

# UNAMI Herald

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## Importance of sound, inclusive elections in Iraq 'cannot be overstated'

**New York, 23 November 2021** - Following "hard-earned" parliamentary elections on 10 October, Iraqis of all political stripes must exercise restraint, eschew violence and await the outcome's final certification by the Federal Supreme Court, the senior UN official in the country told the Security Council on Tuesday.

Jeanine Plasschaert, Special Representative and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) said clashes erupted in the weeks following the vote, with demonstrations and sit-ins escalating into violence and casualties reported.

On 7 November, an assassination attempt was made on Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi when an exploding drone entered his residence in Baghdad's Green Zone.

### Demands and grievances

Describing Iraq's current outlook as "precarious", the Special Representative recalled that the October elections themselves emerged from an unprecedented wave of country-wide demonstrations in 2019.

Marked by violence, excessive use of force, abductions and targeted killings, the protests left hundreds dead and thousands injured.

The country's current fragile peace also comes on the heels of decades of conflict, which prevented ordinary civilians from making their voices heard.

"A lack of political, economic and social prospects made many, many Iraqis take to the streets", said Ms. Plasschaert. "Their demands and grievances remain as relevant as ever".



### 'Much to be proud of'

While turnout for the recently concluded election was just 41 per cent, the vote was generally peaceful and well-run.

"There is much for Iraqis to be proud of in this election," said the Special Representative.

On 22 October, the Security Council issued a statement congratulating the people and Government of Iraq on the smooth conduct of a "technically sound election" and deploring related threats of violence.

UNAMI had provided technical assistance to the electoral process and warned against the threats of violence and misinformation.

Moreover, many experts have noted that the recent election provides fresh hope that Iraq's challenges can be addressed democratically going forward.

### Calls for restraint

The UN official acknowledged that elections and their outcomes can provoke strong feelings, in

Iraq or in any democracy across the globe.

While the results may be disappointing to some, she strongly cautioned against allowing civil debate – the bedrock of pluralism and political engagement – to give way to misinformation, baseless accusations, intimidation or threats of violence.

"Under no circumstances must terrorism, violence or any other unlawful acts be allowed to derail Iraq's democratic process", she stressed.

Calling for patience, Ms. Plasschaert said any unlawful attempts to prolong or discredit the electoral results process – or worse, to alter the electoral results through intimidation and pressure – can only backfire.

"I call on all stakeholders not to go down that path", underscored the UNAMI chief.

"The importance of a sound and inclusive government formation process cannot be overstated", she concluded.

By UN News.

## In this edition ...

### Year-end message from the Special Representative

**Baghdad, 31 December 2021** - As 2021 comes to a close, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Special Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, sends her best wishes to the people of Iraq for the new year.

“2021 was a momentous year for Iraq. Although many challenges remain ahead, it is important to acknowledge what has been achieved and appreciate the opportunities that the new year has to offer.

The United Nations has steadfastly stood by Iraq in the past and will continue to support the country’s efforts to develop and prosper. On behalf of the entire UN family, I wish all Iraqis a merry Christmas as well as peace, good health and happiness in 2022” - Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert



### 16 Days of Activism: UN calls for justice for women and girls survivors of gender-based violence

**Baghdad, 24 November 2021** - As we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the launch of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), we are reminded that GBV harms women and girls’ health and well-being.

According to the latest estimates, nearly 1 in 3 women aged 15 years and older around the globe, at least once in their lifetime have experienced a form of sexual and gender-based violence indicating that levels of violence against women and girls have remained largely unchanged over the last decade... *More on page 22.*

### Special Adviser Ritscher: Potential turning point in efforts to hold ISIL accountable before competent courts

**Baghdad, 2 December 2021** – In his first briefing to the UN Security Council on the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Special Adviser Christian Ritscher emphasized that a potential turning point was being reached in efforts to deliver justice for the victims of ISIL crimes.

“If we strengthen our unity in addressing the inherent challenges that the scale of ISIL criminality presents, I believe we have the opportunity to turn the tide from impunity to justice”, Special Adviser Ritscher said, after reflecting on the progress made by the Investigative Team in the last six months, in cooperation with Iraqi authorities. *More on page 45.*

### United Nations meets with donors to discuss Development Strategy for Iraq

**Baghdad, 23 November 2021** - A high-level meeting between the United Nations and international donors took place in Baghdad to discuss the United Nations’ updated development strategy for Iraq. The meeting focused on the 2020-2024 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), which was signed by the Government of Iraq in September.

The UN was represented by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, who also serves at the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. *More on page 64.*

### Flagship workshop for persons with disabilities makes history in Iraq, MENA region

**Erbil, 16 November 2021** - Iraq has one of the largest populations of persons with disabilities in the world. Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in Iraq are increasingly being asked to advocate for their rights to their government and humanitarian and development agencies. Yet, there has been limited opportunities for persons with disabilities from various governorates in Iraq to develop a strong and comprehensive understanding of their rights. *More at page 36.*

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PIO Director: Samir Ghattas

Editor-in-Chief: Ivan Djordjevic

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

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

## Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8910<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 23 November 2021

**New York, 23 November 2021** - On its 8910th meeting convened on 23 November 2021, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. Here is the text of the briefing by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert at the meeting:

“Mr. President,  
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

As much as I would have liked to be with you in the chamber today, with the 10 October elections just behind us, we judged it more efficient to address you from Baghdad. It goes without saying that I very much look forward to seeing you in person early next year.

Given the importance of the recent parliamentary elections, as well as the political and security developments since, today’s briefing will principally focus on the electoral and post-electoral environment.

At the outset, I do wish to make a resolutely positive observation: these were the fifth national elections held under Iraq’s 2005 constitution. And there is much for Iraqis to be proud of in this election.

As we have noted before: the elections were assessed as generally peaceful, well run, featuring significant technical and procedural improvements. All in all, a substantial achievement - which Iraq’s authorities and parties would do well to publicly acknowledge.

Also, and I cannot overstate, these elections were hard-earned. Let us not forget, the October-elections emerged from an unprecedented wave of country-wide demonstrations in 2019. Demonstrations that were marked by violence, excessive use of force, abductions and targeted killings. Demonstrations that resulted in hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries.

Mr. President, there is no denying it: elections and their outcomes can provoke strong feelings. That goes for any democracy across the globe. And Iraq is no different. Depending on where one stands, emotions can run high.

Most of the time, these strong feelings will spark intense debate on, for instance, the direction the country should go in. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Such



debates are the bedrock of pluralism and demonstrate political engagement.

However, if such feelings and debates give way to undemocratic impulses - such as disinformation, baseless accusations, intimidation, threats of violence or worse - then sooner or later, the door is opened to acts that are simply intolerable.

Mr. President, on 17 October, parties rejecting the electoral results began demonstrations and sit-ins, which escalated on November 5, with casualties reported in Baghdad.

In the early hours of November 7, an assassination attempt on the Prime Minister took place. A direct attack on the State. A heinous act, and one which can only be condemned in the strongest of terms. Let me be clear: under no circumstances must terrorism, violence and/or any other unlawful acts be allowed to derail Iraq’s democratic process. To ease tensions, calm, restraint and dialogue are the only way forward.

The fact is that citizens in democracies often must recognize that, even if the results are not what she or he hoped for, the process as such might have been sound. In fact, one of the clearest signs of a strengthening democracy is the ability for parties and electors to recognize outcomes - no matter their individual preferences when it comes to results.

In the case of Iraq, the aggregated votes at the national level do not necessarily translate in the number of seats some parties might have

expected. How so? Well, for instance, too many candidates in one constituency could have led to a fragmentation of votes.

Interesting in Iraq’s case is that women candidates seem to have operated very successfully – thereby taking advantage of, and likely exceeding, the 25% women quota, which is a floor and not a ceiling.

What I am saying is: while losing seats can be difficult to digest, it is important - for any party in any democracy - to examine the reasons and to learn for future elections.

For any other issues, including accusations of manipulation, the established legal channels are open. And in the case of Iraq: widely used. But so far, and as stated by the Iraqi judiciary, there is no evidence of systemic fraud.

Mr. President, in recent weeks, we have observed a severe lack of trust. A lack of trust between parties, between parties and institutions, between parties and authorities. And that’s not even mentioning the longstanding lack of public trust in both politicians and institutions.

Now, that is not without risk, as mistrust often leads to escalation.

Hence, our consistent calls for political dialogue to prevail. And again, any outstanding electoral concerns must only be dealt with through established legal channels, in accordance with the law. There is no point in using others as a scapegoat for electoral grievances.

Now, where do things stand as we speak?

## Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8910<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 23 November 2021 *(continued)*

Results will only be final after ratification by the Federal Supreme Court, which takes place once the Electoral Judicial Panel has adjudicated on those appeals brought before it.

Today I can only say that further patience will have to be exercised. The Electoral Judicial Panel is finalizing its work, and IHEC is conducting a further examination of over 800 polling stations based on the decisions issued by the Electoral Judicial Panel. Once this has been completed, IHEC is expected to send the final results to the Federal Supreme Court.

While it would be preferable to have the final results ratified sooner rather than later, it should be noted that there are no constitutional time limits for ratification by the Federal Supreme Court.

Having said this, let me emphasize: any unlawful attempts to prolong or discredit the electoral results process, or worse: to alter the electoral results through (for instance) intimidation and pressure, can only backfire. And I call on all stakeholders not to go down that path.

Mr. President, in the midst of this post-electoral turmoil, it is clear that Iraq cannot afford its national interest to be neglected. As I have noted before: elections are never an end, but rather a means. And while the risk of continued political deadlock is real, Iraq desperately needs a government that is able to - swiftly and effectively - tackle the long list of unfinished domestic business: this is the primary responsibility of all political stakeholders.

In other words: it is important for the current situation not to drag on. Statesmanship, leadership and sound judgement are needed, and it is all needed, and so is a broad commitment to political dialogue, with factual information as a basis for deliberations and decision-making.

Clearly, time is of the essence. As I stated in August, it is high time for Iraq to emerge from prolonged political standstill, and to establish dynamic, responsive governance mechanisms.

In fact, the current post-electoral phase is the moment for all political actors to demonstrate their determination in service of all Iraqis.

Yet again, I can only refer to the events that led to the October elections in the first place. A lack of political, economic and social prospects made many, many Iraqis take to the streets. Their demands and grievances remain as relevant as ever. And as we all know, simmering anger easily swells.

Plainly speaking, Iraq's current outlook is precarious - to say the least. And in the absence of genuine reforms, the situation will not get any better. On the contrary.

Mr. President, some final notes on the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives:

On 18 November, Kuwait announced the identification of another 19 Kuwaiti Prisoners of War and missing persons, bringing the total number of Kuwaiti Missing persons and third country nationals identified to date to 59: 57 Kuwaitis and 2 Saudis.

This breakthrough was possible with

concerted, persistent efforts in the past couple of years, combining two elements: witness information and satellite imagery.

Here I would like to emphasize the importance for the Government of Iraq not to lose this momentum, and to use these elements to locate the remaining 300 plus missing Kuwaitis and third country nationals. I am confident that the strong commitment of all actors could expedite the resolution of this humanitarian file.

I am also pleased to report that after considerable delays due to the covid 19 pandemic, on 18 November, UNAMI successfully completed the training of 20 Iraqi staff from the Ministry of Defence on the use of Ground Penetrating Radar, which could further contribute to locating human remains, in addition to witness information and satellite imagery.

Mr. President,

In closing, allow me to reiterate: the October elections were hard earned, and importantly: technically well-managed. A process for which IHEC and others deserve credit.

Indeed, the recent parliamentary elections can serve as an important steppingstone on a longer path towards regaining public trust.

And as we await the ratification of results by the Federal Supreme Court, I can only underline that what happens in the coming days and weeks will prove to be even more significant for Iraq's immediate future.

The importance of a sound and inclusive government formation process cannot be overstated.

Thank you."

### Electoral

## UN Security Council Press Statement on the Secretary-General's report on Iraq's electoral process

**New York, 15 November 2021** - The members of the Security Council welcomed the Secretary-General's report on Iraq's electoral process and the assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to that process, pursuant to resolution 2576 (2021).

