on interview and resume tips and on the Iraqi market environment and dynamics.



With the support of UNHCR: inauguration of the first National Identification Document Centre in Ninewa Governorate

Baghdad, 31 October 2019 - The Directorate of Civil Affairs, Passports and Residency in Ninewa Governorate, with the support of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, inaugurated today the first national Identification Document centre in Ninewa Governorate, which will provide Iraqi citizens with a national ID card. This national card will replace two civil documents – civil ID status data and citizenship certificate.

The national card will help thousands of Iraqis who lost civil documentation during recent conflicts, allowing them to prove their identity, and to gain access to public services and government assistance programmes. It will also reduce identity fraud and administrative and legal problems that occur due to name similarities. Many internally displaced persons have

lost, damaged or not been able to obtain civil status documentation, including birth certificates, as a result of factors linked to their forced displacement. More than 600,000 people across Ninewa will benefit from this initiative by the end of 2020.

Across Iraq, 8 per cent of out-of-camp IDP households, 10 per cent of camp-based IDP households, 8 per cent of returnee households and 6 per cent of households who remained in their homes reported missing documentation, without which they are unable to exercise basic civil rights.

“The lack of civil documentation among internally displaced persons is a major programmatic priority for UNHCR and other humanitarian protection actors in Iraq,” said Ayman Gharaibeh, UNHCR

Representative in Iraq. “It has the potential to dramatically improve the lives of Ninewa’s citizens, as well as assist local authorities ensure the provision of public services.”

Since 2017, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has been working with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior to implement mobile documentation centres in Ninewa, Erbil, Duhok, Sulaymaniyah, and with legal aid partners to assist thousands of displaced families across Iraq to acquire essential legal documents that they need to prove their identity, as well as to access public services and assistance. In addition to this first centre in East Mosul, new centres will soon be opened in Bartella, Nimrud, Zummar, Rabia’a, Hammam Al Alil and Qayyarah sub-districts.

UAE funds water treatment station in Mosul, Iraq

Mosul, 12 November 2019 -- As part of the UAE’s ongoing efforts to restore stability in several cities in Iraq, the Al Qubba Water Treatment Plant was inaugurated in east Mosul, in cooperation with the local government and the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP.

The inauguration was attended by Mansour Marid, Governor of Mosul, and UNDP Officer of Northern Iraq Governorates Projects, who thanked the UAE for supporting the project.

The station is one of the largest in Nineveh Governorate, east Mosul, and will cover the needs of 75 percent of the region’s people, benefitting 750,000 individuals.

The station is one of 23 projects implemented by the UNDP in Iraq costing AED220 million (US\$60 million), which are funded by the UAE.

These projects, which are estimated to benefit 1.2 million people, aim to restore local infrastructure and social facilities in the areas of health, electricity, water and housing, as well as provide job opportunities, build national capacities, empower women, develop local markets, and encourage refugees to return to their homes.

The UAE has provided humanitarian and development aid to Iraq worth AED2.63 billion (\$716 million) between 2014 and October 2019.



Anbar’s immediate stabilization needs supported by UNDP & USAID

Habbaniya, 16 November 2019 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Marta Reudas, and the Ambassador of the United States of America to Iraq, Amb. Matthew Tueller, alongside the Governor of Anbar, Mr. Ali Farhan, and the Mayor of Habbaniya, Mr. Ali Dawod Sulaiman met with students and staff of the Abd-Al-Rahman Al-Nasser Primary School in Habbaniya.

It was a ground-breaking ceremony to commemorate the continued partnership between USAID, the Anbar Governorate and UNDP to help meet Anbar’s immediate stabilization needs. Funded by USAID to UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization.



UN-Habitat supports victims of war in Mosul to file compensation claims for destroyed or damaged property

Mosul, 16 November 2019 - After the liberation of the areas occupied by ISIL, many families found their houses and property damaged or destroyed as a result of the conflict. This situation added one more hardship to the families trying to rebuild life after the war. As per Iraqi law on compensation, Law 20 of 2009 and 57 of 2015, all owners or heirs of properties that have been lost, damaged/destroyed during hostilities have the right to file the compensation claim for damaged or destroyed property to the Compensation Committee. However, not everyone is aware of this right, or is not familiar with the process and it can be challenging for victims of conflict to file a claim and receive due compensation. UN-Habitat is working

with local leaders and community members to change this situation. Supporting victims of war to file their claims, the program "Support to Housing, Land and Property Rights for IDPs in Nineveh" is working with members of the community in Mosul to raise awareness on the Iraqi Compensation Scheme. Targeting the most vulnerable groups, including ethnic and religious minorities who were particularly affected by the ISIL occupation, UN-Habitat holds local awareness-raising sessions to explain the requirements to file a claim with the relevant Compensation Committee and provides guidance on the process. UN-Habitat also provides counseling and legal aid for free, aiming at increasing the possibilities of

victims of war receiving compensation. A simplified guideline has been developed by UN-Habitat to support beneficiaries to better understand their rights and procedures to file compensation claims.

Since the beginning of these activities in September 2019, 60 men and women have attended awareness sessions in Mosul.



Workshop on Privileges and Immunities of the UN held in Erbil

Erbil, 20 November 2019 - The Department of Foreign Relations in the Kurdistan Region or Iraq (KRI) and UNHCR organized a workshop for members of the Judicial Council, for KRI judges and other government officials on the topic of Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. In his opening address, Chief Prosecutor, Judge Azad Khoshnaw, welcomed the initiative and the enhanced collaboration between UNHCR and Judicial bodies. Following the presentation of Lance Bartholomeusz, Head of the Legal Affairs Section at UNHCR's Headquarters in Geneva, a lively discussion on a variety of legal aspects developed. The officials also listened with interest

to Karen Whiting, Assistant Representative Protection, who provided a

summary of UNHCR's mandate and activities in Iraq.



FAO in Iraq met the National Food Security Committee

Baghdad, 20 November 2019 -The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Representative to the Republic of Iraq – Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, met with Dr. Hussein Ali Saud, Ministry of Agriculture Adviser for Animal Resources, in addition to the members of the Iraqi National Food Security Committee at the Ministry of Agriculture. Both principles held discussions on the food security strategy in Iraq, more specifically in regard to approaches, methodologies, survey instruments, and indicators for implementing food security strategy. In addition, the talk focused on the theory and practice of national early warning systems and its implications on future needs in regard to capacity development. During the meeting, Dr. Elhadj Hassan highlighted that Inter-



ministerial cooperation is essential to achieve food security at national level, particularly given the current constraints facing the country. He also stressed the need for participation from international, national, and subnation-

al partners and to institutionalize the process. Dr. Elhadj Hassan expressed FAO's commitment to be part of this process and taking firm steps towards achieving food security and nutrition for all Iraqis.

Building social cohesion in Erbil

Erbil, 27 November 2019 - From 17 to 21 November, IOM Iraq hosted a youth engagement training for local authorities, partner agencies, volunteers key stakeholders of Erbil's Sari Blind Community Centre. The training focused on planning, volunteering, principles of time management and activity development focused on social cohesion.

IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support teams started working in the Sari Blind area in October 2017 to support newly-arrived IDPs from areas affected by conflict and displacement. In January 2018, a community centre was established to support IDP families living in the area and promote good relationships with the host community.

This activity was funded by USAID - US Agency for International Develop-

ment and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.



Agricultural production struggles following ISIL presence in Iraq

Erbil, 29 November 2019 - The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) occupied large swathes of Iraqi territory between 2014 and 2017. The consequences of this occupation are still being felt in many rural areas where agricultural production was used as both a source of political propaganda and income, or destroyed as the group was forced out, a new IOM report says.

It is estimated that the group's brutal three-year occupation reduced Iraq's agricultural capacity by 40 per cent.

"It is necessary to prioritize the recovery and development of rural areas as part of our reconstruction and stabilization efforts," said Siobhan Simojoki, Head of IOM Iraq's Community Stabilization Unit.

"Agriculture should be considered as an essential facet of the stabilization process and focus on this area can help balance out longstanding rural-urban economic inequalities."

The report, *Rural Areas in Ninewa: Legacies of Conflict on Rural Economies and Communities in Sinjar and Ninewa Plains*, published on 28 November focuses on agricultural output in Iraq's third-largest governorate. Ninewa, in north-western Iraq, is also one of the country's most fertile areas and has historically been the source of much of its grain and produce.

ISIL benefitted from the 2014 harvest completed in the months before taking over Ninewa; the group then profited from sales of the harvest and rain-fed crops, while forcing workers to continue operating agricultural infrastructure. Finally, as ISIL was being pushed out, fighting, abuse, and revenge destruc-

tion caused severe lasting damage to the agricultural sector in the governorate.

ISIL purposely targeted rural areas for strategic purposes, i.e., access to their own steady food supply and the option to sell off agricultural produce for financial gain, but their overuse and, in some cases, deliberate destruction of agricultural land has had long-term consequences on many rural areas. Almost two years after the military defeat of ISIL in Iraq, livestock are still missing in Ninewa, agricultural lands remain contaminated with explosives, and necessary machinery is lost or destroyed.

To date, many stabilization and post-crisis development efforts have targeted urban areas. Ninewa's role in Iraq's agricultural industry suggests that

rebuilding agricultural livelihoods is an essential component to achieving successful stabilization in Iraq.

The presence of historically marginalized minorities in Ninewa's rural areas is also of great importance, given the sensitivities of ethno-religious tensions related to land ownership; Ninewa Governorate is one of the most diverse in Iraq in terms of the number and prevalence of minorities. The new also report considers tensions in rural areas that have been worsened or ignited due to land and water policies, and agricultural decline under ISIL.

The studies conducted for this report were funded by USAID, within the framework of the project Supporting the Return of Displaced Populations in the Ninewa Plains and Western Ninewa.



Returning to ruins, displaced Iraqi farmers find help to rebuild

Displaced for two years following ISIS advance in 2014, returning Iraqis in Yathrib benefit from irrigation and home rehabilitation projects to reestablish their farms.

Yathrib, Iraq, 02 December 2019 - "When we left, the oranges on the trees were this big," says Matra, cradling the memory of the fruit in two weather-beaten hands as she describes the night they fled their farm. "When we returned, the trees were all burned and nothing was left."

Matra, 60, escaped along with her family and most of the other villagers of Yathrib – a farming community some 50 kilometres north of Baghdad – when ISIS fighters swept through the area in mid-2014.

"It was a tough night," she says. "They were firing rockets at us. We managed to flee, but it was a painful night."

After being displaced for two years, she was finally able to return to the farm in 2016, but was met with a scene of devastation. "Everything was different," Matra said. "I came back and the farm was burned and everything was gone, including our clothes."

Where once they had produced enough oranges, pomegranates, grapes and other products to support a simple yet

comfortable lifestyle, the damage done to their home and farmland by the retreating militants meant they were no longer able produce enough to sell.

"Farming is my life, we can't survive without it. We harvest and sell. But now I just plant to eat," Matra explains. The small apartment she shared with her husband attached to the main farmhouse had been gutted by fire, forcing them to sleep in a shared room with half a dozen other family members.

It was a similar story for her neighbour Kutaiba, 22, whose family owns a 4,000 square metre plot of vines and apple and pomegranate trees. After being displaced for two years to the nearby city of Samarra, relying on his father's teaching salary to get by, they came back to find the farm he had lived on all his life destroyed.

"When I returned, it was heart-breaking," Kutaiba said. "The farm was ruined and the house was burned down." They set about the labourious and costly work of rebuilding, starting with the farm that provides their livelihood before moving on to the house, repairing one room at a time.

"For us, the farm is everything," Kutaiba explains. "Replanting takes time. This is the first year [since 2016] that

we have had a harvest. Life was better before. We have lost a lot – money, homes, cars, cows – life is more expensive now, and more difficult."

Of the estimated 12,000 residents from Yathrib that were displaced in 2014, some 8,500 have so far returned to the area. In the country as a whole, of nearly 6 million people internally displaced by the conflict since 2014, some 4.3 million have returned to their homes while around 1.6 million remain currently displaced.

Across Iraq, UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency – is working to provide assistance both to displaced people and those returning home. In Yathrib, it has funded a number of priority projects including installing new electricity transformers, rehabilitating water treatment plants and repairing road bridges and the area's main irrigation canal.

"Water is vital to our lives. Without it, all the [replanted] trees would have died," Kutaiba says. "The irrigation was destroyed during the war, so the repairs were a big help in getting us back in business."

UNHCR is also helping individuals such as Matra with repairs to their damaged homes, replacing windows and doors and plastering and painting damaged walls. The scale of the rebuilding task is huge, as evidenced by the rows of crumpled houses that were destroyed by the militants as they left. But for the returning residents, there is at least a glimmer of hope.

"This is my land, and the land of my ancestors. Of course I am very attached to it," Kutaiba explains. "We were one of the first families to return, because we wanted to live with dignity on our own land, even though everything was destroyed. I can't describe the feeling when we came back, [and now] I look forward to a better future."

By Charlie Dunmore and Edith Champagne, UNHCR Iraq



New skills for sustainable jobs - Toyota Iraq, UNDP and Human Relief Foundation celebrate the graduation of IDPs in automotive training programme

Erbil, 3 December 2019 - Sixteen Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have graduated from Toyota Iraq's two-month Technical Development Training Programme, thanks to an on-going partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); with support from Human Relief Foundation (HRF).

The programme offered tailored training on Customer Relationship Management and Automotive Parts Warehouse Management to provide a pathway for long-term job opportunities for young men and women forcefully displaced during ISIL's occupation of Iraq. Six cohorts of IDPs have now successfully completed the Toyota certified training,

bringing the total number of IDPs trained under this programme to 69.

Toyota Iraq's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Shinsuke Fujimoto, congratulated graduates at a ceremony on Tuesday, "I am, indeed, honored to stand in front of you all and to bear witness to the graduation ceremony of our 6th group of trainees. Providing fair opportunity to

New skills for sustainable jobs - Toyota Iraq, UNDP ... (continued)



access jobs is one-way Toyota Iraq Corporate Social Responsibility Activity serves to support the society," he said. Ms. Zena Ali Ahmad, Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, also commented on the importance of building resilient communities. "Employability is a

critical factor in helping IDPs with the daunting task of rebuilding their lives – many of whom lost their jobs due to their forced displacement. Training opportunities like this are essential not only to build participants' confidence but allow them become financially inde-

pendent in the future," said Ms. Ali Ahmad.

Consular Officer of the Embassy of Japan in Iraq, Erbil, Mr. Katsumi Moriyasu, concluded with his gratitude toward the continued collaboration of public and private stakeholders, "This [partnership] is a clear indication of the growing recognition to the noble initiatives undertaken and being undertaken by Toyota Iraq and its partners, with a view to empowering displaced youth, women, persons living with a disability or other groups of the vulnerable."

Following the completion of classroom and simulation training, each graduate benefitted from an on-the-job work experience for one month with Toyota Iraq's Authorized Dealers. The training programme is financed by the Government of Japan and Germany's Ministry for Economic Cooperation through KfW.

Iraq and ILO pledge to further decent work in the country



Baghdad, 6 December 2019 - Iraq and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have signed the first Iraq Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), as the country recovers from decades of conflict.

The Programme, which runs from 2019 to 2023, supports national initiatives to promote decent work and strengthen Iraq's capacity to mainstream decent work in social and economic policies. It will be implemented through close partnerships between the ILO and employers' and workers' representatives in the country.

The agreement was signed on 5 December by ILO Regional Director for Arab States Ruba Jaradat, Director General of Labour and Vocational Training Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs Raed Bahedh, President of the Iraqi Federation of Industries Ali Sabeeh al-Saadi, and President of the General Federation of Trade Unions in Iraq Satar Denbous on behalf of the Trade Union organizations.

Also in attendance at the ceremony in Baghdad were the Minister of Labor

and Social Affairs Bassem al-Rubaie, Minister of Planning Nouri al-Dulaimi, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamad Alhakim, as well as heads of government departments and agencies, employer representatives, trade unionists, ambassadors and representatives of UN agencies.

"The ILO has a long history of close cooperation with the government and social partners of Iraq, and today's event marks the comprehensive re-engagement of the ILO in the country," said ILO Regional Director Jaradat.

"We look forward to providing our partners in Iraq with the required support to address labour market challenges and raise employment rates, strengthen social protection, boost growth rates, and decrease fragile and informal labour. The new Programme establishes a firm commitment between all partners to strengthen decent work in the country in a holistic, coherent and integrated manner, to ensure that decent work is at the heart of Iraq's recovery and reform processes," she added.

DWCPs are the ILO's main vehicle to

promote decent work as a key component in national development strategies. Under the programme, the ILO will work with government, worker and employer organizations in Iraq to support national initiatives on employment promotion, rights at work, social dialogue and social protection.

Based on extensive consultations between the ILO and Iraqi constituents, the Programme in Iraq will focus on three priorities:

Ensuring that private sector development supports the creation of new jobs. Extending and strengthening social protection, and addressing child labour. Improving social dialogue in order to promote rights at work.

Iraq has been a member of the ILO since 1932 and has ratified 68 ILO Conventions, including all eight fundamental Conventions.

Since 2004, the ILO and Iraq's government, workers' and employers' organizations have worked closely as part of the post-war reconstruction effort to bolster Decent Work and develop the labour market across different areas of the country.

Recent achievements include the adoption of a new Labour Law to improve Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; The ratification of ILO Convention 87 on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize and ILO Convention 187 on the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health; A roadmap for public employment services in Iraqi Kurdistan has also been designed.

People with small gestures

Baghdad, 9 December 2019 - “I feel alive when I start drawing, my feelings are expressed through my drawings. I follow a lot of international painters and I hope to be like them one day. My happiness comes from exhibitions like this that allow me to show my talents and let people see my efforts,” said Rizgar, 28.

Rizgar was one of 58 small people from Duhok Governorate and Zakho District who participated in “People with Small Gestures” - an exhibition organized by

IOM, The Little People Association and Rusaz organization to encourage better

interactions between internally displaced persons and host communities.



Semel Youth Center offers services that would help IDPs — who are unable to return to their areas of origin — to integrate with the host community

Duhok, 12 December 2019 - The Duhok Governorate Directorate of Youth, the Director of Semel Youth Centre and IOM Iraq officially inaugurated today a series of IOM-supported activities at the centre that will run until November 2020.

The project, funded by the European Union (Europe Aid), has been active since October and this official ceremony honoured the centre and the more than 1,000 participants that have already benefited from its services. Men, women, boys and girls from across Duhok Governorate have come to Semel Youth Centre for women’s leadership trainings; caregiver trainings; family and emotional support visits; music courses; group discussions; social cohesion dialogue; women’s self-help group sessions; informal educational courses (e.g. English lessons); and recreational activities for young children, including book café sessions that encourage young people to

read more.

The Women’s Leadership Course aims to build the participants’ capacities to be leaders in their communities. The focus is on women’s empowerment through activities and trainings for IDP and host community members; the course aims to help the women be more independent; make decision on matters important for their own well-being and that of their family members; while improving their knowledge of their roles and rights.

A music course is offered for young students, with a focus first on theory — pitch and sight reading — and then on practical skills. The goal, through music and performance, is to improve social relations and mood; build peace; and reduce tensions between different communities.