The members of the Security Council welcomed the positive assessment of the international UNAMI election monitors and congratulated the

Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) for conducting a technically well-managed and generally peaceful election on 10 October 2021.

The members of the Security Council also welcomed UNAMI and IHEC findings that partial manual recounts of polling stations have matched IHEC's electronic results-transmission system.

The members of the Security Council

commended the Iraqi people for their commitment to the electoral process in the face of dynamic security challenges. They acknowledged the role of UNAMI in supporting the Government of Iraq's and IHEC's efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned elections. They welcomed the efforts of the Government of Iraq, IHEC and UNAMI to promote women's political participation. The members of the Security Council commended

## UN Security Council Press Statement on the Secretary-General's report on Iraq's electoral process *(continued)*

UNAMI for demonstrating objectivity in its efforts to support Iraq throughout the election process.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their condemnation of both the 7 November 2021 assassination attempt against Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and the persistent threats of violence against UNAMI, IHEC, and others. The members of the Security Council deplored the use of violence to settle election-related grievances and urged all political parties to pursue legal and peaceful means to resolve these grievances. They condemned attempts to discredit

the election.

The members of the Security Council encouraged all stakeholders to respect the legally defined process and to facilitate a peaceful and independent judicial review of electoral appeals. They noted that UN personnel will continue to monitor any unlawful attempts to undermine the election process.

The members of the Security Council reiterated the Secretary General's call to all political parties, candidates and other stakeholders in Iraq to exercise patience and address any outstanding concerns through established legal

channels, and to create a post-electoral environment that fosters mutual understanding and national unity through peaceful and constructive dialogue.

The members of the Security Council look forward to the peaceful formation of an inclusive government which would deliver meaningful reforms to address the needs and aspiration of all Iraqis, including women, youth and marginalized communities. They reiterated their support for the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

### Social Cohesion

## New training programme empowers NGOs in Iraq to contribute to prevention of violent extremism

**Erbil, 04 November 2021** – The United Nations Development Programme in Iraq (UNDP) and the NGO Directorate at the Council of Ministers Secretariat (COMSEC) have launched a capacity building programme for 60 representatives of local non-government organizations (NGOs) to support them in the design and implementation of programmes and initiatives to prevent violent extremism.

The programme, which commenced with a series of workshops from 13-18 October, targets participants across Iraq including Anbar, Baghdad, Basra, Dhi Qar, Diwaniyah, Diyala, Karbala, Kirkuk, Maysan, Muthana, Najaf, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, and Wasit, and includes sessions on youth radicalization in the digital area, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, inter-faith initiatives, digital hate speech and conflict analysis on root causes of violence.

These workshops build on UNDP Iraq's support to the Government of Iraq in combating and preventing violent extremism through an integrated society-centered approach including civil society, which has a vital role in peaceful coexistence and stabilization.

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad emphasizes, "Supporting the Prevention of Violent Extremism is a key priority for UNDP in strengthening the social fabric for recovery in Iraq. This partnership with the NGO Directorate reinforces our community-based approach to addressing drivers of violent extremism at the root and promoting inclusivity and tolerance in Iraq."

The Director General of the NGO Directorate, General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Ashraf al-Dahan, states, "A joint effort is required between national and international partners to work towards the prevention of violent extremism through a comprehensive civil society



approach, to promote social cohesion and address the root causes of extremism. We look forward to continuing our work together towards stability and prosperity in Iraq."

In 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a dedicated five-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq, supported by the governments of Denmark, Germany, Japan, and the Netherlands.

## Peacebuilding in action: UNDP and swisspeace train Iraqi peace practitioners

**Baghdad, 9 November 2021** - Engagement with local actors is fundamental to building sustainable communal peace in Iraq. From 24 to 26 October, UNDP Iraq in partnership with swisspeace, held a capacity building workshop on dialogue and mediation for representatives from local non-governmental organizations,

academics, and peace practitioners. This is the second in a series of workshops, targeting seven organizations from the governorates of Anbar, Babel, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, and Maysan, in addition to representation from Baghdad University.

Thanks to expertise from swisspeace in

areas of peace mediation and dialogue processes, the training aims to strengthen capacities in peaceful conflict transformation through sessions on conflict analysis, dialogue processes, and social cohesion in Iraq, with simulations of real-life conflict and mediation case studies.

"I am here because I have an initiative

## Peacebuilding in action: UNDP and swisspeace train Iraqi peace practitioners *(continued)*

that I want to implement in my community, and we are learning from the experts about project methodology and from other participants about their experiences.” - Duha Abdulhassan, 35, Al Khair Humanitarian Organization, Local NGO, Maysan.

“Tension is caused by misunderstanding and miscommunication, and we can understand the perspective of each party through dialogue and mediation skills.” - Mohammed Qasim, 30, Al

Ghad Organization, Local NGO, Kirkuk.

“This training has given me a deep understanding of the nature and causes of tension and conflict in my country and how to introduce concepts of peace. I learned about the ways that we as local NGOs can reduce tensions, and I learned about the tools, methodologies and approaches that will help us be more aware and careful while dealing with tension.” - Tara Abdulaziz, 23, Civil Development Organization (CDO),

local NGO, Kirkuk.

UNDP Iraq has launched in 2020 a dedicated 5-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq. With thanks to the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for their generous contribution, efforts for peacebuilding in Iraq are strengthened through collaboration with swisspeace to build capacities for mediation and peacebuilding at the local level in Iraq.

## The Planting the seeds of peace, breaking cycles of crisis

UNDP Resident Representatives from Iraq, Myanmar and Nigeria share perspectives on how the humanitarian-peace-development nexus offers fertile grounds for seeds of peace to be sowed early and prevent future crises

Authors:

Zena Ali Ahmad, Resident Representative, UNDP Iraq

Titon Mitra, Resident Representative, UNDP Myanmar

Mohamed Yahya, Resident Representative, UNDP Nigeria

**Baghdad, 9 November 2021** - In Iraq, Myanmar and Nigeria, UNDP experiences show an integrated approach addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus can help break the cycle of crisis.

UNDP opened this year’s Geneva Peace Week (GPW21) alongside peacebuilding and humanitarian partners by exploring how more coordinated and complementary efforts between humanitarian development and peace actors can support and sustain peaceful societies. The theme of GPW21, From seeds to systems of peace: Weathering today’s challenges, explores the importance of ensuring that all our actions contribute to peace and are systematically integrated into the way

in which we work.

In a crisis, humanitarian, development and peace interventions should not be thought of as sequential. Waiting for a situation to emerge from a humanitarian emergency before laying the foundations for sustainable development or lasting peace runs the risk of keeping those living in conflict trapped in a cycle of crisis, where new drivers of tension and instability overlay existing grievances and are never truly resolved.

What is needed is a much more responsive and adaptable approach where the three are applied simultaneously and are mutually reinforcing. We must also place greater emphasis on people-centred approaches, engaging local capacities and moving beyond the principle of ‘do no harm’.

Such an approach, referred to as the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, operates under the mantra ‘prevention always, development wherever possible and humanitarian action when necessary’.

In Iraq, Myanmar and Nigeria, our own experience has shown that such an integrated approach can have a significant impact in breaking the cycle of crisis and putting communities on a

path to peaceful, sustainable development.

Tackling drivers of fragility in Iraq

In the past year, Iraq has not been just plagued by COVID-19, but also by political turmoil and a significant drop in oil revenue. While Iraq’s fiscal position is slowly recovering, the basic needs of the population remain significant with 4.1 million people in humanitarian need – of which 2.4 million are in acute need. Close to 25 percent of the population live below the national poverty line. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has also had a limited revival during the pandemic.

We have learnt through experience that moving away from fragility and recovery from shocks such as a pandemic can only be achieved through a strong foundation of state-society trust. Our research indicates that corruption and security are at the top of the list of grievances for many Iraqis and the recent elections present an opportunity for the new government to rebuild trust by taking into account these priorities and establishing a more equitable and participatory social contract.

UNDP in Iraq has launched of a number of joint analyses such as its Socio-Economic Impact Analysis series. The focus on fragility dimensions ensures a deeper understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and key fragility drivers. UNDP has also integrated a nexus lens in development of strategies, plans and programming, such as the launch of a large-scale Durable Solutions strategy jointly with IOM, and a programme to address the specific multidimensional needs of displaced people and communities, including those with perceived affiliation to ISIL.

UNDP’s multi-dimensional



## Planting the seeds of peace, breaking cycles of crisis *(continued)*

### Authors



**ZENA ALI AHMAD**

Resident  
Representative,  
UNDP Iraq



**TITON MITRA**

Resident  
Representative, UNDP  
Myanmar



**MOHAMED  
YAHYA**

Resident  
Representative,  
UNDP Nigeria

stabilization approach was also designed as a set of holistic interventions working to safeguard against risk of violent conflict, government ineffectiveness, socio-economic vulnerability and gender inequality. This builds on the premise that stabilization priorities and needs fall across the breadth of the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spectrum.

Laying foundations for sustainable peace by addressing multidimensional crisis in Myanmar

In Myanmar, the combined shocks of COVID-19 and the military takeover are being felt throughout the country. Basic human rights are being compromised, democratic space is increasingly restricted and respect for the rule of law is rapidly diminishing. With nearly half of the population projected to fall below the national poverty line in 2022, poverty may revert to levels not seen since 2005. Significant resources (4.5 percent of pre-COVID-19 GDP) would be needed to raise the newly poor above the poverty line.

In addition to increasing vulnerabilities in many contested ethnic areas, many cities are now the focus of insurgency, also leading to increasing poverty.

Given this trend, a narrow focus on and prioritization of humanitarian programming in the current crisis (a usual pattern in protracted and cyclical crises) would risk weakening civil society.

Under the UN socio-economic resilience response plan, UNDP is applying a nexus approach through its Community

First Programme, which helps address basic needs of vulnerable populations in urban and rural areas while fostering resilience to current and future shocks. Partnerships are key. In Rakhine, UNDP is launching a “Triple Nexus” Joint Programme with UNHCR, building on previous results in northern Rakhine where Quick Impact Projects have proven excellent entry points to build trust and gain physical access to communities previously kept off-limits by authorities. “Triple Nexus” interventions aim to build social cohesion while preparing the ground for the future return of refugees and the internally displaced. To support nexus programming for urban populations, UNDP is partnering with UN Women and UN Habitat in areas where UNDP’s rapid response programme already assisted 100,000 people.

Applying the HDP nexus approach in Nigeria’s northeast

The northeast of Nigeria is plagued with protracted insurgencies, and violent extremism, with far reaching humanitarian implications. The north-central zone is heavily burdened by natural-resource-based violent conflicts leading to massive displacement of communities and loss of lives and livelihoods; whilst the northwest region is grappling with pervasive organized crime, escalated amidst a broader deterioration in security.

In the northeast, three interlinked strategies are deployed through stabilization, enhancing physical security and safety of communities, while also ensuring increased access to

basic services.

UNDP’s approach, which integrates peace building and is defined by stabilization investments, early recovery and reconciliation, ensures that conditions for long term development are guaranteed while humanitarian support is ongoing.

The state of Benue is characterised by herder-farmer crisis. To deliver a comprehensive package that piloted integrated responses to the immediate, medium and long term needs of communities, UNDP worked with the government through a ‘joined’ programme with UNHCR and the Human Security Trust Fund.

In the immediate term, there was a need to provide relief to displaced communities while also laying a foundation for sustainable recovery by restoring livelihoods and basic social services. From a policy perspective, strengthening core governance functions, supporting institutional arrangements for rule of law, promotion of peace and timely action was pertinent for long term coordinated prevention of violence.

Strengthening development pathways to prevention and peace

Applying the HDP nexus approach has shown real impact of overcoming multidimensional crises.

UNDP has a vital role to play in efforts to integrate and scale up actions that tackle the structural drivers of conflict and help to build lasting peace, as well as ensuring that these efforts are maintained, before, during and after crises hit. This means having the right people in the right place at the right time.

Together with our partners, we look forward to continuing to strengthen development pathways to prevention and peace, and to accelerating the exit of affected populations from crisis and conflict and prolonged humanitarian situations to avoid aid dependency and, ultimately, to end humanitarian need.