The Semel Youth Centre is a neutral and safe hub for young people from the many diverse communities that call



Duhok Governorate home. Host community members, IDPs and refugees are welcome at the centre, where classes, awareness-raising sessions and other activities are on offer to enhance social interactions, reduce tension and empower groups such as women and young people. The focus is on designing and providing services that would help IDPs — who are unable to return to their areas of origin — integrate the host community; and on building bridges between IDPs and host community members.

Kuwait supports housing units rehabilitation in Mosul

Baghdad, 16 December 2019 - Kuwaiti Society for Relief signs an agreement with UN-HABITAT to support the rehabilitation of 100 housing units for Iraqi families in Al-Shifa neighborhood in Mosul, Iraq paving the way for safe and sustainable return and stability.



New Assessment of the labor market and skills analysis: Iraq and Kurdistan Region-Iraq



Baghdad, 17 December 2019 - UNESCO in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning in Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Erbil Chamber of Commerce and Industry, held a launch event for the Report of Iraq labor Market Assessment followed by an expert workshop dedicated to “labor market & skills analysis: outcomes for key sectors”. Approximately 100 experts and stakeholders attended the event and 35 attended the workshop later to discuss how to deliver significant benefits to citizens and consumers across several industry sectors by utilising such re-

sults.

The Labor Market Assessment and Sector Skills Analysis project was a key component of the UNESCO Iraq TVET Reform programme, funded by the EU, in partnership with the governments of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

The main aim of the project is to supply comprehensive and up to date information to match skills provided by TVET providers and the skills actually needed and valued by seven selected industry sectors. The sectors are wholesale, retail and vehicle maintenance; transport and storage; manufacture;

ICT; construction; hospitality; and agriculture.

The workshop provided an extensive overview of various labor market business models, challenges, gaps, opportunities and practical examples. The workshop was attended by a number of Ministries Representatives, including Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, as well as by representatives of the private Sector. It helped to further raise awareness of labor market issues and the potential challenges ahead in a fast developing environment.

The Labor Market Assessment and Sector Skills Analysis was designed to find out about graduate supply from the education and training institutions; and the evolving demand of employers, and about emerging trends in the economic sectors which will affect the skills needed in the future. The project provides the information needed for planning and prioritising and resourcing the further development of the technical and vocational education and training system. It also provides a model for updating labor market information to inform planning and decision making in the future.

Made in Iraq



Baghdad, 17 December 2019 - Among many other priorities in the recovery of post-conflict Iraq, access to employment for the population in conflict-affected regions remains paramount. The ability of the population to earn a living wage impacts the recovery process and has a direct bearing on future stability.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) created the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) to support economic recovery in Iraq. The creation

of EDF was a direct response to the Organization’s experiences in conflict-affected communities.

In Mosul, Anbar, Baghdad, Kirkuk and many other places, we encountered countless businesses whose buildings needed to be rebuilt or rehabilitated, who needed to replace lost or stolen equipment or who needed to hire workers.

IOM began the EDF as a modest experiment seeking to provide financial assistance to a few of these small busi-

nesses. Due to the success of the EDF experiment, we expanded it dramatically over the course of 2019, responding to needs across the country and in a wide variety of economic sectors. In the process, we had the opportunity to meet and engage with the men and women of Iraq’s private sector, entrepreneurs who suffered unspeakable loss but who will also serve as the engine for the country’s recovery.

“This book is, above all, dedicated to them, Iraq’s entrepreneurs who work tirelessly every day to rebuild and grow. It is also a token of our gratitude to all of those who made our work possible. This includes the people and Government of Iraq, our UN and NGO partners and EDF’s numerous donor partners.

Finally, it is one of the symbols of IOM’s commitment to Iraq as it recovers from conflict and emerges as a better, more stable country for its people” says Gerard Waite, Chief of Mission, IOM Iraq, in the foreword of the book.

You can download report at <https://iraq.iom.int/file/61911/download?token=IBgkxJDL>

Mosul citizens have their say in the redesign of Al Yarmouk Park

Mosul, 17 December 2019 - UN-HABITAT has just concluded an intensive community consultation process in the neighbourhoods of Sikak, Matahin and Maghreb in west Mosul aimed at providing a better understanding of current living conditions and priority needs of residents. Some 200 male and female respondents of all ages took part to a set of structured Focus Group Discussions organised by UN-Habitat's local NGO partner (RIRP) and hosted by Mosul Municipality. The consultations were followed by lively hands-on sessions focusing on the participatory redesign of the adjacent Al Yarmouk Park, whose upcoming rehabilitation

and landscaping will represent a major contribution by the European Union to the healing of the conflict-affected city of Mosul through its programme

'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.



Schoolchildren participate in an art competitions on green spaces in Mosul and Heet

Mosul, 19 December 2019 - Nearly 270 schoolchildren took part in a drawing contest and video competition launched by UN-Habitat through its implementing NGO partner (RIRP) in primary and secondary schools located near project sites in the conflict-affected cities of Mosul and Heet. Male and female children and youth, aged between 6 and 17 years old, were invited to reflect on the environment surrounding them, the value of green spaces and what they would like to see built in their respective parks. A final prize giving ceremony was organised in each city and was attended by the winning "budding artists" and many of their proud parents. This consultation and



awareness-raising initiative was undertaken under the EU-funded programme

'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

Reflections on the Nexus; collaboration saves time, money and lives

Kirkuk, 31 December 2019 - 2019 was a dynamic year for Kirkuk, filled with humanitarian, peace-building and development activities. To reflect on the successes of 2019 and look ahead to the challenges of 2020, the UN Team in Kirkuk hosted a "Nexus Conference" with 34 peace, humanitarian and development partners. "The Nexus concept describes the interplay between peacebuilding activities, humanitarian aid and development assistance" said Ricardo Ceva from the Office for Political Affairs, who opened the conference. Under this model, the UN Team in Kirkuk works more closely together: there are joint missions, staff exchanges, weekly coordination meetings, and action points are followed up across the different pillars of peace, security, humanitarian and development. This has greatly improved infor-

mation sharing, team spirit and efficiency in the allocation of resources. "People receiving emergency aid want opportunities, not endless hand-outs. This is why it is important that we all work together in the nexus of Humanitarian - Peace - Development" said Mohammed Chalabi from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, who dreams of the day that Iraq no longer needs humanitarian aid, even if that means he would out of a job. NGO-representatives made the case for greater coherence. "Sometimes humanitarians are trapped in short-term thinking. Humanitarian aid alone does little if conflict, gender inequality, climate change, and displacement persist. That is why the 'triple nexus' makes complete sense to us, although we never used this specific vocabulary before." "UN Team Kirkuk has fully embraced

the New Way of Working" concluded Martijn Dalhuijsen, the Liaison for UNAMI's Development Coordination Office. To leave-no-one-behind and reach-the-furthest-behind-first, development actors must be multidisciplinary. "Fortunately, we have excellent working relationships between all humanitarian, development and even private-sector partners here in Kirkuk." The participants appreciated the opportunity to enhance cooperation and collaboration in the 'Nexus' and looked forward to working ever closer together in 2020; thus wishing Kirkuk a peaceful, sustainable and very humanitarian, New Year.

By Martijn Dalhuijsen, UNAMI Development Coordination Office, Kirkuk

Filmmakers from across Iraq met in Baghdad for Community Policing film festival



Baghdad, 11 December 2019 — Last Wednesday (4/12) young filmmakers from across Iraq presented their work at the Community Policing Film Festival in Baghdad.

The festival, hosted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at the al-Rasheed Hotel, was an occasion to present 15 short films showing the impact of Community Policing on different towns and cities.

The fifteen films, from Anbar, Basra, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din governorates, highlighted local solutions to local problems, including issues like gender-based harassment and reckless driving. An open call went out to filmmakers earlier this year and eight were selected to attend a media workshop in Baghdad in August 2019, together with Community Policing Forum (CPF) members. During the workshop, the participants explored best practices for social and behaviour change communication and began developing their film concepts.

The resulting films expand on the initial planning meetings that were held between CPF members and CP officers,

during which participants identified the main security-related challenges facing their communities and developed interventions. They were produced with the aim of raising general awareness about Community Policing (CP) and showcasing the work that is being carried out in the communities to address local safety and security issues.

"Community Policing keeps pace with local events first-hand," said Major General Saad Maan, Director of the Media and Public Relations Directorate at the Government of Iraq's Ministry of Interior. "The development of this approach has significantly contributed to the resolution of many social problems, through continuous support from the Ministry of Interior and international support, including from IOM."

"The Community Policing model is central to rebuilding trust between communities and law enforcement to counter drivers of irregular migration, create safer communities and strengthen security. This continues to be relevant to the Iraq context," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite during his opening speech. "We continue to

invest, alongside the Government, to open up safe avenues for communications about issues impacting communities and support the presence of community police to help safely resolve them."

During the ceremony, awards were given to the three best films as chosen by IOM. The winning films were:

- A drama about electronic blackmail from Sinjar, Ninewa by Ali Hasan Haji.
- A drama about gender-based harassment from Hamdaniyah, Ninewa by Younis Qais Ibrahim.
- A documentary featuring community members' perspectives on Community Policing and examples of outreach activities that have been conducted from Baradiyah, Basra team by Wissam Ihsan Fadhi.

All participating filmmakers, CPF members and CP officers received trophies and the filmmakers also received equipment to support the future production of impactful video content.

"We are delighted to have participated in the Community Policing Film Festival, and we are also pleased to have won the prize for best film. This gives us great confidence to continue educating Iraqi society on all types of social issues," said Ali Hasan Haji, a filmmaker from Sinjar District in Ninewa Governorate.

"It is an amazing feeling when a city that has been subjected to displacement and vandalism wins, and this is a clear message that Sinjar does not give up. We will continue to search for hope and stability," he concluded.

The festival was organized as part of the project "Strengthening Community Policing in Iraq - Phase II", supported by the Government of Germany.

Mine Action

European Union delegation visited Mosul

Mosul, 23 October 2019 - UNMAS recently hosted a delegation from the European Union (EU) comprising the Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq, Mr. Martin Huth, along with senior officials from the EU and UNMAS, to West Mosul.

The visit entailed a tour of UNMAS-cleared sites in the city, including the Al Shifa Hospital Complex and the Al Markaziya school. Delegates were also able to meet with UNESCO representatives at the Al-Nuri mosque, the site of the leaning "al-hadba" minaret, to dis-

cuss the UNESCO-led project to revive the historical icon along with its surrounding neighborhood.

Since the defeat of Da'esh, the EU has been a prime contributor to rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Iraq, donating millions of dollars to safeguard Iraqi heritage, facilitate the return of livelihood, promote gender quality, and enable the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) back to their areas of origin, particularly through clearance and stabilization support.

UNMAS would like to thank the European Union for its contribution to explosive hazard management and gender mainstreaming activities in Iraq.



UNMAS hosted a JCMC visit to Mosul

Baghdad, 25 October 2019 - As part of its support to the Iraqi government in explosive hazard management (EHM), UNMAS recently hosted a delegation from the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Center (JCMC) led by Mr. Naseer AlZubaidy, Executive Director of JCMC, for a field visit to West Mosul. The visit included briefings at several locations previously cleared by UNMAS, including Al Shifa Hospital and Danedan Water Treatment Plant. The visit provided an opportunity to highlight the on-the-ground challenges and achievements of UNMAS clearance activities to the visitors, enabling them to see first-hand the vast improvements yielded so far in EHM since the city's liberation from Da'esh. The visit also provided a unique opportunity for close coordination at operational sites. Clearance activities in affected neighbor-

hoods will go a long way in enabling the safe return of internally displaced persons back to their areas of origin, to begin to restart their normal lives.

As part of its directive to provide technical support to the Government of Iraq, UNMAS works with JCMC to offer trainings and workshops to gov-

ernment employees on EHM-related matters. Recently, both entities concluded a workshop for local government stakeholders in Babel, Iraq.

UNMAS would like to thank the JCMC for their continued efforts in supporting and facilitating technical support initiatives in Iraq.



UNMAS Iraqi staff participated in the “Inspiring Women Leaders” course

Geneva, 31 October 2019 - As part of its efforts to mainstream gender across all of its activities, UNMAS Iraqi staff recently participated in the “Inspiring Women Leaders” course at the Geneva Center for Security Policy in Switzerland.

Sumer, Ayat, Shahad and Noor provided their insight on women in mine action, sharing their experiences on working in a predominately male-oriented field. In return, they were able to learn new methods of enhancing their self-perception, tools of effective leadership,

networking strategies, and how to formulate a personal development plan.

UNMAS in Iraq is committed to promoting gender parity and equal opportunities across all of its activities and in the overall mine action sector and has taken numerous steps to develop and maintain an inclusive working environment.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank all of its donors who are supporting gender mainstreaming initiatives in the country.



UNMAS visited its implementing partner the HALO Trust

Baghdad, 19 November 2019 - UNMAS recently visited its implementing partner, the HALO Trust in Ramadi, Al-Anbar Governorate. The HALO Trust became operational in October under the oversight of UNMAS Iraq and was deployed to the Ramadi grain storage facility for its first task.

The site includes several destroyed buildings but the main challenge is a high building that was heavily bombed due to the presence of a Da'esh sniper. For this part of the task, additional equipment is needed for the machines to cut and break down the debris in order to safely move it and proceed with the search. This was explained during the extensive briefing provided by the HALO Trust along with an introduction on the type of devices expected and encountered in the area, as well as the mapping and identification of affected communities who need to

receive risk education.

The UNMAS team was also able to see a brief demonstration of the armoured front-end loaders and excavators used by the mechanical operators.

At the moment, parts of this facility are used to store grain. Once the site will be completely cleared by UNMAS and rehabilitated by the Government of

Iraq, the full area of the facility will be used and it is expected that approximately 150 people will be employed.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank all of its donors who support explosive hazard management activities in the country, as well as the HALO Trust for undertaking this task.



UNMAS informs a Chinese Diplomat on its explosive hazard management activities

Baghdad, 21 November 2019 - UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, recently met with Mr. Zhao BeiDou, Defense Attaché at the Chinese Embassy, in Baghdad to discuss UNMAS explosive hazard management activities in the country and to introduce UNMAS new employee, who also hails from China, to embassy officials.

During the meeting, Mr. BeiDou invited UNMAS Iraq representatives to present their activities at the forthcoming business forum that is set to take place in Baghdad. Organized by the embassy, the forum will provide a platform for UNMAS Iraq to highlight its work under the Security and Rehabilitation section.

In Iraq, the People's Republic of China has heavily invested in the country's economic and livelihood revival, spon-

soring initiatives to build and rehabilitate schools and other public infrastructure with thousands more planned for the coming years.

However, the presence of explosive hazards continues to impede these humanitarian and stabilization efforts, preventing any prospective development until fully cleared and rendered

safe. UNMAS, along with other mine action organizations, is assisting the Government of Iraq to safely clear contaminated areas from explosive hazards.

UNMAS would like to thank the People's Republic of China for its contribution to Iraq's reconstruction efforts and for its interest in mine action.



UNMAS discuss coordination with Kirkuk JOC

Kirkuk, 27 November 2019 - UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, recently met with the head of the Kirkuk Joint Operations Command (JOC), General Saad Harbiya, to discuss strengthened coordination mechanisms between UNMAS, the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

During the meeting, both parties agreed on future steps that will further enhance explosive hazard management activities in Kirkuk. This meeting is part of a series of UNMAS-led efforts to enhance coordination between operations, UNMAS, and government enti-

ties to further streamline field processes.

UNMAS would like to thank General

Saad Harbiya and the ISF for their efforts in facilitating mine action activities in Kirkuk.



UNMAS completed its twentieth Explosive Hazard First Responder (EHFR) training course



Kirkuk, 27 November 2019 - UNMAS recently completed its twentieth Explosive Hazard First Responder (EHFR)

training course at the Police Academy in Kirkuk. This five-day training encompassing diverse modules such as

cordon and clearing of the area, command, control and adequate reporting aims to prepare police officers to safely undertake their work while encountering explosive hazards. A total of 16 police officers, including four female officers, successfully graduated from this course.

"This course was above our expectations and contained very useful information to help us protect ourselves and others. I especially liked the practical exercises, but the theory lessons were good as well." said Yousif, one of the participants of the course.

UNMAS would like to thank the Government of Germany for its continuous support in training and capacity enhancement activities in Iraq.

UNMAS – Swedish cooperation discussed in Baghdad

Baghdad, 4 December 2019 - Ms. Clara Vaz, UNMAS Senior Gender Advisor, recently met with Ms. Margareta Davidson-Abdelli, a representative from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), to discuss the concerted push for nationalization and how UNMAS Iraq will prioritize this sustainable model, alongside technical support to the National Mine Action Authorities (NMAA) in their current and future work and aligned with their priorities.

Ms. Davidson-Abdelli was impressed with the work UNMAS Iraq is doing on gender with the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) as well as with its holistic approach to the mixed clearance teams in Sinjar. Following a meeting with DMA, she also noticed its good relationship with UN-



MAS as well as the progress made regarding coordination and planning. UNMAS would like to thank SIDA and

the Government of Sweden for their continuous support to explosive hazard management activities in Iraq.

UNMAS and IKMAA cooperation continues

Erbil, 6 December 2019 - Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, recently met with the Head of the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), Mr. Siraj Barzani to discuss enhanced coordination and cooperation mechanisms between UNMAS, IKMAA and the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA).

This meeting was also the opportunity to start preparations for the mine action donor conference scheduled early next year in Baghdad.

UNMAS Iraq would like to highlight its excellent relationship with IKMAA and would like to express gratitude for all the support provided.



A field mission to Sinjar for JCMC and EU Delegation representatives organized by UNMAS



Baghdad, 5 December 2019 - A field mission to Sinjar, Ninewa governorate, was organized last week for delegations

from the Joint Coordination Monitoring Center (JCMC) and the European Union (EU).

During the visit, the two delegations received an extensive briefing on explosive hazards management activities in the Sinjar district, more precisely in Al Jazeera village where, in the past months, UNMAS implementing partner has cleared numerous critical infrastructure, including schools and clinics. Clearance in this area is undertaken by trained and qualified women and men, both Yazidi and Muslim, from Sinjar itself. Present at the time of the visit, the mixed teams were available to share their experiences and impressions with the visitors.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank JCMC and the EU for their continuous support and contribution to clearance efforts in the country.

UNMAS have a meeting with the Director General of the NGO Directorate, General Secretariat of CoM

Baghdad, 11 December 2019 - UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, recently held a meeting with the Director General of the NGO Directorate, General Secretariat to the Council of Ministers, Mr. Mohammed Al Tamimi, to discuss their common vision for 2020, UNMAS Iraq nationalization strategy as well as budget cuts and the potential financial support from the Government of Iraq to fill this gap.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the NGO Directorate for taking the time to meet and discuss important topics and looks forward to continuing this fruitful collaboration.



Consultations on UNMAS – New Zealand cooperation

Baghdad, 12 December 2019 - Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, met with Ms. Tredene Dobson, New Zealand Ambassador to Iraq, to discuss various topics including current and future projects funded by the Government of New Zealand.

The return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), livelihood opportunities, and social cohesion are key programmatic activities of high interest for both New Zealand and UNMAS Iraq. The mixed clearance teams working in Sinjar district illustrate this vision and UNMAS Iraq is looking forward to build on this experience and start similar projects in the future.