## Ministry of Youth, UNFPA, FBA hold organizational development leadership training for the youth, peace, security coalition

**Baghdad, 11 November 2021** - The Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) and UNFPA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth & Sports, held the first Organizational Development Leadership training for the Iraqi Coalition on Youth, Peace, Security (YPS).

During the five-day training, experts on the YPS agenda provided insights on the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250) to the 25 Iraqi YPS Coalition members. The training focused on providing a common understanding of the core functions and responsibilities of the Coalition vis-à-vis the government, society and the international community.

The young women and men discussed the strategic direction of the Coalition and drafted work plans for the implementation of the YPS agenda and the way forward as a group.

Speaking after the training, Mr Taleb Sobeh, Project Manager for Iraq at the Folke Bernadotte Academy, said: “Young Iraqis are leading the way for peace and trying to change the present and their futures for the better. In light of this, implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and its guiding principles has never been as important for our societies as today. The Folke Bernadotte Academy is committed to supporting the implementation of the

YPS agenda in Iraq, enriching the partnerships that we have established so far, and building new ones with our Iraqi counterparts.”

Ms Joanna Broumana, Process Lead for Youth, Peace and Security at the Folke Bernadotte Academy, added: “Since the Iraqi YPS Coalition launch in December 2020, FBA has worked closely with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNFPA and a group of young peacebuilders to support the implementation process of the UNSCR 2250 in Iraq. We hope that this Coalition will become a platform for youth leadership, partnerships and advocacy for the operationalization of the YPS agenda in the country while keeping meaningful youth participation

at the very heart of such efforts.”

Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, said: “UNFPA will continue to support Iraq to implement UNSCR 2250, putting the interest and rights of young people at the centre of national priorities and strengthening youth participation in peace-building in Iraq. It is our utmost priority to recognise that women and girls’ participation in conflict resolution and mediation efforts is an enormous force for good”.

UNFPA & FBA trust that the Iraqi YPS Coalition will bring all Iraqi youth together to agree on a vision, advance their ideas and create a movement that will materialize and translate young people’s vision into actions.



## IOM Iraq conducted a technical support and consultation workshop in Erbil for reconciliation committees, local authorities and community members

**Erbil, 22 November 2021** - Efforts to support social cohesion, peacebuilding and community stabilization are essential to addressing deep rifts in Iraq’s social fabric and preventing the country from backsliding into a crisis situation.

This November, IOM Iraq conducted a three-day technical support and consultation workshop in Erbil for reconciliation committees, local authorities and community members from the villages of Eitha, Ganous and Sheikh Hamad in Shirqat district.

The groups gathered to discuss community-level priorities and opportunities related to social cohesion and sustained peace in the area, identifying drivers of conflict and agreeing on a community engagement plan to respond to them locally.

Participants also conducted an initial discussion around the reconciliation committees’ internal organizational approaches such as membership criteria to inform future plans and work.



Attendees’ participation was remarkable and commended on many levels – with active, targeted and thoughtful assessments of priorities for continued

community support for peace and stability in Shirqat.

This workshop was supported by the German Embassy in Baghdad.



## IOM Iraq held a series of thematic workshops focusing on facing social and cultural challenges

**Erbil, 22 November 2021** - In Iraq, support is needed to reduce social divisions and strengthen ties between different social groups. If left unaddressed, divisions can cause populations to backslide into a crisis situation.

IOM Iraq recently held a series of thematic workshops for 15 government officials in Erbil Governorate focusing on facing social and cultural challenges; instilling a culture of dialogue and exchange of experiences; and working toward unified action.

These thematic workshops are supported by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.



## Workshop to develop action plans for the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) held in Kirkuk and Mosul



**Kirkuk/Mosul, 2 December 2021** – In partnership with the National Security Advisory, the local government of Hawijah, Kirkuk governorate, and civil society actors, IOM Iraq held a workshop on 29 November in Kirkuk to develop plans of action for the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) in Hawijah District as part of a series of consultations to strengthen Iraq's National PVE Strategy. The workshop identified several drivers of violent extremism and proposed key interventions to address these drivers.

"The issue of violent extremism is very sensitive, especially in the Hawija area of Kirkuk Governorate, which has suffered a lot of terrorism and problems due to ISIL. This has affected society as a whole – especially the youth, who represent the largest segment of society and who terrorists recruited," said Dr. Ayad Nori, a political consultant from the National Security Advisory. "Now, the thinking is reversed. Organizations are working side by side with the

government to bring these young people back to the right path."

"The causes of extremism are many," he continued, "including ignorance, poverty, lack of education, and clan nature. Religious inclination is also a dominant one that is used to incite extremism and terrorism."

"Since we are a society of diverse sects and races, we need flexibility toward and acceptance of each other. Greater work is to be done by focusing on the youth, making them feel [a national] affiliation and returning them to humanity," said Dr. Nori. "All strategies developed through the government or organizations need to be implemented and followed up."

This workshop was made possible with support from New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

"Extremism led ISIL into our governorates. [We are here to discuss] how to develop a strategic plan to address extremism, whether religious, sectarian or societal," said Zuhair Mohsen Al-Araji, Mayor of Mosul,

during a workshop to develop plans of action for the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) in Ninewa Governorate. It was organised by IOM Iraq, in partnership with the National Security Advisory and the local government of Ninewa, as part of a series of community consultations to implement Iraq's National PVE Strategy in Mosul on 2 December 2021. Participants in the workshop identified several drivers of violent extremism and proposed key interventions to address these drivers.

"There will be a real structure, that everyone can participate in – whether decision makers, [civil society] organizations, or the general public – to identify and address the causes of extremism and make Ninewa free from extremism. Holding these workshops is evidence of IOM's interest in the issue of preventing extremism. This type of workshop [helps to] support the stability of the region for all segments of society," Mayor Al-Araji added.

This workshop was made possible with support from Government of Canada.



## Strengthening youth political engagement in Iraq: capacity building workshops



**Baghdad, 11 December 2021** - In coordination with the Committee for Dialogue and Societal Peace (CDSP) in the Prime Minister's Office, UNAMI organized ten thematic participatory workshops between August and December 2021 to build the capacities of 50 young women and men from across Iraq on political participation.

A total of 44 participants, 21 of them women, attended the closing session on 11 December in Baghdad. Dr. Hosham Dawood, Prime Minister's Advisor and Head of the Committee for Dialogue and Societal Peace, and the Director of Planning in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Mr. Sattar Mujbil, attended and addressed the session.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Mohammed Al-Najjar, Director of the UNAMI Office of Political Affairs, affirmed the important role of Iraqi youth as catalysts for change and emphasized that "UNAMI will continue to support the Iraqi people for real reform and sustainable development".

He further commended the participants and encouraged them to take advantage of their enormous potential as a source of creativity and to make an impact throughout their ideas and solutions.

Following the opening remarks, participants presented the key recommendations covering four main

themes:

- Youth perspectives on reforms and the way forward;
- Effective political role of the youth in decision-making and policy formulation;
- Role of youth in policy-making;
- Youth, peace and security agenda in Iraq: challenges and opportunities and next steps.

During the previous nine workshops (August – December 2021), participants discussed the general principles of democratic systems, including the role of free and fair elections in strengthening the democratic system, as well as policy-making, Iraq's role in foreign policy; and how to overcome the obstacles to active political participation and leadership. During these sessions, they expressed their concerns and hopes about the future and the role they can play in developing the stability and prosperity of Iraq.



## IOM Iraq organized a bike marathon in the Al Shuhada neighborhood of Sinjar city

**Sinjar, 14 December 2021** - Years of devastating conflict and massive displacement have ruptured social relations between Iraq's diverse communities, particularly in the Sinjar region, where the Yazidi community and other minorities suffered a genocide at the hands of ISIL. Assistance is needed to rebuild trust and improve psychosocial welfare as communities recover and return to their areas of origin.

With support from community volunteers, IOM Iraq organized a bike marathon in the Al Shuhada neighborhood of Sinjar city. 25 individuals from the city's various ethnoreligious communities



participated in the marathon, which aimed to strengthen relationships between the groups and encourage the

return of displaced families to the area. This activity was made possible with support from USAID.

## UNESCO and partners completed 13 rounds of training on “Preventing Violent Extremism through Education”



**Baghdad, 15 December 2021** - Since May 2021, UNESCO and partners completed 13 rounds of training on “Preventing Violent Extremism through Education”, by training 3,700 (2,300 Females) teachers, principals, educational supervisors, and parents from 70 primary schools in Ninewa and Al Anbar Governorates.

In addition, 450 primary teachers (126 Females) have been trained on the

identification and dealing with the different types of psychological stress and trauma in the classroom through the Psycho-Social Support training.

Through these trainings’ knowledge and skills of education actors have been further enhanced to create a positive and safe learning environment for pupils and to foster resilience in the schools and the wider community.

## A conference was held in Baghdad on the prevention of violent extremism

**Baghdad, 16 December 2021** - Four years after the official end of the ISIL conflict, more is needed to support efforts to promote peace and prevent violent extremism in reclaimed Iraqi governorates.

IOM Iraq collaborated with the Committee for Dialogue and Community Peace in the Office of the

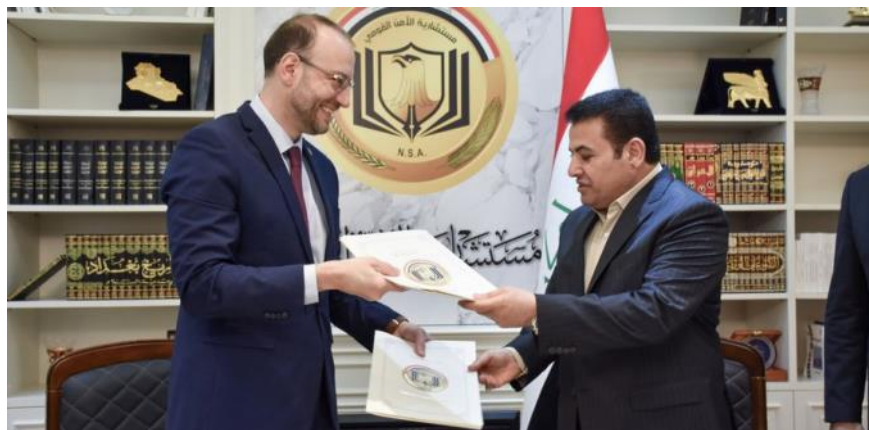
Prime Minister and the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers to hold a two-day conference on 15-16 December 2021 in Baghdad on the prevention of violent extremism.

The Prime Minister of Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, opened the conference to an audience of government officials, tribal heads and

clerics. Attendees discussed a wide range of topics, including research related to extremism broadly, extremist ideological movements in Iraq more specifically, and the role of gender and gender dynamics in violent extremism.

This conference was made possible with support from the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

## IOM, National Security Advisor sign cooperation agreement to prevent violent extremism in Iraq



**Baghdad, 20 December 2021** – Four years after the military defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), preventing violent extremism (PVE) remains a key priority in Iraq’s post-conflict recovery and stabilization.

On 16 December 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) signed a Cooperation Agreement with the Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) on the implementation of Iraq’s National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism. The Agreement Ceremony was held at ONSA premises in Baghdad and attended by IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, Mr. Giorgi Gigauri, and the National Security Advisor, His Excellency Mr. Qassim al-Araji.

The agreement will underpin IOM’s stepped-up support to Iraq’s national efforts to prevent violent extremism. It recognizes and provides a framework for multiple areas of collaboration between IOM and the Government of Iraq, including support for policy development; capacity building; development of area-based Plans of Action (PoAs) for the implementation of the National PVE Strategy; and expert exchange on prevention of violent extremism in the MENA region and beyond.

The signing came on the heels of a two-day PVE workshop in Baghdad held jointly by IOM Iraq, the Committee for Dialogue and Community Peace in the Office of the Prime Minister and the General Secretariat of the Council of

Ministers, with support from the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In a demonstration of the government’s commitment to addressing extremist ideological movements and promoting peace in Iraq, the Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, opened the conference to an audience of government officials, tribal heads and prominent clerics, who went on to discuss topics including the role of gender in violent extremism.