In addition to the financial contribution from New Zealand, UNMAS Iraq is grateful for the secondment of an in-kind staff to UNMAS Iraq who has been very useful for the programme and positively contributes to opera-

tional activities.

UNMAS Iraq would like to take this opportunity to thank again the Government of New Zealand for its support to explosive hazard management activities in the country.

UNMAS enhances national staff capacity

Baghdad, 13 December 2019 - In line with UNMAS strategy to enhance national staff capacity, 2 staff members participated in the Risk Management and Assessment Training sponsored by the Geneva International Center of Humanitarian Demining and the Lebanese Mine Action Center at the Regional School for Humanitarian Demining in Lebanon.

This 5-day training encompassed both theoretical and practical field exercises as well as discussion panels and group work with members of the Regional Mine Action Centers from Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq and Libya. It also provided insightful knowledge of risks, hazards, control measures and mitigation processes in relation to the Mine Action sector that can be applied to explosive hazard management and strategic planning.

“This approach can be useful for my



team’s usual engagement with the Government of Iraq and donor community to outline activities in a fluid political and social arena. I believe that the training proved valuable for my career long-term, and might also be incorporated in my day-to-day work.” - Saif,

UNMAS Iraq Associate Liaison Officer & Translator/Interpreter.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank Germany, the Czech Republic and the European Union for their support to capacity enhancement activities in the country since inception.

An overview of UNMAS activities presented to MOFA officials

Baghdad, 15 December 2019 - Last week, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, met with focal points from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Ms. Zena Hathal, Third Secretary, and Mr. Samad Muwafak, Counsellor, as well as the Head of the Disarmament Section from the Department of International Organization and Conferences at the MoFA in Baghdad.

The purpose of this meeting was to give an overview of UNMAS Iraq activities in the country, share funding updates and discuss the support of the Iraqi government in approaching potential donors from the Gulf region in 2020.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the

MoFA representatives for taking the time to meet and for their sound advice.



German diplomats updated on explosive hazard management activities in retaken areas



Erbil, 15 December 2019 - Ms. Barbara Schumacher, German Consul for Political, Economic and Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Man-

ager recently met at the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Erbil.

This meeting was an opportunity for Mr. Lodhammar to give an update on

explosive hazard management activities in retaken areas, including new partnerships and the clearance of residential areas. UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager also provided an overview of the programme's strategy to build the national capacity through the reduction of international personnel and the increase of training and technical support to national staff and the Government of Iraq.

The Federal Republic of Germany is UNMAS Iraq's largest donor in the country and UNMAS would like to reiterate its appreciation for Germany's generous and continuous support to explosive hazard management activities in Iraq.

The Dutch Government reiterates its support to explosive hazard management activities in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 December 2019 - The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of EUR 3 million (approximately USD 3.5 million) from The Netherlands to mitigate the threat posed by explosive hazards and enable the return of displaced communities to their areas of origin.

This contribution will mainly focus on the Sinjar district where one of the major problems post-liberation remains the presence of explosive hazards. Faced with military operations to reclaim the Sinjar territory in 2014, members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) deliberately booby-trapped private residences, ensuring that improvised explosive devices (IEDs) continue to haunt the city long after they had left.



These dangerous items are everywhere. Their presence threatens lives and impedes the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). As of 31 October 2019, approximately 25,400 IDPs from Sinjar district are still estimated to

remain displaced, with about 11,400 households having returned (International Organization for Migration; Displacement Tracking Matrix). These remnants of war are also a significant obstacle to all rehabilitation

The Dutch Government reiterates its support ... (continued)

and reconstruction efforts. No humanitarian projects can begin if critical infrastructure such as hospitals, power plants, schools, bridges, and roads are littered with IEDs - often barely visible to the untrained eye.

In addition to explosive hazard management activities, risk education will be delivered to affected communities from the area where clearance operations are taking place, either on site or in the nearby IDP camps. The Netherlands will also support a nine-month risk education campaign that will be implemented throughout 2020 and will be measuring the long-term effect and behaviour change following the delivery of life-saving messages through different channels and targeting specific

audiences.

Last week, representatives from the Dutch Embassy in Baghdad were able to see first-hand explosive hazard management and risk education activities conducted by UNMAS implementing partner in Ramadi, Al-Anbar Governorate. Commenting on the visit, Mr. Tsjard Hoekstra, Chargé d'Affaires, underlined the essential importance of mitigating the risks posed by explosive hazards left behind by Da'esh during a dark period in the recent history of Iraq. "The work of UNMAS and its partners is crucial in the light of the safe return of those that have been displaced during the conflict, and enabling affected communities to rebuild their lives. The liberated areas, such as

Anbar and Sinjar, need our continued support towards stabilization and recovery, and the Netherlands is proud to strengthen its partnership with UNMAS in this regard."

"We eliminate the explosive threat along roads, under bridges, from power and water plants, from schools, from critical infrastructure, so that those displaced by conflict can return to their homes, begin again to work, to educate their children, to contribute to society, to live a normal life. This would not be possible without the support from our donors. We are utmost grateful for the additional contribution from the Dutch Government," added Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager.

UNMAS consultations with the Ministry of Health and Environment



Baghdad, 18 December 2019 - UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar recently met with the Technical Deputy Health and Environment Minister, Dr. Jasim Abdul Aziz

Al-Falahi and Director General of the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), Mr. Khalid Rashad to discuss the ongoing developments of mine action in Iraq and the latest updates on operations

across the retaken areas.

Dr. Al-Falahi and Mr. Rashad commended the role of UNMAS in supporting the Iraqi National Mine Action Programme and called for further cooperation between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations, represented by UNMAS. They also stressed the importance of mutual trust and partnership that both parties appreciate.

Mr. Lodhammar pointed to the successful leadership of DMA as headed by Mr. Rashad as one of UNMAS' staunchest supporters and expressed the will of UNMAS to further develop and continue its activities towards an Iraq that is free of explosive hazards, promoting a safe, dignified and voluntary return of displaced individuals to their homes.

Training workshop on resource mobilization organized by UNMAS

Erbil, 19 December 2019 - UNMAS, in partnership with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), recently organized a basic level training workshop on resource mobilization for 10 staff members of the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency.

The workshop focused on a holistic approach to developing a resource mobilization strategy, including sessions on SWOT analysis, outlining relevant strategic goals, formulating a cohesive media and communications strategy, gender, etc. An advanced version of the training is planned for next year.

Commenting on the training, Ghazi Maarroof, a participant in the workshop, said: "This course was very beneficial. I



appreciate all the useful information I received at the training, and I hope to take part in the next, advanced installment of this workshop."

UNMAS would like to thank IKMAA

for their engagement and participation in the workshop, with a special thanks to the Government of Germany for its contribution to the organization of the workshop.

Light at the end of the tunnel: combatting tuberculosis in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 November 2019 - It was just another day at school for Ali Najmaddin, a third-year Kurdish language student at Kirkuk University, when he started coughing violently and spitting blood out. He went to the university clinic but was told that it was nothing serious. He was given some pills and sent on his way.

After classes, Ali went back to his home in Laylan, east of Kirkuk, and did not think about it again — it was April 2018. He never visited any doctors for follow-up and didn't tell his family anything; he didn't want to worry them, as he knew his family had no regular source of income other than his late father's pension. Moreover, he had been an athletic strong young man who engaged in active sports; he worked often in construction as a daily laborer, and never felt that anything was wrong with his health.

Three months later, Ali woke up one morning with a severe flu, coughing again.

"I felt as if there was something in my chest; I rushed outside my room and saw blood again. This time I immediately went to hospital for a checkup and tests," Ali recalled.

Results were soon out — he had tuberculosis.

With about 7,000 new cases every year, Iraq is now one of the countries most affected by TB in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Years of war and sanctions since the mid-1990s have contributed to the resurgence of TB in Iraq. The situation further deteriorated after 2014, when ISIL took control of large swathes of land in Iraq and subsequent military operations to retake those areas heavily damaged the government's health infrastructure.

Ali was shocked to learn that he had been diagnosed with such a serious disease.

"It was a very difficult moment for me. Knowing I had TB psychologically tortured me. But everything is in God's hands in the end," he said.

The news took a heavy emotional toll on the family as well, especially on his mother.

"When they told us Ali had TB I cried every day, and his brother grieved too. We did not know what to do, we did not have enough money for transportation to visit a doctor, let alone for check-ups and medication," she said.

Iraq's Ministry of Health has 19 National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP) centres across the country. With financial support from the Global Fund, IOM

focuses on strengthening the Iraqi NTP to fight TB and reduce the disease's burden on the health system, by procuring medicine and laboratory supplies; training NTP staff; and coordinating mobile medical teams (MMT) that operate in seven governorates affected by conflict and displacement.

Ali visited the NTP centre in Kirkuk, where he was examined and received treatment.

He started to take the medication but became increasingly weak over the next few months, and lost weight at an alarming rate.

Something was not right. The medicine wasn't working.

"TB affected him so much that he was like a dying man at home; always lying down, no energy for anything. I would go and lie down next to him, and touch his forehead, it was on fire," Ali's mother said.

Ali's family, fearing for his life, tried reaching out to anyone who could help. A friend referred them to IOM's MMT in Kirkuk, who paid him a visit at home. The MMT staff, in coordination with the NTP centre, found out that Ali had been taking the wrong doses of treatment, on the advice of a local medic who didn't specialize in TB.

"This is very dangerous because wrong intake of TB medicine can worsen the illness," said Abdul Jalil, IOM's MMT focal point in Kirkuk.

The team took Ali back to the NTP centre for further investigation and tests; their worst fear was realized. Ali, who had a regular "TB-positive" case when he was first diagnosed in July 2018, now had Multi-Drug Resistant (MDR) case TB — a much more serious strain of the diseases resulting from the wrong intake of medication doses.

Patients with "Index Cases" of TB can directly affect others just by breathing

near them. Mobile

Ali was then referred to Baghdad because MDR consultations and treatment are not available in Kirkuk. Since then, IOM's MMT has been transporting Ali to the NTP centre monthly for follow-up and laboratory tests to make sure he is following the right course of treatment.

"In coordination with the NTP, we put him on the correct dose of medication, and we follow up with him daily to make sure he is taking the medicine correctly, and to observe his condition," said Abdul-Jalil.

"He wouldn't have recovered had he not been referred to Baghdad," Ali's mother noted. "At some point his condition was so bad that we all gave up on him, but God returned him to us."

The team also provided food packages to help him regain his strength and put on weight as he takes the medication. The food packages include high-protein food that TB patients need to regain their strength, such as tuna fish, beef, chicken breast, milk, beans and grains, cheddar cheese olive oil and others.

Ali has experienced significant physical pain and mental difficulties since being diagnosed with TB. But ever since he has been taking his medication correctly, there is hope. As of October 2019, he is recovering fast and he managed to finish his university education.

"I am feeling much better now. My coughing has stopped. I eat well; I am regaining weight. I weigh 69 kilos now, and I am recovering my strength," he explained. "I get up and walk around, I go out and even play soccer with my brothers and friends from time to time. And I feel psychologically strong."

His mother agreed.

"We will find a bride for him to marry soon!" she said jokingly.

By Raber Y. Aziz, IOM Iraq



IOM focuses on strengthening the role of the Iraqi NTP to fight TB and reduce the disease's burden on the health system

Mosul, 22 December 2019 - Safa, a 19-year-old from Mosul, started feeling unwell in early 2017. Her symptoms, combined with feedback from the first doctors she went to see, made her fear the worst.

"A lot of them thought I had brain cancer. I felt very weak and feverish; I was losing weight and getting paler and paler," she explained. "It affected my studies and my whole life. Sometimes I would faint a few times during the day. I was afraid that I would die."

Safa and her family eventually made the difficult decision for her to undergo a procedure that would check her doctors' initial assessments.

"Biopsy tissue was pulled from her brain, which could have caused blindness, deafness or loss of the ability to speak, which was of course very frightening," said Dr. Mohammed Amjed, a doctor with IOM's Mobile Medical Team (MMT) in Mosul. "Doctors told Safa's father to keep these three possibilities in mind."

However, Safa's family felt it was worth the risk to discover whether she had a brain tumour so that they could figure out how best to treat it. The pro-

cedure was done at a neurosurgical hospital in Baghdad, as the facilities for such a complex test were not available in Mosul. Doctors in Baghdad were able to confirm that Safa didn't have cancer, but they found something else: Tuberculosis. TB was the source of all Safa's symptoms — and it is a treatable disease.

Safa was then referred to the National Tuberculosis Programme (NTB) center in Baghdad for further examinations which confirmed the diagnosis in May 2017, and the way forward seemed clear. Unfortunately, when the family returned to Mosul, they could not find the right medication for Safa. After another referral to IOM's Mobile Medical Team (MMT) in Mosul, Safa was soon in contact with medical professionals who provided her treatment for free while checking in to observe her condition regularly.

The Mosul MMT supported Safa from diagnosis through recovery by bringing her medicine and food packages to build up her strength as she underwent treatment. The team visited her regularly to track her condition and make sure that she was taking her medicine



as prescribed.

Safa's struggle with TB took one and a half years, but as of October 2019, she has almost returned to full health.

"I am much better now, and I have no symptoms," she explained.

With financial support from the Global Fund, IOM focuses on strengthening the role of the Iraqi NTP to fight TB and reduce the disease's burden on the health system; supporting the procurement of medication and laboratory supplies; training for NTP staff, and the purchase of medical equipment. To further support the TB response, IOM has eight MMTs operating in seven governorates that have been affected by conflict and displacement.

Primary and referral health services for Syrian refugees in Iraq get a boost, thanks to a new contribution from the US Department of States - BPRM

Baghdad, 11 November 2019 - The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomed a new contribution of US\$ 2.5 million from the US Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) to maintain an uninterrupted provision of primary and referral health services for over quarter of a million Syrian refugees living in the three Kurdistan Region of Iraq governorates of Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah.

The contribution targeted a package of advanced quality health and emergency referral services including supporting a hospital in each of the mentioned governorates with 24/7 curative care and life-saving emergency referrals for both refugees and host communities.

The support also included maintaining surveillance activities for the timely detection, verification, and response to common communicable disease outbreaks in both refugees and hosting communities through the early warning and response network (EWARN).

"WHO appreciates the new contribution from the BPRM which is going to help us maintain our support to the primary and referral health facilities serving the

Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq," said Dr. Adham R. Ismail Abdel Moniem, Acting WHO Representative in Iraq.

"WHO, the national health authorities and some selected health partners have, so far, been coordinating the provision of basic health care services for refugees in the country, but additional supplies of medicines and medical technologies are still required; which is where we are going to intervene to avail," Dr. Abdel Moniem added.

The number of Syrian refugees in Iraq has increased drastically over the past few weeks due to the Turkish operation in Northern Syria. Approximately 15,000 newly arrived refugees were added to the current load of a quarter of a million in 2018. They are distributed to governorates of Erbil, Dahuk, and Sulaymaniyah in the KR-I, with nearly 37% hosted in camps while 63% are residing in non-camp settings in urban areas.

This scale-up in the number of refugees required urgent extended humanitarian support in terms of food, proper shelter, and health services. The new BPRM

contribution has come at the right time to assist WHO accommodate the increasing basic to emergency health needs of the vulnerable refugee community in Iraq.

It is worth mentioning that in 2018, WHO received a similar contribution of US\$ 2.5 million from the US BPRM to increase the health security and resilience of Syrian refugees living in Iraq.

In addition to supporting the primary health care services in the nine Syrian refugee camps, the previous grant funded the establishment of the Semi-Intensive Care Unit (SICU) at Hevi Pediatric Hospital in Dohuk Governorate in July 2019 and the Gastroenterology Unit and Neonatal Special Care Unit in Raparin Pediatric Hospital in Erbil Governorate in September this year as well.

WHO would like to express its gratitude to the US Department of States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) for their continued support which enabled WHO and partners to maintain quality health care delivery and emergency referral services to all Syrian refugees in Iraq.

New USAID/OFDA contribution boosts comprehensive health services in Iraq

Baghdad, 18 November 2019 -- The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes a new contribution of US\$24 million from the US Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID-OFDA) to strengthen primary, secondary and preventive health services in conflict-affected governorates in Iraq. Access to improved life-saving health services will be ensured for approximately 3.5 million beneficiaries in seven governorates where health systems have been weakened by years of conflict.

"WHO is grateful to USAID-OFDA for its continued support, which enables us to maintain the delivery of uninterrupted quality health care services to millions of highly vulnerable women, children and the elderly living in severely affected areas," said Dr. Adham Ismail Abdel Moniem, WHO Representative in Iraq.

As of October 2019, more than 4.3 million people have returned to their homes of origin, while approximately 1.5 million remain displaced in camps, informal settlements, and host communities across Iraq.

Through this new contribution from USAID-OFDA, WHO will scale up its support to national health authorities and partners to find sustainable solutions for the treatment of common dis-



eases and environmental health emergencies. In parallel, WHO will establish primary health care centers in camps hosting displaced people, and rehabilitate primary health care facilities in areas of return.

The contribution will also cover the provision of prosthetics and physical rehabilitation for amputees, in addition to supporting mental health care services for those in need. Clinical management of rape and Gender-Based-Violence survivors is also among WHO's priorities for 2019/20.

WHO has received considerable support from USAID/OFDA which was vital in supporting the health emergency response throughout the crisis in Iraq. During the Mosul conflict in 2014,

mobile clinics were deployed, field hospitals were established close to the frontlines, and medicines and medical supplies were provided to health facilities delivering emergency health services in Dohuk, Ninewa, Anbar, and Kirkuk.

Medical waste management services were also supported, and a total of 76,000 kgs of medical waste was collected, sorted and disposed to prevent risk of cross-contamination.

"WHO has been able to maintain its work in Iraq through the commitment, cooperation, and generous contributions of donors such as the US Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance," said Dr. Abdel Moniem.

More than 3.1 million Iraqi children to be vaccinated against polio



Baghdad, 25 November 2019 - Health authorities in Iraq in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF have launched a campaign to reach more than 3.1 million children under five years of age with lifesaving polio vaccinations.

The five-day campaign aims to target children in 65 districts in the governorates of Baghdad, Babylon, Diwaniya, Diyala, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Missan and Basra.

"Over the years, WHO, the Ministry of Health and UNICEF have worked hard to improve the immunization coverage in the country. Therefore it is very im-

portant that we keep building on our work by making sure that children are vaccinated against childhood preventable diseases like polio, hence keeping Iraq free of polio" said Dr Adham Ismail, WHO Representative for Iraq. "During this second phase of the campaign, we want to reach all the children under 5 years regardless of their previous vaccination status with Oral Polio Vaccine leaving no one out no matter where they are," added Dr Adham.

WHO supported the development of micro plans to guide the vaccination team day by day, mobilized and trained 1300 supervisors and more than 13000 vaccinators to carry out the campaign. In addition, it is also paying all the vaccination costs including transportation and other incentives to ensure that all children are reached using the door-to-door and at fixed centers stationed in health facilities strategy.