“In Iraq, we have seen some of the worst-case scenarios that violent extremism can produce,” said Mr. Gigauri. “IOM’s mission to assist vulnerable migrants, internally displaced persons and conflict-affected populations means not only meeting humanitarian needs in crises and facilitating access to durable solutions; it also means working to address underlying causes of irregular migration. PVE thus represents a crucial element of IOM’s partnership with the Government of Iraq and the Office of the National Security Advisor.”

During the signing ceremony, both parties stressed their commitment to ensuring that human rights and the principle of do-no-harm underpin all future cooperation. His Excellency Mr. Qassim al-Araji also recognized the importance of collaboration between the international community and the Government of Iraq to address the transnational challenge of violent extremism.



**Erbil, 3 November 2021** - Head of the UNAMI Regional Office in Erbil, Ricardo Rodriguez, met today in Erbil with the Head of Foreign Affairs and Diplomacy Office of the Kurdistan Region Presidency, Niyaz Barzani. They discussed political situation in the Region and mutual cooperation.



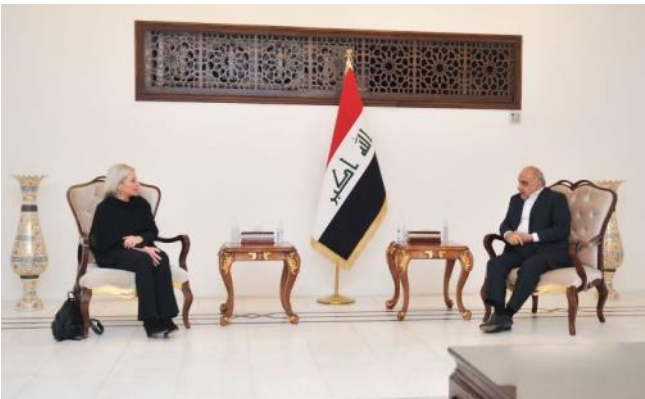
**Kuwait City, Kuwait, 9 November 2021** - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, was received in Kuwait by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri. She visited the Kuwaiti Forensics Laboratory and held further meetings with Assistant Minister of International Organizations, Abdulaziz Saud Mohammad Al Jarallah, and Ambassador of Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for Kuwaiti Prisoners and Missing Persons, Rabe'a al-Adsani. Discussions focused on the political situation in the region, with emphasis on the file of Kuwaiti Missing Persons and Property.



**Baghdad, 10 November 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Baghdad with Sayyed Ammar al-Hakim, Head of the Hikma National Movement. They discussed the political situation following the general elections in Iraq. The SRSG stressed the importance of calm and continued dialogue as Iraqis await the final results.



**Baghdad, 15 November 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Sheikh Qais Al-Khazali, Secretary-General of the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq movement. They discussed the latest political developments in Iraq, stressing the importance of following legal channels in addressing electoral concerns.



**Baghdad, 16 November 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi.



**Baghdad, 18 November 2021** - The President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Barham Salih, today received the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. Discussion focused on the latest political developments in Iraq.



**Baghdad, 25 November 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Baghdad with Fateh Coalition Chairman, Mr. Hadi Al-Ameri. The SRSG expressed hope that the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and Electoral Judicial Panel give full consideration to all appeals independently and urged all parties to find serious political solutions and form an inclusive government that meets the expectations of the Iraqi people.



**Erbil, 27 November 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert met today in Salaheddin, Kurdistan Region, with Mr. Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Discussion focused on the recent elections and latest political developments in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.



**Erbil, 29 November 2021** - The President of the Kurdistan Region's Parliament, Ms. Rewaz Faiq, received today the Head of the UNAMI Regional Office in Erbil, Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez. Discussion focused on the current political developments in the Kurdistan Region.



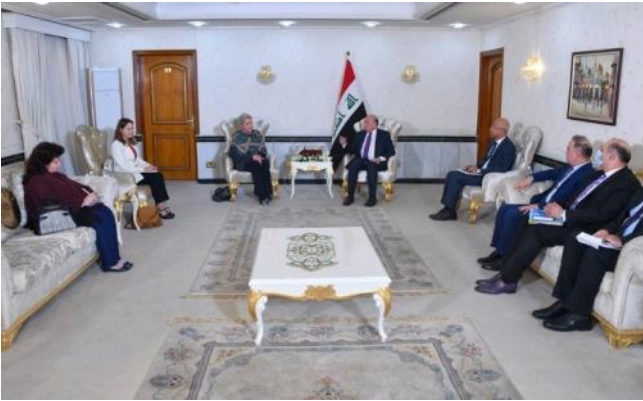
**Najaf, 7 December 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the leader of the Sadrist Movement, Sayyed Muqtada Al-Sadr. They discussed the current political situation in the country in light of the recently held general elections in Iraq.



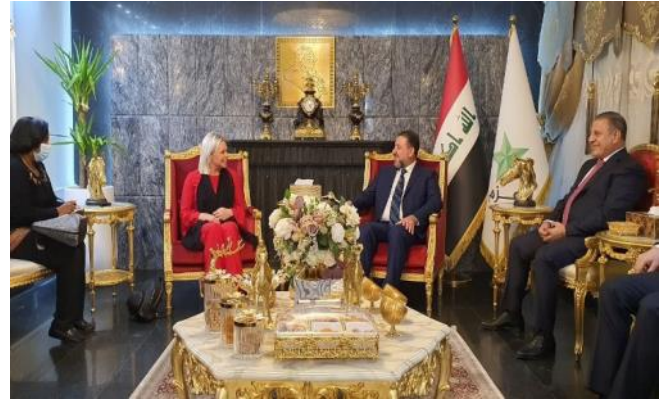
**Baghdad, 8 December 2021** - At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Acting Head of the International Organizations and Conferences Department, Dr. Abbas Kazem Obaid, met Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.



**Amman, 12 December 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met in Amman with Jordanian Foreign Minister, Mr. Ayman Safadi. Discussions focused on the general situation in Iraq and the region, with both stressing the importance of Iraq's stability.



**Baghdad, 13 December 2021** - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by Chief UN Human Rights Iraq, Ms. Danielle Bell, met with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein in Baghdad.



**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the leader of the Azm Alliance, Mr. Khamis al-Khanjar. They discussed the political situation in Iraq, including the results of the recently held elections.



**Baghdad, 15 December 2021** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Baghdad with the leader of the Taqadom Alliance, Mr. Mohammed al-Halbousi. They discussed the current political situation in Iraq in light of the recently held parliamentary elections.

## Security

### UNAMI condemns Diyala attacks, urges unity

**Baghdad, 27 October 2021** – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) strongly condemns the heinous attacks in Diyala on Tuesday night, which caused many deaths and injuries. The Mission extends its

sincere condolences to the victims' families and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

UNAMI calls on the authorities to fully investigate the attacks and exert every effort to ensure the safety and security

of all citizens.

To fight continued threats of terrorism and violence that undermine Iraq's stability, national unity is key. Those who seek to harm and divide cannot do so if Iraqis stand together as one.

### UNAMI on Twitter

**Baghdad, 5 November 2021** - UNAMI regrets the escalation of violence and the ensuing injuries in

Baghdad today. We call on all sides to exercise maximum restraint, for the right to peaceful protest to be

respected, and for the demonstrations to remain peaceful.

### UNAMI strongly condemns assassination attempt on Iraqi Prime Minister

**Baghdad, 7 November 2021** - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) condemns in the strongest terms the assassination attempt against Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. The Mission expresses its relief that the Prime Minister was not hurt in the drone

attack on his residence in Baghdad. Terrorism, violence and unlawful acts must not be allowed to undermine Iraq's stability and derail its democratic process.

The Mission joins the Prime Minister in calling for calm and urging restraint. Moreover, UNAMI strongly encourages

all sides to take responsibility for de-escalation and to engage in dialogue to ease political tensions, upholding the national interest of Iraq.

The United Nations stands by all Iraqis who long for peace and stability; they deserve nothing less.

## The Secretary-General strongly condemns the assassination attempt against Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi

**New York, 7 November 2021** - The Secretary-General strongly condemns the assassination attempt against Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi earlier today. He calls for the perpetrators of this crime to be held

accountable.

The Secretary-General calls on all Iraqis to exercise utmost restraint and reject all violence and any attempts to destabilize Iraq. He urges all political actors to uphold the constitutional

order and resolve differences through peaceful and inclusive dialogue.

The United Nations will continue to stand with the people and Government of Iraq as they strive for a better future.

## The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms assassination attempt against Iraqi Prime Minister

**New York, 8 November 2021** - The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the 7 November 2021 assassination attempt against Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi.

The members of the Security Council expressed their relief that the Prime Minister was not injured in the attack. The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, democratic process and prosperity of Iraq.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its

forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

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

The members of the Security Council

reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed. They reaffirmed the need for all States to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

## UNAMI on Twitter

**Baghdad, 3 December 2021** - Our sincere condolences to those who lost loved ones in last night's heinous

attack in Makhmour; we wish the injured a full and speedy recovery. Strengthened security coordination and

cooperation are essential in the ongoing fight against terrorism.

Baghdad, 07 December 2021 - We strongly condemn the cowardly bombing in Basra, extend sincere condolences to the families of those who

lost their lives and wish the injured a prompt recovery. Holding the perpetrators accountable and strengthening national unity will

thwart such attempts to destabilise Iraq.

## Security Council Press Statement on recent terrorist attacks in Iraq

**New York, 8 December 2021** - The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the recent cowardly terrorist attacks in Iraq. The members of the Security Council condemned the terrorist attack in Basra, Iraq, on Tuesday, 7 December 2021. The attack resulted in at least four deaths and at least 20 injured. The members of the Security Council also condemned the terrorist attack in northern Iraq, on Friday, 3 December 2021. The attack, which was claimed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), resulted in at least 13 deaths.

The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Iraq, and they wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, democratic process and prosperity of Iraq.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

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

The members of the Security Council reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed. They reaffirmed the need for all States to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed their support for Iraq's security and the continued fight against terrorism, including against ISIL/Da'esh.

## Changing perceptions to end a harmful tradition in northern Iraq

**Sulaymaniyah, 29 October 2021** - "Come with me, we need to go to the bakery, my mother told me one morning. That day, I experienced fear, deception and excruciating pain. I was only seven," Dania\* explained recently, describing the day she underwent female genital mutilation in her home town, Sulaymaniyah, in northern Iraq. "When we arrived at the bakery, my mom took me to the back room where there was an old stove," she described. "I saw an old woman holding razor blades. I remember that old woman and my mom holding me down. Words cannot express the pain and confusion I felt. It took a few seconds and I saw blood coming down my thighs. The woman then put coal on my genitalia." Dania is now 53 years old. But, she says, "I remember everything... The smell, the pain, the screams and the blood coming down on my thighs." A harmful practice ingrained in cultural beliefs

Female genital mutilation is any procedure that alters or injures the female genitalia for non-medical reasons, and it is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights. It can cause lasting physical and psychological consequences, including painful menstruation, infertility, infections and even, in some cases, death.

Female genital mutilation takes place in countries and communities around the world, including the Kurdistan

region. Strong advocacy in recent years has made a difference, however. Estimates from 2015 showed that, among the mothers surveyed, 44.8 per cent reported undergoing the practice themselves, compared to 10.7 per cent of their daughters under age 14, being cut, with the average age of cutting being five years old.

Still, the practice continues to affect the health and lives of too many girls. In Iraq's Kurdistan Region, it is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and myths. For instance, many view cutting as essential to protecting the honour of their daughters, while others consider it a prerequisite for eventual marriage. Spreading awareness to change behaviours

UNFPA is helping end female genital mutilation in region through campaigns that raise awareness of the adverse effects of the practice. These efforts engage the media, religious leaders and other influencers to change attitudes and perceptions among the local communities. It is also reaching out to parents, teachers, doctors and midwives to spread out behavioural change messages.

These campaigns are being carried out in collaboration with the Kurdistan High Council for Women's Affairs, and with support from the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

"To date, I don't understand why I had

to go through this experience," said Dania. "My mother never justified her actions or felt the need to guide me through this painful process."

She has since become a vocal advocate for ending all harmful practices. In this work, she not only calls for the end of these practices, but also calls attention to the rights of girls. It is not only the act of cutting that must change, she says, but the gender biases that drive it.