"These vaccines act as a shield, protecting children and babies from diseases, saving thousands of lives in Iraq each year. UNICEF continues to work hard

with our partners to ensure that vaccines reach as many children as possible," said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

UNICEF worked to ensure that beneficiaries are aware of the importance of the vaccination campaign and that vaccines are properly forecasted, stored and managed; it also provided technical support to public health workers as they developed a detailed and up to date map of target children irrespective of whether the children are IDPs, refugees, returnees or in host communities, or whether they live in urban, rural, official or unofficial settings.

This is the second phase of the polio campaign after the first one conducted in September that reached 2.6 million children. Vaccines remain the most cost-effective preventive measure against vaccine-preventable diseases like polio, WHO, and UNICEF are committed to supporting the health authorities to reach every eligible child in the country with the needed vaccines irrespective of their location.

Iraq's dedicated polio vaccinators hit the road to reach millions of children



Baghdad, 28 November 2019 - In Iraq's capital Baghdad, one might think that access to households during the current polio vaccination campaign would be almost impossible, given the ongoing protests. However, for Mr Mahmoud Farhan and Ms Hadeel Kareem who have been working with WHO as vaccinators for the last 16 and 5 years, respectively, this is not a barrier.

With WHO support and using a strategy of providing vaccination at fixed centres in health facilities and by going door-to-door, the 13,000 vaccinators in Iraq, such as Mahmoud and Hadeel, are ensuring that each and every child is reached with just two drops of the

polio vaccine.

Mahmoud and Hadeel are going door-to-door in the Al Adeel area of Baghdad-Kerkh district. According to Mahmoud, vaccinating children in Baghdad and its surrounding environs has been his job for the past 16 years and this round is no different from the previous ones.

"People around Al Adeel know me, which makes it easy for them to bring forward their children for vaccination. Our religious leaders also did well when they passed messages to people during the Friday prayers urging them to open their doors to us during the campaign session. This made it even easier since we did not meet any resistance," says Mahmoud.

"On the contrary we have people coming to remind us to visit their households as far as three to four gates ahead to vaccinate their children," added Mahmoud, as he points out a lady who has come to request them to visit her home and vaccinate her children. This shows the level of awareness in the community about the benefits of the polio vaccine.

Mahmoud says that he is very passionate about his job because he treats the children like his own and vaccinating them makes him happy because he is

protecting them from crippling and killer diseases.

With him, is his colleague, Hadeel, who has served in a similar role for the past 5 years.

"For me having a female vaccinator in the team is vital because female parents tend to relate well and open up to fellow female vaccinators, and so far the outcome has been very good", says Hadeel. She adds, "Sometimes we don't find children at home or get no response at the gates but that is okay and normal, in such cases we mark the gate and return to it later."

Amidst the current political demonstrations in different parts of the southern governorates of the country, the Ministry of Health in partnership with WHO has launched the second round of mass vaccination campaigns for polio in 65 districts in 10 governorates as planned. More than 3.1 million children under 5 years of age from Baghdad, Babylon, Diwaniya, Diyala, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Missan and Basra are being targeted for vaccination in this phase.

This will enable the Polio Eradication Initiative in Iraq to reach approximately 5.7 million children under 5 years with oral polio vaccine during a second round of Polio National Immunization Days in 2019.

Strengthening Iraq's influenza surveillance system



Baghdad, 5 December 2019 - To improve the influenza surveillance system and overall national pandemic influenza preparedness in Iraq, WHO conducted a mission on 16–19 September 2019 to assess the country's influenza surveillance system and laboratory capacity and review potential sentinel surveillance sites.

Iraq has had a functioning influenza surveillance system as part of its well-established national surveillance system for severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) that operates out of 40 sites in all 18 governorates. It has also been

sharing laboratory data through FluNet, an online platform used for influenza virological surveillance. However, the SARI sentinel sites do not follow WHO's standard influenza surveillance protocols and there is no proper monitoring of patient enrolment and testing.

As a result of the WHO mission, the Ministry of Health has agreed to establish two model SARI surveillance sites at Kadhmiya and Nu'man hospitals that will implement the WHO influenza surveillance protocols with technical support from WHO.

Iraq's National Influenza Centre is a key

part of the surveillance system and was recognised by WHO in 2010. It supports national influenza surveillance activities for SARI, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and other respiratory viruses with pandemic potential.

In addition to implementing a pandemic influenza preparedness work plan, the Ministry of Health is prioritizing the development of a national pandemic preparedness plan and a national One Health framework with technical support from WHO. The National Influenza Centre laboratory will also be developing a comprehensive plan outlining the support needed from WHO.

As well as providing the initial stock of laboratory supplies, reagents and materials to the National Influenza Centre, WHO will continue to support Iraq in training and capacity-building activities for the two surveillance sites and the Centre through developing guidelines, standard operating procedures and reporting tools. The Ministry of Health has committed to sharing influenza virus isolates with WHO collaborating centres, and WHO has agreed to facilitate this virus sharing.

UNICEF and Rebuilding and Relief International (RRI) are realizing a health and hygiene awareness campaign

Baghdad, December 2019 - In cooperation with UNICEF, Rebuilding and Relief International (RRI) is currently realizing a Health and Hygiene Awareness Campaign in Baghdad, Anbar, Najaf and Salah-al-Din. The project serves to distribute key messages on health and immunization within the communities and improve people's knowledge on safe and healthy behaviors for hygiene, sanitation and water conservation. On the photos you can see RRI's outreach campaign to raise awareness for the importance of proper immunization (especially for children).

The door to door visits are implemented in cooperation with skilled medical

staff to guarantee professional consultation.



Restoring health services is essential to the recovery of rural areas and the sustainable return of IDPs to their areas of origin

Baghdad, 22 December 2019 - UN-Habitat has recently launched its urban recovery project in Yathrib, a rural town flanked by the River Tigris in Salah al Din governorate, with the reconstruction of the heavily damaged Emergency Unit of its main Medical Centre. The physical works, undertaken through its NGO partner (RIRP), are being conducted in parallel to the delivery of a Child Accident Prevention awareness-raising campaign. The aim of the initiative is to support the recovery of Yathrib and the sustainable return of its inhabitants through an area-based approach that restores essential public services disrupted by the conflict with ISIL, provide several employment



opportunities, and seek to reduce injuries and fatalities among children. This initiative is undertaken under the EU-funded programme 'Supporting

Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

Students provided with eyeglasses and oral hygiene care

Baghdad, 24 December 2019 - In November, IOM's health team conducted screening for visual acuity and assessments for general medical conditions, including oral hygiene, among students in primary schools in

Hamdaniyah. The team found out that many students needed support eyeglasses and oral hygiene care. Last week, the team distributed 584 pairs of eyeglasses and 755 oral care packages including toothpaste and

brushes, as well as first aid kits. This activity was supported by Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo.



Revive the spirit of Mosul: UNESCO in action



Mosul, 13 November 2019 – An overview of UNESCO's activities in Mosul:

Stabilizing the remaining structures

A crane is presently towering over the Al-Hadba minaret facilitating access to the remaining base of the monument, its cleaning and the stabilization of the historic minaret, built more than 840 years ago. A first set of stabilization brackets have been installed around the Al Nouri Mosque as well as Stripes around the pillars of the Mosque's dome have been placed to stabilize the pillars, while the building of wooden pillars is taking place to serve as propping system. The Al-Hadba Minaret surroundings have been completely cleared, making it possible to walk around the remaining base, in addition to gaining access to the uncovered external staircase to the top of minaret. The clearing goes hand in hand with the recovery of possible historical fragments under the supervision of MoC. Among the experts working with UNESCO there are structural engineers specialized in stabilization, consolidation and monitoring of historical and archaeological heritage who have been involved in a number of significant consolidation interventions on important monuments including the Tower of Pisa (Italia), the Temple of Jupiter in Baalbek (Lebanon), and the Temple of Qasr al Bint in Petra (Jordan).

In October, the Governor of Nineveh, Mansour Al-Mareed, announced the formal commencement of the rehabilitation works of the Al-Nouri Mosque in the old city of Mosul, under the supervision of UNESCO and Nineveh Governorate. The restoration of the Al Nouri Mosque and its fabled Minaret is made possible thanks to the support of the United Arab Emirates, a key partner of

UNESCO's initiative to "revive the spirit of Mosul".

Demining and Salvaging

Demining operation are still ongoing. The area was extensively damaged due to booby-traps, hazardous materials and unexploded ordinance. In parallel to the stabilization works, UNESCO has undertaken the selection of valuable building fragments which are separated from the rubble for use during reconstruction, under the guidance of international experts and archeology students from the University of Mosul. These structural elements stored in a safe warehouse. The training of students of the departments of archaeology, architecture and engineering of the University of Mosul will be enriched by their participation in the restoration. The monument will be completely restored in full respect of the site's historic integrity. Beyond the rehabilitation of architectural landmarks, the initiative includes on the-job training for

young professionals, employment of craftspeople (masons, carpenters, stone carvers, metalsmiths, etc.) and paid apprenticeships.

On 10 October, UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, and the Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development of the United Arab Emirates, Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, also agreed to undertake the rehabilitation of the Syriac Catholic Al-Tahera Church and the Latin Al-Saa'a Church in Mosul.

Reviving the Book festival

On 5 October, Mosul hosted its first book festival, with the support of UNESCO and the Book Forum, the NGO Guilde du Raid and other partners. The Ministry of Culture provided more than 4,000 books in various fields, with a significant discount. In coordination with the Mashki publishing house fifteen writers from inside and outside Mosul were invited for a book-signing session on the day of the event. The Festival also included a painting and photography exhibition, a film projection, and a concert. More than 700 of people attended the Festival, most of them families from the Old City of Mosul. "I am so happy," said one of the attendees "This is the first time our children attend an outdoor movie screening or a music show since the end of the war." Another explained, "we are very thankful, this event gives us the hope and power to rebuild our book shops again".

All of the above is just the beginning of huge project, but such results strengthen our commitment to #Revive the spirit of Mosul.



Iraq participated at the UNESCO General Conference held in Paris

Paris, France, 13 November 2019 – Iraqi Minister of Education, Dr Suha Khalil Al-Ali, at the 40th UNESCO General Conference praised the great cooperation between the Republic of Iraq and UNESCO in the fields of education, culture and the sciences. She also highlighted the importance of #RevivetheSpiritofMosul initiative.

While in Paris, Minister Khalil Al-Ali also discussed with UNESCO representatives education in Mosul as part of broader UNESCO's education support in Iraq.



Doha: Signing of the Italy-UNESCO Agreement on children's education in Iraq

Doha, 22 November 2019 - The Director General for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Giorgio Marrapodi, and the Director of the UNESCO Office in Iraq, Paolo Fontani, signed an agreement today in Doha for the implementation of a joint cooperation project aimed at ensuring access to education for children in Iraq who currently cannot go to school. The agreement is part of a broader program also funded by the Education Above All Foundation of Qatar. Italy will support the project with one million euros. The aim is to help remove some of the ob-

stacles that limit access to education in Iraq. The funds will be used by UNESCO to rehabilitate ten schools, conduct education campaigns, and enroll 17,000 boys and girls of the Governorships of Salah al-Din and Baghdad. "In the Iraqi context - commented Director General Marrapodi - it is even more important than anywhere else to create synergies between the different sources of knowledge and experience: Iraq, Italy, Education Above All and UNESCO will each offer an important contribution to the activities of the project. We are confident that this project will be a starting point for a broader

and more fruitful trilateral collaboration with Qatar, in Iraq and also in other contexts".

At the signing ceremony of the agreement, Paolo Fontani, Director of the UNESCO Office in Iraq, said "UNESCO is particularly grateful to the Italian Government and to Educate A Child - the global programme of the Education Above All Foundation - for the support provided to the project. Improved access to education for excluded boys and girls is the best possible contribution to their future and to the future of Iraq."

Italy's Ambassador to Qatar, Pasquale Salzano, commented: "We are pleased that the signing of this agreement takes place in Doha within the framework of the WISE Summit, and that it focuses, in particular, on access to education for children in disadvantaged countries. Italy has always been one of the major contributors to UNESCO and the project agreement signed today in Doha strengthens our commitment to promote access to education, alongside Qatar and the Education Above All foundation which is engaged in Iraq in Africa and in the world, providing education to over 10 million children living in crisis areas".



UN: We are working with three countries to help rebuild Iraq's heritage and religious sites destroyed by ISIS

Baghdad, 24 November 2019 - The United Nations announced that it is working with the help of three countries in the reconstruction of heritage and religious sites destroyed by the terrorist organization Daesh.

The Permanent Representative of Iraq in Geneva, Ambassador Hussein Al-Khatib, participated in the meeting of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in which Miguel Moratinos, the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, briefed him on his activities and future plans for the Alliance of Civilizations.

The UN official pointed out in his intervention, Iraq's experience in managing

the diversity of its cultural, ethnic and religious components, peaceful coexistence, confronting the extremist ideology of ISIS, accepting the other within the society, and the positive role of religious leaders, especially the religious authority in Najaf.

The High Representative called for support to Iraq to rebuild the religious sites destroyed by the ISIS terrorist organization, and that Iraq is a reference and source of this issue, praising the diversity of civilizations and cultures of its people, and that it is Mesopotamia, the origin of civilizations and mankind.

The UN official pointed out that the

coalition is working with UNESCO to assist three countries in the reconstruction of heritage and religious sites destroyed by the ISIS terrorist organization, stressing that Iraq deserves all support and assistance.



Broadcast and photojournalism training for Iraqi youth

Basra, 9 December 2019 - Nearly 35 Iraqi youth from Basra, Missan and Thi Qar were trained on broadcast and photojournalism to become community reporters. The training took place in Erbil on 1-5 December 2019 and will continue remotely for months afterwards.

This activity is organized by the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development, an initiative funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP.



Through the lens: capturing the beauty and adversity of Sulaymaniyah

Sulaymaniyah, 10 December 2019 - "I want to express both beauty and sorrow through my photos," says Hemn Omer Ahmed, a local photographer from the north-eastern Kurdish town of Arbat, Sulaymaniyah. "I started taking photos to capture the beauty of Kurdistan's nature, but also to document the adversity of the people living in this region," he adds.

Located in the foothills of Suren mountain, and just a stone's throw away from Ahmad Awa, one of Kurdistan's most famous waterfalls, it's no wonder that local photographer's Hemn Omer Ahmed and Rebeen Rahman Rahim want to capture life in Arbat, through the lens.

Recognizing the power of art to spark conversation and connect community members, UNDP and Un Pont Per (UPP) awarded these photographers a small grant to present a photography exhibition at Arbat Community Center in September. Visited by local community leaders as well as the women, men and youth that frequent the center for training and support services – visitors were inspired to think about their own connection to the land and the community in which they live.

In May 2017, UNDP and UPP opened

the doors to Arbat Community Center. Home to almost 53,000 Arab, Kurdish, Yazidi and Turkmen, Arbat is located just 20km south-east of the provincial capital – often renowned as an artistic hub for the region. This proximity to the city of Sulaymaniyah, and the relative lower cost of living, makes Arbat a viable home for the IDPs and refugees residing in neighboring camps – Ashti and Arbat IDP camps and Barika refugee camp. The camps contribute almost 20,000 more faces to the local social fabric – including IDPs rushed from their homes in south and central Iraq during the ISIL crisis, and refugees from the Syria and Iran-Iraq wars.

Despite this richness in faith and culture, stress and social tensions have intensified due to the high unemployment rate and limited access to health

and education services. This is why for the past two years, UPP and UNDP have invested in the Community Center, developing the space as an epicenter for promoting co-existence, building social cohesion and encouraging local development.

Hemn, 36 and Rebeen, 32 are both part-time photographers with more than 30 years combined experience and a passion to capture images that encourage people to protect their environment and one-another. "Photos are like a mirror to show the past and present to people. I want to remind people of how it used to be – the green spaces [in Arbat] are becoming less and less today as a consequence of conflict, construction and a lack of connection," describes Rebeen Rahman Rahim.

With generous funding from the Government of Germany, the community center has supported awareness raising sessions for more than 1,800 community member on GBV and SGBV, provided psycho-social support services and legal aid to more than 40 survivors of gender based violence and engaged more than 1,200 IDPs, refugees and host community members in a range of training courses – including languages, IT and the arts.



UNESCO Iraq discussed cooperation with Nineveh authorities

Baghdad, 14 December 2019 - The UNESCO team in Iraq met with the new Governor of Nineveh, Najm Al-Jubouri. They discussed the mechanism of cooperation between UNESCO and the local government in regard to employment, education, culture and reconstruction in Mosul.



Illustrating equal access to education for girls and boys

“If we are all educated equally, every generation will be a smart generation,” girl, 14 years old.

Baghdad, 9 December 2019 - In honor of the global campaign ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence’ (November 25-December 10), the students of Sinuni Secondary School demonstrated their passion for equal access to education through art.

Asked to draw a picture representing why women – just like men – should enjoy the same access to school and college, students of all ages depicted both the power of educated women and the barriers to engage girls in education that still exist today.

This activity, as well as several others designed to mark the 16-day campaign, were made possible through an ongoing partnership between Islamic Relief Worldwide and UNDP Iraq. This partnership is a part of an livelihoods project funded by the Government of France, under which 250 returnee and host community members from Sinjar and Hamdaniya will receive small business development support, in the form of training and grants.

Importantly, the project engages community members in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness activities throughout implementation and supports equal access to livelihood opportunities for GBV survivors.

We asked students to tell us why they think education for women is important.

“Girls should have the same rights as boys. I need to know how to communicate – to read and write...and for this, I need an education,” girl, 18 years old.

“When I marry and have children, I

want to be able to support my family. I want to go to college and be a doctor,” girl, 17 years old.

“It’s important to know how to communicate well. When I need support for myself or my family – in the hospital or in other places, a good education will make sure I can tell them what I need,” girl, 11 years old.

“I want to see all girls in school! No matter whether you are a boy or a girl, you need to be able to earn a living to support your family – to have a good job...and this is easier if you are well educated. We need more people to start talking about equal rights for men and women,” boy, 16 years old.

“Everyone should be able to write their name, but some girls aren’t even allowed to learn this. We want everyone to be able to do the same,” boys, 11 and 17 years old.

“I want to be a doctor and support my whole community. I’m a girl and that’s why I come to school,” girl, 5 years old.



“Education is important for boys and girls, so we can build a bright future together,” girl, 15 years old.

“Women and men should be independent. If we are both educated, we can support each other and achieve more,” girl, 17 years old.

“Equal access to education is equal access to decent jobs,” girl, 19 years old.

“Women should be educated equally so that they can be engaged in the community and represent what we need in our country,” girl, 15 years old.

“Both girls and boys need to be educated if we want to achieve our goals as a community,” boy, 16 years old.



SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert New Year’s Message

Baghdad, 31 December 2019 – Message by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on the occasion of New Year:

The entire UN family sends its best wishes to all Iraqis for the year 2020.

Over the past months, many Iraqis have paid the ultimate price to make their voices heard in calling for change in Iraq.

It is our wish that all the girls and boys, women and men of Iraq will see their brave determination result in lasting progress.

As we set our sights on the future, I join Secretary-General António Guterres in finding hope in the youth of the world.



“Keep speaking out”, he said. “Keep thinking big. Keep pushing boundaries. And keep up the pressure”.

The world needs it. May the year 2020 bring peace, good health and happiness to Iraq.