"Circumcision is not a religious act, nor a medical one. It is just a baseless cultural practice that aims at shaming women from a young age based on their sex. I will never do this to my daughter," said Dania. "By performing genital mutilation and other harmful practices, we are robbing our daughters of their sexual and reproductive rights."

\*Name changed for protection reasons.



## UNFPA and Governorate inaugurated the First Women Protection Centre in Diwaniyah

**Baghdad, 28 October 2021** - The Governorate of Diwaniyah and UNFPA inaugurated today the first Women Protection Centre in the Governorate, with funding from Canada and Sweden. The Centre will offer psychosocial and legal assistance, medical counselling and protection for survivors of gender-based violence. Women and girls will be able to benefit from special programmes on empowerment, life skills and livelihood education.

The inauguration was attended by Mr Zuhair Ali Al-Shaalan, Governor of Diwaniyah, Dr Yousra Al-Allak, Head of Women Empowerment Department and Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, as well as representatives from the civil society and women-led organisations.

Speaking at the event, the Governor highlighted the centre's importance to women and girls in Diwaniyah: "Women play an important role in our



society. Diwaniyah is proud to establish a centre that provides a comprehensive package of services for survivors of gender-based violence. When women are protected and provided with the right tools, they can thrive."

For his part, Dr Yousra Al-Allak reiterated: "Establishing a Protection Women Centre is a very good first step. However, to ensure the proper development of Iraq, we need legislation that protects women and girls from gender-based violence and ensures their rights are preserved".

In her speech, Dr Columbia emphasised the importance of safe spaces for women and girls survivors of any form of violence. She thanked the local authorities, Women Empowerment Department and civil society for their efforts to prevent and respond to GBV. She called on other governorates to follow this example to take concrete steps towards eliminating gender-based violence in Iraq. "

Speeches also called the Parliament to adopt the Anti-Domestic Violence Law and endorse the legal framework for gender-based violence service provision and protection of women.



## Results of the questionnaire assessment about women and girls unemployment in the region presented



**Nindevah, 02 November 2021** - Asuda Organization for Combat Violence against Women organized the third meeting of the Voluntarism

Community Support Group for the Nineveh Governorate in the Tlisqof village, Al qosh sub-district - Nineveh Governorate - in the Etana

Organization office, within the “Women, Peace and Security Project in the Arab Countries - Phase II”, in partnership with the United Nations Women, with the support of the Finnish government.

In the presence of 10 members of local women leaders (Voluntary Community Support Group for Nineveh Governorate), discussion was dedicated to the presentation of the results of the questionnaire assessment about women and girls unemployment in the region.

It is worth mentioning that the assessment developed by Asuda Organization was distributed to the relevant parties by volunteers. The questionnaire targeted four NGOs and four governmental institutions.

## Representatives of the French Embassy and UNFPA visited the women shelter in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 3 November 2021** - Today, a delegation from the Embassy of France, headed by Ambassador Eric Chevallier, and a UNFPA delegation, headed by the Representative in Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, visited the women shelter in Baghdad.

During the visit, they met with representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and discussed the services provided by the shelter to women and girls survivors of gender-based violence and abuse.

The visitors listened to women and girls at the shelters talk about their needs and hopes.

France and UNFPA agreed to enhance services offered to help survivors recover from trauma and get back on their feet.



## Moving out from the short-term interventions to the long-term job opportunities

**Kirkuk, 4 November 2021** – Woman Leadership Institute (WLI) organized the first coordination session in Kirkuk



with: the Woman Empowerment Department in the Kirkuk Governorate Office, women related governmental institutions representatives, the private sector (investors), civil society organizations, the head of Kirkuk Trade Union and two women who won in 2021 Iraqi Parliament Council election. The purpose was to facilitate and create flexible and adaptable mechanisms that may be applied in the private sector and the investment companies in the province to provide work opportunities for IDPs and hosting community women and girls in

Kirkuk, with special attention and focus to women and girls with disabilities.

This activity comes within the woman Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAPII) aims to support women (IDPs and hosting community) through the productive and financial assets and skills, and moving out from the short-term interventions to the long-term job opportunities with focusing on the entrepreneurship and employment, by targeting women to enhance their skills and ability to live in safety and dignity.

## UNFPA, Anbar Governorate sign framework to enhance services to women and girls

**Anbar, 7 November 2021** - UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, and the Governor of Anbar, Mr Ali Farhan Al-Dulaimi, signed a Joint Cooperation Framework on Sunday to increase access to services responding to gender-based violence and protecting women and girls in Anbar.

The agreement will be translated into establishing a women protection centre in Heet district, which will serve the entire governorate. UNFPA will ensure that the centre can provide survivor-centred quality services to women and girls survivors of violence.

Speaking to the press, Mr Farhan, said: "I thank UNFPA for prioritising women and girls in Anbar. The Governorate will ensure that women and girls have access to services they desperately need. We promise to expand our collaboration with the partners to



support women empowerment in Anbar."

For her part, Dr Columbia thanked the Governor for his support to women and girls' empowerment in Anbar: "This cooperation framework will help to expand services to women and girls in the Governorate and ensure service providers are equipped with survivor-

centred approaches that respect human rights."

The cooperation agreement between UNFPA and the Governorate is within the UNFPA 2020-2024 Country Programme Document and the Memorandum of Understanding between UNFPA & the Government of Iraq, through the Ministry of Planning.

## Anbar, second governorate to open a Women Protection Centre with UNFPA



**Anbar, 8 November 2021** - The Governorate of Anbar, with support from UNFPA and funding from Canada and Sweden, opened today a women protection centre in Heet district.

The centre will cover the entire governorate and provide psychosocial and legal assistance, medical counselling, referral to reproductive health services and protection for

survivors of gender-based violence. Women and girls will also benefit from education programmes focused on life skills, livelihood and civic engagement. The inauguration was attended by Mr Mohannad Zebar, Mayor of Heet, Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, and representatives from the civil society and women-led organisations.

In his speech, Mr Zebar said: "I want to thank UNFPA for their support to women and girls in Anbar. We are grateful to have such a centre for the first time in Anbar, and in particular in Heet. Women are essential members of our society and their protection and empowerment is key to the development of Anbar. This centre will ensure that survivors of gender-based violence are receiving proper services, have the opportunity to start over again and not be left behind."

Dr Columbia addressed the audience, emphasising the role of women and girls in the development: "Women and girls are the core of every society. They are the power that drives the communities upwards. UNFPA will strengthen its support to the local authorities in Anbar to ensure that the needs and the rights of women and girls are fulfilled, and they are well protected from any form of gender-based violence."

## Asuda Organization conducted awareness-raising sessions on Gender Based Violence and the gendered impact of the COVID-19

**Baghdad, 9 November 2021** - Asuda Organization for Combating Violence against Women conducted awareness-raising sessions related to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and the gendered impact of the COVID-19, in Baqufa and Sharya village, Alqosh sub district, Nineveh Governorate.

The sessions were divided to cover several topics: understanding the concept of gender, explaining the consequences and impact of gender-based violence on individuals, families, communities and the increase in the gender inequality gap due to COVID-19.

The total number of participants in the awareness sessions were 50 (45 women and 5 girls).

This was done under the project "Women, Peace and Security in the Arab Countries- Iraq - Phase two" funded by the government of Finland and in partnership with UN Women.

## UNFPA opens two new Family Planning Centres of Excellence and one-stop assistance centre



**Baghdad, 13 December 2021** - UNFPA, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs opened this month a one-stop assistance centre (OSAC) in Kirkuk with support from Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

The Centre is integrated at a primary health care facility and provides comprehensive gender-based violence services including referrals for women and girls. UNFPA will continue building skills and expertise of service providers on integrated protection and gender-based violence services in Kirkuk using the established facility and connecting communities to OSAC.

"I cannot imagine what it is like for internally displaced persons, returnees, refugees and host communities to be

going through these conditions away from their homes and families in the middle of the Pandemic. I hope that they get over all the difficulties they suffer and live a life they dream of, with this One-Stop Assistance Centre," said KOICA Iraq County Director, Mr Cho Hyeong Lae.

In addition, two family planning centres of excellence were established in Erbil and Kirkuk by the Ministry of Health and Environment and the Ministry of Health, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and UNFPA with support from Sweden and the UK and will open three more in Duhok, Sulaymaniyah and Basra by the end of 2021.

The opening of such centres is one of the essential steps towards universal

access to high-quality family planning services for families and women. The centres will serve as a capacity development platform for health providers in governorates, an innovative lab on family planning and a place where women can receive an integrated package of health services including high-quality family planning services.

In 2022, with support from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), UNFPA will open five more family planning centres of excellence in line with the National Birth Spacing and Family Planning Strategy.

Commenting on the initiative, the British Ambassador to Iraq, HE Mark Bryson-Richardson, said: "The UK is excited to support the implementation of Iraq's Family Planning Strategy and to see local communities, particularly women and girls, have access to quality health care provision."

For her part, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia said: "All women and girls in Iraq have a right to be protected and have access to good quality health services. Relying on human rights and survivor-centred approaches, these centres will offer families, women and girls the information and services they need on health, including reproductive health and on how to gender-based violence prevention and response."

## Ministry of Planning, UNFPA launch results of the second Iraq Women Integrated Social and Health survey

**Baghdad, 27 December 2021** - The Ministry of Planning, the Central Statistical Organization and UNFPA launched today the results of the second Iraq Women Integrated Social and Health (IWISH) survey, conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning at the Kurdistan Regional Government - Kurdistan Region Statistics Office and with funding from Sweden.

The survey addresses women issues throughout all ages and covers various sectors such as women empowerment, health, reproductive health, violence against women and other relevant social and health dimensions to establish a comprehensive database. It offers integrated data that identifies the progress made and the gaps in the economic, social, and health situation of women in Iraq in comparison to the results of IWISH I, conducted ten years



ago.

Speaking at the event, Dr Maher Johan, Deputy Minister of Planning, emphasised the importance of data and statistics in programming and policy development, reiteration the Ministry's determination to conduct the Population & Housing Census before the end of 2022: "Evidence-based

policies are the only way for us to achieve our commitments to the International Conference on Population & Development in Nairobi and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals".

Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, commented on the survey, saying: "UNFPA will continue to provide technical assistance in collecting, analysing and using reliable population data to ensure girls and women's rights and needs are a priority for the Government of Iraq. The findings will enable the development of people-centred policies enabling women to have equal opportunities and exercise their reproductive rights".

Highlights of the IWISH results can be found at

<https://iraq.unfpa.org/en/resources/brochure-iraq-women-integrated-social-and-health-iwish-2>

## SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: “I truly believe that today’s women in public office are the role models for tomorrow’s generation of leaders.”



**Erbil, 28 November 2021** – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert delivered a speech today at the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategies Conference in Erbil. SRSG focused on the importance of women's political participation and gender equality. Here is the text of her remarks:

“Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Distinguished guests,

It is an honour to address you today, and I thank the four universities for the opportunity to share some reflections and recommendations on this all-important policy priority.

At the outset, and through the lens of the recent parliamentary elections, let me begin by sharing some moderately encouraging news with regards to women's political participation in Iraq. Nearly 30% of candidates (in the October elections) were women, and preliminary results indicate that there'll be a historic number of female members of parliament in the next Council of Representatives: above and beyond the 25% minimum required.

Now, the willingness and ability of women to participate in these elections - be it as campaigners, activists, candidates and of course voters - is not only a good sign but also much needed. Much needed...as, and I quote Michelle Obama, “no country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contribution of half its citizens”.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Speaking in the Kurdistan Region today, I would (of course) be remiss not to point out the pioneering role played

by female politicians in this region, which has long led the country in terms of the quantity and quality of female political representation.

And as a woman who also blazed a political trail in my home country, I know how important it is for young women and girls to have role models to look up to as they aspire to positions of leadership, including in politics. I truly believe that today's women in public office are the role models for tomorrow's generation of leaders.

Also on the policy and legislative side, a lot has been done in the Kurdistan Region. From doing the obvious, for instance by institutionalizing gender issues, to all kinds of legal reforms such as the one addressing polygamy.

But let's face it: the growing assertiveness of Iraqi women in Iraqi political life is not yet a given. On the contrary. Past and present experience on the ground tell us that lots of work lies ahead of us.

Not only to ensure the elimination of all existing barriers for women to realize their political rights, but also to work towards gender balance in decision-making positions.

I mean, of all the names being mentioned for the position of Prime Minister, Speaker or President...perhaps I missed something...but so far, I haven't heard one female name.

What we do observe, however, is (to put it mildly) a rather challenging environment.

The thing is: when we speak about a challenging environment, when we speak about gender-based intimidation or violence - we often immediately think of the use of physical force.

Understandably so.

But as I have said on many occasions: gender-based intimidation and violence take many subtle forms.

Yes, certainly, there are the overt and explicit threats, but also implicit threats of, for instance, social exclusion and rejection. All of this with the intention to degrade, demoralize or shame women. It happens at home, in the community, in public and online.

Having said this, I cannot overstate that these kinds of acts are too often downplayed or even utterly dismissed: the situation is not that bad, mu mushkila, gwey pe mada!

But let it be clear: such acts do deter women from considering running for office or pursuing positions of leadership.

And that's not even mentioning so-called flirtations and off-colour remarks: about her looks, the length of her skirt, or the way she walks and talks. Needless to say, similar comments would never be made about men.

Like it or not, sexism also takes many subtle forms. Again, deterring women from fulfilling their professional and public aspirations.

Now, here is something I learned the hard way: ambitious women need to develop thick skin. That goes for women across the globe, including Iraq. Recently, in a lowly attempt to land an insult, I was referred to as that “old” woman. Ageism and sexism, a two-for-one combo. Let's not kid ourselves: a man of my age would be referred to as young or, if anything, as wise and experienced. Also, those trying to land an insult were clearly not bothered by the fact that most of my male counterparts and interlocutors are at least a decade older than me.

Ladies and gentlemen, in light of the long list of distinguished speakers today, I do not wish to dwell on policies, milestones and legislations.

Instead, I would like to emphasize the importance of an event like this. This is especially welcome as there continues to be a true need to recognize the plight and rights of women. In so many ways, in so many countries.

A timely event as well, as we are currently in the middle of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, which kicked off 3 days ago and will culminate on December 10, Human Rights Day. And this year's theme is “Orange the world! End

## SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “I truly believe ... (continued)”

violence against women now”, which makes me particularly happy as orange happens to also be the national colour of my native Netherlands.

At the same time, however, I would like to warn against conferences, speeches and reports as mere window dressing. At the end of the day, it is all about getting things done, about making a real difference in the lives of women and girls.

Take, for instance all the Iraqi women and girls suffering from physical and mental abuse, who are still waiting for the Anti-Domestic Violence Law to be enacted, let alone implemented. Here again, the comparatively advanced status of legislation in the Kurdistan Region must be recognized and commended.

Ladies and gentlemen, I also have a message to all ambitious women out there: do not feel discouraged by the generation of men that currently holds the reins of power.

True, their old boys’ network could be seen as the world’s biggest cartel, spanning the globe. And yes, many of these men could truly use some humility, integrity and self-awareness.

I also agree that gender too often seems more important than talent or merit.

But you know what: the era of men telling us “we know what is good for you, woman”; that era will only end if you end it yourself. And therefore, I can only urge each and every woman to speak up.

Wear your heart on your sleeve. Aspire openly to leadership roles. Go where no woman has gone before. Have no fear, but do develop the thick skin I mentioned earlier. And I can only underline the importance of taking pride in those women and girls stepping up to claim their rightful place in society.

You know, I was the first Dutch female Defence minister, and am now the first female Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Iraq. On both occasions, many men confessed (not immediately, but later on) that their initial thought was: wallah, why is this happening to us?!

But as time passed, they got used to me. I didn’t wait for permission or for male endorsement, and today, female leadership is a well-entrenched fact within the UN in Iraq: not only myself

but both of my Deputies, as well as many leaders of the UN funds, programmes and agencies, are accomplished women in senior decision-making roles.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, let me say the following: men and women are wired differently. There is no denying it. And there is no need to deny it.

The fact is that men and women have different capacities and both bring different qualities and solutions to the table. They can and must complement each other.

It is therefore high time to overcome dusty notions of leadership. It is high time for both the public and private sector to expand and to restructure, to attract, retain and empower competent women.

I tell you in all certainty that this can be done. In fact, we need look no further than around us here, right now: given the amount of decision-making power in this room, men and women, we can greatly advance this cause. With resolve and determination, and with a shared commitment by us all.

Thank you.”

## WPHF National Steering Committee session held in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 19 December 2021** – Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative for Iraq and Yemen, attended the session of the Women’s Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) National Steering Committee for Iraq which was co-chaired by Dr Yusra Mohsen, Director General of the Women’s Empowerment Department in the Council of Ministers, and Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, Deputy UN Special Representative. The meeting focused on selecting grantees for the Call for Proposal launched on conflict

prevention as well as agreeing on the requirements for the two new Call for Proposals on Humanitarian work and Forced Displacement which will be launched by the end of this year.

Dr Khanzad Ahmad, Secretary General of Kurdistan’s High Council of Women’s Affairs, also attended the meeting virtually with the presence of representatives from the donor community (Austria, Germany and Canada) as well as members representing the civil society including the 1325 Network and Alliance.



## UN-Habitat is one of the leading UN agencies dedicated to empowerment of women

**Sinjar, 03 December 2021** - UN-Habitat is one of the leading UN agencies dedicated to empowerment of women and encouraging our implementing partners and contractors to support female community members. A female engineer, Ms. Dalal Khalil, who is originally from Sinjar, is currently engaged in the construction of low-cost housing units in Sinjar as a site engineer of one of the construction companies working under the

supervision of UN-Habitat. Since she was a child she has always wanted to be an engineer. This is her first professional job upon graduation in civil engineering. The project, titled “Support to Reconstruction and Peacebuilding of Liberated Cities in Iraq – Phase III”, is funded by the Government of Japan and will accommodate 1,100 returnees in new housing units.



## 16 Days of Activism: UN calls for justice for women and girls survivors of gender-based violence

**Baghdad, 24 November 2021** - As we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the launch of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), we are reminded that GBV harms women and girls' health and well-being.

According to the latest estimates, nearly 1 in 3 women aged 15 years and older around the globe, at least once in their lifetime have experienced a form of sexual and gender-based violence indicating that levels of violence against women and girls have remained largely unchanged over the last decade. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic increased the risks for women and girls to undergo violence and abuse during the lockdown.

In Iraq, the Government and local actors, with support from the United Nations, are working to improve services for survivors, including access to healthcare, survivor-centred case management and legal assistance. Yet, more needs to be done.

GBV disproportionately harms women and girls because of their lesser socio-economic political power in relation to men and the discrimination they suffer to enter the labour market. Vulnerable groups like internally displaced persons, returnees, as well as Syrian and other refugees also face increased risks of sexual violence and exploitation.

We urge the Parliament to endorse the Anti-Domestic Violence law aimed at improving the judicial response to

prosecuting GBV cases and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. Survivors of violence need protective spaces and environments to feel safe and empowered to thrive.

Countering impunity for perpetrators; providing survivor-centred care; improving services for survivors, economically empowering women through providing decent job opportunities and promoting culturally sensitive approaches to social change and positive behaviours of men and boys can help create conditions for women and girls to participate in societies free from violence and harassment, including in the workplace. The engagement of boys and men as allies to end gender-based violence is equally needed to create a safer society for women and girls.

We must stand together, speak up and take action against all forms of violence against women and girls in Iraq. We will continue our joint efforts to support

the implementation of UNSCR 1325 advocating for women's political participation and protecting women and girls from GBV.

Freedom from violence will help women and girls reach their educational and professional goals; achieve economic independence; build careers and contribute to the development of their communities and society at large.

Together, let's End Violence Against Women Now!

Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq  
Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative, Iraq

Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative, Iraq and Yemen

Zena Ali Ahmad, UNDP Resident Representative, Iraq

Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative, Iraq

Ally-Raza Qureshi, WFP Representative, Iraq

Jean-Nicolas Beuze, UNHCR Representative, Iraq

George Gigauri, IOM Chief of Mission, Iraq

Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator, Iraq

Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative, Iraq

Muhammad Usman Akram, Director, UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman

Danielle Bell, Representative, OHCHR, Iraq

Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Director and Representative, Iraq



## 450 women and girls in Ramadi and Kirkuk received dignity kits and attended awareness sessions

**Baghdad, 23 November 2021** - Menstruation is good. It's a sign that your body is working normally. UNFPA dignity kits provide girls and women with basic menstrual hygiene products.

This week, 50 women and girls in Ramadi, Anbar received dignity kits and attended awareness sessions on personal hygiene and COVID-19. Social workers answered their questions on these topics. The activity was realized with support from Canada.

In Kirkuk, 400 women and girls received dignity kits containing basic health and hygiene products. The distribution was a part of UNFPA's efforts during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Community mobilisers took the opportunity to spread information about reproductive health and women rights.



## Activists meet in Basra to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

**Basra, 29 November 2021** – As part of the global campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI HRO) facilitated a strategy discussion in Basra on improving response to gender-based violence in the southern governorates of Iraq.

Representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Family Protection Unit, Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights and civil society from Basra, Muthanna, Thi Qar and Missan Governorates identified the need for joint advocacy opportunities: to encourage efforts to criminalize domestic violence in Iraq, formalize an effective support system for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for crimes committed inside the home. ‘Breaking the Silence’, a short film illustrating the plight of survivors of



domestic violence and the need for legislation criminalizing domestic violence, was also screened. Participants emphasized that the adoption of the draft anti-domestic violence law by Parliament is a crucial and a long-awaited step to support survivors of domestic violence and must

be part of process of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the role of civil society organizations in supporting victims of domestic violence needs to be formalized and civil society organizations must be involved in the debate about the draft anti-domestic violence law.

## 16 Days of activism at Kabarto 1 IDPs camp

**Baghdad, 25 November 2021** – Baghdad Women Association celebrated today 16 Days of activism at Kabarto 1 IDPs camp. 54 IDPs women and girls enjoyed entertainment, with the girls' band, poetry reciting, and anti-violence speeches.

The activity aims to enhance women's ability, to face and eliminate violence by increasing their awareness of their rights.

This activity was organized within “Women Peace and Security in the Arab states - Phase II”, in partnership with the UN Women and with the support of the Government of Finland.



## A panel discussion organized in Baghdad for a group of Yazidi and Shabak survivors

**Baghdad, 5 December 2021** - With the support of the UN Women in Iraq and the Women’s Fund for Peace and Humanitarian Action, the Sawtuha Network for Women Human Rights

Defenders, in cooperation with the Non-Governmental Organizations Department, and in conjunction with the 16 Days Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, organized a

panel discussion in Baghdad for a group of Yazidi survivors and Shabak titled “The role of survivors in participation and achieving social peace... reality and challenges”.

The symposium covered the 16-day campaign for combat of gender-based violence. Three issues were also at the center of discussion, the first was about the legal and human rights dimension of the survivors’ file, and the second covered the role of the NGO department in following up on the survivors’ file. As for the third issue, it covered the role of the media in mobilization of public opinion regarding the suffering and needs of survivors.



## Kirkuk – 16 days of activism against gender-based violence

**Kirkuk, 5 December 2021**– As part of the global campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI HRO) organized a strategic discussion in Kirkuk. Participants included 12 women and nine men, from Salah-al Din, Diyala and Kirkuk Governorate, including representatives from police Family Protection Units, members of local administrations, the Iraqi High Commission of Human Rights, women rights activist and successful candidates of the October 2021 elections.

UNAMI HRO screened the advocacy short film 'Breaking the Silence', illustrating the plight of survivors of domestic violence, the obstacles faced when seeking support and highlighting the need criminalize domestic violence. During the strategic discussions, participants shared their experience supporting survivors of gender-based violence and the need to strengthen existing response mechanisms, including increasing the numbers of female employees as a crucial step to strengthen the trust between survivors who seek for support and the existing institutions. In addition, participants highlighted the need to criminalize

violent crimes committed at home and to enact anti-domestic violence law as a crucial step to counter gendered misconceptions and reluctance to address societal norms and behaviour to criminalise violence in the family.



## Urgent need for Iraqi law to protect the most vulnerable, especially at home

**Baghdad, 6 December 2021** - As part of this year's global campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, al Amal Association and the Human Rights Office of the United Nations brought together Iraqi women rights activists working in government institutions, community elders, judges, health practitioners, lawyers, police, and religious leaders to reaffirm their collective commitment to ending violence against women and girls in Iraq. In her opening remarks, Ms. Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office and the OHCHR Representative in Iraq, emphasized the "urgent need for Iraqi law to protect the most vulnerable, especially at home. Without the criminalization of domestic violence, the most brutal violence – acts that outside the home would be considered criminal – will continue to be treated as mere 'family disputes' or 'private matters'."

During the expert level discussions, participants, including 28 women and 8 men, from Baghdad, Karbala, Diwaniyah, Thi Qar and Najaf Governorates, emphasized that progress can only be achieved through a collective and mutually reinforcing effort by government institutions and

civil society. Participants identified the need to adopt national laws and mechanisms that protect women and girls from gender-based violence, end impunity for gender related crimes, empower women and enhance their participation in peacebuilding, societal cohesion, and sustainable development programs.

Here is the text of Ms. Bell's opening remarks:

Esteemed Panelists,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much Amal.

On behalf of UNAMI human rights office I thank you all for participating in today's event to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. May I also extend special thanks to the al Amal organization for hosting us here today.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the civil society initiative of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The anniversary therefore provides a timely opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to ending gender-based violence and increase awareness, galvanize advocacy and create new opportunities for discussion about challenges and solutions.

The success of the global campaign requires effective engagement at the national level and, in that spirit, I am pleased to also welcome our distinguished panelists. Your expert view on the current status of the draft anti-domestic violence law, initiatives to strengthen existing response mechanisms and how the work of civil society can amplify the ongoing debate, will be invaluable in shaping the subsequent open discussion.

I also look forward to presenting today a short advocacy film produced by my office earlier this year called 'Breaking the Silence'. The film aims to raise awareness and encourage broader engagement with the ongoing efforts to criminalize domestic violence in Iraq, formalize an effective support system for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable without the possibility to mitigate sentences in the name of so called 'honor'.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has vividly highlighted all the risk factors for violence against women and girls, including unemployment and poverty, and has reinforced many of the root causes of such violence, such as negative gender stereotypes and harmful social norms.

This new reality of enhanced risk has reinforced the urgent need for Iraqi law to protect the most vulnerable, especially at home. Without the criminalization of domestic violence, the most brutal violence – acts that outside the home would be considered criminal – will continue to be treated as mere 'family disputes' or 'private matters'.

I am very much looking forward to the expert panel and the open discussion."





## UNFPA, UN Women and WED joint conference “Let’s Talk: Ending gender-based violence in Iraq” raised commitments of stakeholders to protect, prevent and respond to GBV

**Baghdad, 9 December 2021** - “Let’s Talk: Ending gender-based violence in Iraq” conference brought the attention of the policymakers, civil society, activities, academia, donors, and the private sector to the outstanding issues of violence against women and women’s rights in Iraq.

Despite the progress made in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, gender-based violence is still increasing in the country amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis: the situation requires new and ambitious solutions, agreed the panellists and attendees.

The dialogue between the officials, donors, female activists, young people, academia, business and media representatives highlighted the successful practices and potential new solutions for preventing any form of violence against women in society. Everybody agreed on the significant role of education and value system that forms gender sensitivity and norms among the young generation and families; men and boys engagement was mentioned as one of the key factors of eliminating gender-based violence, and a need for stronger

partnership between public and private sectors when it comes to gender-based violence elimination.

Freedom from violence will help women and girls reach their educational and professional goals; achieve economic independence; build careers, and contribute to the development of their communities and society at large.

Finding solutions to reduce and respond to gender-based violence is not only vital to the lives and well-being of women and girls, and societies, but to the successful implementation of the 2030 Sustainable

Development Goals in this Decade of Action.

At the end of the event, change-makers, innovators, influencers, teachers, youth leaders, as role models in the society, made commitments to change and take action within the communities.

The “Let’s Talk Conference” was conducted within the 16 Days of Activism Violence against women, creating an opportunity to bring the voices from Iraq into the global stream of conversations about rights, choices and women empowerment.



## Together to end impunity for violence committed against women and girls



**Baghdad, 10 December 2021** – To mark the end of this year’s campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, on 6 December, the Iraqi Women Network, Iraqi al Amal Association and the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq brought together Iraqis from a broad range of professions, united by the common objective to end gender-based violence.

Participants emphasized the importance of community engagement working towards the common goal to end violence against women and girls, and the need for collective actions to advocate for the enactment of legislation to criminalize domestic-violence and to ensure accountability for crimes committed based on gender-based violence.

In addition, there is a need to increase the awareness raising activities to end violence against women and girls and criminalize domestic violence already ongoing reaching all parts of Iraq society

by women rights activists, including with the support of the United Nations, and judges, doctors, lawyers, academics, journalists, religious leaders, tribal elders, and civil society activists. They have been at the forefront of advocacy campaigns to sensitize the public, members of parliament, government, justice institutions, and the security sector to the prevalence of this violation and the importance of providing redress to victims.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly exacerbated all the risk factors for violence against women and girls, including unemployment and poverty, and has reinforced many of the root causes of such violence, such as negative gender stereotypes and harmful social norms.

This new reality of enhanced risk reinforces the urgent need to criminalize domestic violence, to hold perpetrators accountable, and strengthen the support system for survivors.

Consistent with the principles of the

global campaign and recognizing the commendable efforts by the Government to address gender-based violence, we reaffirm our commitment to:

- Advocate for the criminalization of domestic violence in Iraq and the strengthening of a multi-sectoral, survivor-centered and transformative approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence;

- Implement a common, action-oriented approach, fully utilizing the leadership of women and girls, respecting diversity and creating space for their participation in decision making;

- Galvanize the efforts of civil society organizations in alignment with other partners to prevent and end violence against women and girls, by amplifying their collective voice and promoting a common agenda;

- Counter gendered misconceptions and accurately represent the value and long-term impact of effective implementation of ADVL, through responsible and informed media.

- Progress can only be achieved through a collective and mutually reinforcing effort by government institutions and civil society to: adopt national laws and mechanisms that protect women and girls from gender-based violence; end impunity; empower women; and enhance their participation in peacebuilding, societal cohesion, and sustainable development programs.

## The 16 Days of activism were celebrated across Iraq



**Baghdad, 10 December 2021** - The 16 Days of activism was celebrated in Najaf and Kerbala in coordination with Legal Clinic Network.

The venue was the nice park in Najaf. The event was attended by refugee women and children from Najaf and Kerbala, an awareness session on Gender Based Violence was presented, gifts were shared and a picnic lunch meal were provided for attendees.

To #OrangeTheWorld means a lot more than just the color. It's an invitation to celebrate women's strength!

As part of the #16Days campaign, in coordination with the Legal Clinic Network in Iraq, UNHCR conducted an awareness-raising session for over 30 refugee women in Baghdad.

One of the presentations by a doctor from the refugee women community discussed good health practices for women. The session also focused on the prevention and response to gender-

based violence.

Nature is the biggest storage of positive energy in the world!

With the help of a tree planted for this purpose, refugee women, men, boys, and girls sent positive and empowering messages to all women in Arbat Refugee camp in Sulaymaniyah.

Each small orange note contained a positive message or a beautiful dream. It was all put later on the tree for someone else to collect it and receive its positive energy.

The event was conducted in cooperation with UNHCR NGO partner, DHRD - Democracy and Human Rights Development Centre as part of the ongoing 16 Days campaign against gender-based violence.

#16Days media campaign and interactive social experiment with the public were held at the Erbil Citadel.

UN Women Iraq, UNFPA Iraq, WFP Iraq, SWEDO - The Swedish Development Aid Organization, and UNHCR Iraq all marked this day with interaction with public and media interviews shouting from the rooftops for gender equality and to #EndViolenceAgainstWomenNow!

In Kirkuk, it was all orange marking the start of the #16daysofActivism2021. Launching orange balloons into the sky was the first step. The event took place at the Kirkuk Sports Center at the Department of Education.

A leading woman from Kirkuk, the Head of Division of Women Empowerment, Ms. Intisar Kareem Abdullah gave a speech on the importance of standing up to Gender Based Violence.

The local press covered this colorful event.



## Duhok joins 16 days of activism against gender-based violence

**Duhok, 9 December 2021** – As part of the global campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence the Ninewa Human Right's Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI HRO) facilitated a discussion in Duhok.

Participants included seven women and eight men, from Ninewa Governorate, including representatives from the police Family Protection Unit, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, lawyers, judges, newly elected Council of Representative, women rights activists and other civil society actors.

UNAMI HRO screened the advocacy short film 'Breaking the Silence', illustrating the plight of survivors of domestic violence, the obstacles faced when seeking support and highlighting the need criminalize domestic violence.

During the discussion participants emphasized the pressing need to strengthen the Iraqi legal framework as a crucial step to counter gendered misconceptions and reluctance to address societal norms and behavior to criminalize violence in the family by enacting the draft Anti Domestic

Violence Law and to hold perpetrators of gender-based violence accountable. In addition, participants shared their experience in supporting survivors, identifying opportunities on how to strengthen the existing protection mechanisms for survivors, including the need to establish government run shelters.

Join the global campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence: watch the film 'Breaking the

Silence' [<https://bit.ly/3ELO4KB>] and sharing the short advocacy film on social media platforms.

To mark the end of this year's global campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, Iraqi civil society organizations, UNFPA, UNWOMEN and UNAMI HRO issued a joint statement [<https://bit.ly/3GCJsQK>] advocating for the enactment of anti-domestic violence legislation.



## "No form of violence will ever be ok": Iraqi women speak up

**Baghdad, 11 December 2021** - To mark the end of 16 Days of Activism, women from Iraq speak up about gender-based violence.

Around the world, almost 1 in 3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. For women in Iraq, this is no different. The main drivers of gender-based violence stem from deep-rooted harmful social norms and gender inequalities coupled with years of conflict and instability. The COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened it.

Stopping this vicious cycle of violence starts with believing survivors, tackling the root causes, addressing harmful social practices and economically empowering women and girls. At the same time, by ensuring equal access to essential services across policing, justice, health, education, water, electricity and social sectors, we can address drivers of this violence.

Hear directly from powerful women from Iraq on what ending gender-based violence NOW means to them.

Trigger warning: The following story talks about forms of gender-based violence.



Dhuha Sabah (28, Khanaqin, Diyala): "In Iraq, we see many forms of violence against women and girls. None of them will ever be ok. Unfortunately, not all forms of violence are visible to us, such as domestic violence, emotional abuse and online harassment.

One of the main drivers of this violence is the lack of access to quality

education and health. We can change behavioral patterns and counter harmful social norms by building strong education systems.

I also firmly believe that creating equal job opportunities can reduce gender-based violence. It financially empowers women and offers them a higher status in the household, decreasing the risk of violence."

(Dhuha is an assistant project manager at Mercy Hands in Salah al-Din. She works closely with UNDP through the Iraq Crisis and Response Programme.)



Rasul Yasser Mustafa (23, Hawija, Kirkuk): "For the current generation, online abuse and harassment are among the most common forms of violence, but least talked about. I notice how young girls cannot speak up about abuse because of stigmatisation and victim-blaming.

We need to ensure they have a safe space to voice their concerns and report abuse, irrespective of which form. Once they report, we need to ensure legal and financial support is provided on time. We also need to question and address the social norms that prevent them from reporting in the first place."

(Rasul received a business grant to kick start her business idea through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization.)

Captain Ruaa Nasaif Jasem (Female Training Center, Baghdad): "We have strict gender roles in Iraq. A man is responsible for providing for the house while the woman is the primary

caregiver. It should not be the case. Women and men should take equal responsibility. Unfortunately, women need to put in more effort than men to prove themselves.

In many cases of gender-based violence, there is a fear of stigma when a woman comes forward to speak up or report. While sometimes, there is a lack of basic awareness about their rights and the laws that protect them from violence. As a trainer at the female training center, I spend a lot of time building awareness around gender-based violence.



I encourage economic independence because this is one way a woman can free herself from violence. I also urge Iraqis to speak up about sexual abuse, even as a bystander."

(Captain Ruaa is a trainer at the Police Female Training Center in Baghdad. She works closely with UNDP's programme that supports Iraq's security and justice sector governance.)

### How you can act?

**Listen:** Keep an open mind and listen to survivors of violence. Refer them to appropriate support services.

**Speak up:** Challenge your peers to reflect on their behaviours, call out inappropriate comments and behaviors, and speak up when someone crosses the line.

**Report:** If you or someone you know has experienced abuse, feel threatened, unsafe or need assistance, help is available.

By UNDP Iraq.

## Open Day with young volunteers, under 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

**Baghdad, 12 December 2021** - To start a dialogue among the youth on Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and during 16 days of activism against GBV, UNDP, with the funding of the European Union, organized an open day with 30 young volunteers. Girls and boys, most of whom are college students, volunteered to spend a day with UNDP, where they were shown the different types of GBV, encouraged to exchange experiences and were given a space to discuss and figure out their

roles in combatting the phenomenon.

The young volunteers were first introduced to the different types of Gender-Based Violence, then they had the opportunity to share their interpretation for each type in an open discussion. They had breakfast together, during which they got to know each other, and what each one studies.

Later, the young students exchanged personal experiences. Some were brave enough to share their own stories of



## Open Day with young volunteers ... (continued)

overcoming violence that was directed at them. Others heard and gave their support. Both girls and boys had something to say about their role in the change they would like to see in their society.

Here are some inputs on that day from the volunteers who participated:

Aya, 19 years old: "It was my pleasure to participate in a discussion about this important issue. Each volunteer shared what they know about "GBV" but the discussion focused on "violence against women" more. We talked about the types but also the solutions. Some shared their stories that encouraged us as young girls to never choose silence when we are being harassed. The atmosphere was very nice, and let's not forget the fun part where we talked to the other volunteers while we shared breakfast altogether.

It was really a good opportunity to communicate with those active, witty, thoughtful, and great people! I am looking forward for many more

activities like this."

Kaniaw, 22 years old: "I was pleased to have had the opportunity to be a part of UNDP's "16 days activism against gender-based violence" open day. I got to meet some amazing people and we learned a lot and discussed the importance of spreading awareness on violence against women. We also talked about the different types of GBV and many other things including how to protect ourselves against it and what to do when in need of help.

While discussing GBV, we also exchanged ideas and experiences and what we can do to help spread awareness. Besides learning about GBV, we also had lots of fun with the activities, we played and got to know the other volunteers as well. At the end of the day, it was an amazing experience, and I would definitely do it again!"

Chalang, 25 years old: "It was a pleasure to spend the day with such open-minded young people. We were



able to discuss the causes and the solutions for different types of violence with the support of UNDP. Each of us had a story to share about violence against women, whether it happened to us or to someone we know. We were encouraged to be outspoken if we face any type of violence and to refuse silence. In addition to the discussions, the environment was very peaceful, girls and boys began to play. Everyone had an equal chance to talk and participate that day, and there was no difference between us."

## Violence against women and girls, a scourge affecting several generations

**Basra, 12 December 2021** - "Unfortunately, the society here is very patriarchal about violence against women, and the biggest problem is that in the case of beatings, women think that this is a man's right to exercise it over them, so women accept it and go to offload what they have been exposed to on their children," describes with sadness Hind, a social worker in a women and girls center run by the NGO, PAO, in collaboration with UNICEF in Basra, Iraq.

With support from the German Government, many women and adolescent girls receive support at the center and access safe information and services on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Hind provides psychological and social support to these women and girls who come to the center and goes to their homes for monitoring and follow-up. For example, she works directly with victims of intimate partner violence by supporting them and providing information on GBV and available services. "Many psychological problems also affect children and are passed on from generation to generation. I consider this type of violence to be a persistent problem that is passed down through generations," says Hind.

GBV is the most widespread and least



visible human rights violation in the world. It includes physical, sexual, mental, or economic harm inflicted on a person because of socially constructed power imbalances between males and females. It also includes the threat of violence, coercion and deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private space.

GBV takes numerous forms. Intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, trafficking for sexual exploitation, female infanticide, and 'honour' crimes are common – with intimate partner violence occurring at staggering rates in every country. Girls and women may also experience GBV when they are deprived of nutrition and education.

In Iraq, about 1.32 million people (75%

women and adolescent girls) are at risk of different forms of GBV, with 77 percent of GBV incidents linked to domestic violence, which has reportedly increased during COVID-19.1

Women and girls who survive GBV suffer long-term severe consequences for their physical and psychological health, and some of them are exposed to serious physical injuries and may lose their lives. Survivors are often blamed and ostracized by their families and communities.

UNICEF works in Iraq raising awareness against GBV and, in coordination with partners, provide psychosocial support and referrals for emergency medical care to women and girls.

By Anmar Rfaat, UNICEF Iraq

## UNFPA, MOI KRI launch SafeYou App, helping women and girls in Kurdistan be protected from gender-based violence



**Erbil, 17 December 2021** - Today, the Ministry of Interior in the Kurdistan Regional Government, the General Directorate of Combatting Violence against Women and Families (GDCVAW) and UNFPA launched the SafeYou application in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The SafeYou application helps prevent women from being subjected to violence and provides a forum where individuals can get advice about services on gender-based violence.

SafeYou connects women and girls who are at risk of violence, harassment, and abuse with skilled protection forces who can support survivors of gender-based violence. The application also

educates them about their rights, health and life skills.

In addition, the application offers a Help button, which, when clicked, sends the user's location to the trained police as well as the people who they trust and can turn to for help. This service is free of charge and all information received through the app is confidential to secure the privacy of users.

Speaking at the press conference, the Minister of Interior at the Kurdistan Regional Government, Mr Rebar Ahmed, expressed the Government's determination to protect women and girls in Kurdistan: "The Kurdistan Regional Government has zero

tolerance towards perpetrators of gender-based violence. We work with each and every relevant party in the Region to put an end to all forms of violence. The SafeYou application makes us one step closer to achieving a violence-free society, and we will not stop until we reach this goal."

For her part, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia said: "The SafeYou application will help women and girls, and their families feel safe. It is a new and additional tool for protecting them from violence. The SafeYou application will be linked to the 119 helpline managed by the trained officers of GDCVAW."

Commenting on the launch, Senior Advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff at the office of President Nechirvan Barzani, Mr Ahmed Oathman: "Eliminating gender-based violence has been and will remain a top priority of Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani, and we commend UNFPA and KRG's Minister of Interior for providing a new way of reporting violence against females through SafeYou application."

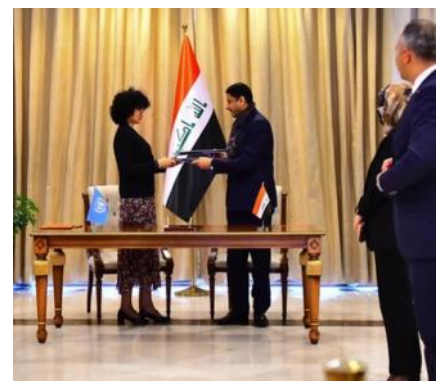
The conference was followed by a Q&A with Ms Kurdo Omer, Head of GDCVAW and Dr Columbia with the audience and media.

## UNFPA and the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers partner to end Gender-Based Violence in Iraq

**Baghdad, 21 December 2021** - UNFPA and the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers (COMSEC) signed a joint cooperation framework to move forward the ICPD agenda in Iraq ensuring that women live a life free of any form of violence.

The Framework will allow UNFPA and the Women Empowerment Department at the COMSEC to strengthen advocacy and actions for the evidence-based laws and policies enhancing response to and prevention of gender-based violence in Iraq.

"At UNFPA, we value our partnership with the Women Empowerment Department in addressing gender-based violence in Iraq. This cooperation agreement will allow us to strengthen the focus and join the efforts in protecting women and girls from all forms of violence", stated Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq at the ceremony.



## Meeting focused on the opportunities and challenges facing women in disputed areas affected by ISISL

**Erbil, 7 December 2021** - The High Council of Women Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, in partnership with UN Women and Mosaic Middle East and under 16 days campaign to eliminate violence against women, conducted two days meeting with 20 women from Nineveh Plain and Sinjar. The meeting was focusing on

the opportunities and challenges facing women in disputed areas affected by ISISL as well as to discuss the psychosocial needs to overcome the impact ISIL caused. Also, they discussed the livelihood needs and opportunities for future projects to support women in disputed areas.



## 21st Anniversary of the flagship United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 marked in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 31 October 2021** - Under the patronage of the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, UN Women Iraq and the Department for Women Empowerment celebrated the 21st Anniversary of the flagship United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. The celebration took place on October 31st at Al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad and brought together high-level government officials, diplomats and representatives from civil society, UN entities and other international organizations. The high-level event highlighted the progress made on the implementation of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and provided a platform for women civil



society to share experiences of their efforts and actions on WPS in Iraq. The event was organized in partnership

with the Department of Women Empowerment with the support of the Government of Sweden and Finland.

## 1325 Iraq National Action Plan II implementation discussed in KRI



**Erbil, 23 November 2021** - The High Council of Women Affairs (HCWA) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, in partnership with UN Women in Iraq, organized a workshop in Erbil on 3 November that involved 25 participants from KRI Civil Societies organizations (CSOs) that works on 1325 and gender empowerment to present and discuss the KRI 1325 board, its role and functions as well as to preset KRI 1325

action plan 2021-2024. During the workshop CSOs representatives and HCWA discussed the implementation process of the plan and creation of a coordination mechanism between the HCWA and CSOs and priorities implementation of the 1325 plan pillars.

This workshop was part of series of workshops conducted under Women, Peace and Security agenda funded by

Government of Finland and Sweden.

On 23 November 2021, HCWA conducted the third meeting with representatives of various ministries and civil society organizations on 1325 Iraq National Action Plan (INAP) II implementation. 60 participants from CSO's and KRG ministries attended the meeting to discuss and agree on the monitoring and evaluation strategy as well as to create a communication and coordination mechanism between the HCWA, CSO's and KRI ministries. The meeting was closed with an agreement on the importance of creating a communication platform on 1325 that can be used as data bank to report all activities, studies, reports, and projects that will implemented by the Government and CSO's. This meeting contributed to strengthening the coordination and communication mechanism among government and CSO's working to implement UNSCR 1325 NAP II KRG.

## Focus group held to discuss the methodology and mechanism of drafting the media plan for the NAP on UNSCR 1325

**Baghdad, 24 November 2021** - Iraqi Women Journalists, in cooperation with the Department of Women Empowerment in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, with the support of UN Women Iraq, and in partnership with international organizations, held the first meeting (the focus group) to discuss the methodology and mechanism of drafting the media plan for the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325.

This activity was supported by the government of Finland, through project "Advancing the Implementation of the Second Iraq National Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS" funded by the Swedish International development cooperation (SIDA).

A preparatory meeting was held in Erbil on 7 December 2021. The workshop focused on identifying the role of DWE in implementation and monitoring, establishing ownership for

the 1325 NAP and unifying the concepts for the developed monitoring and evaluation framework.

This activity was supported through project "Advancing the Implementation of the Second Iraq National Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)" funded by the Swedish International development cooperation (SIDA).



## 1325 National Action Plan for Kurdistan launched in Erbil



Erbil, 30 November 2021 - Today National Action Plan for Kurdistan in Erbil, Iraq by the High Council of

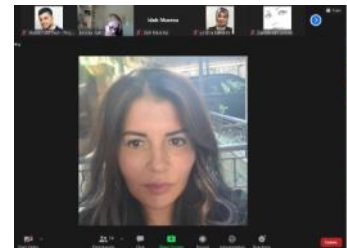
Women and Development sponsored by the federal government, Ministry of Interior (MOI), and in partnership with civil society organizations and UN Women. Partners and donors were invited to attend this event which coincided with the 16 days of activism. A panel session was organized that included representatives from the Federal government, KRI, civil society and UN Women where they shared information on their ongoing work, plans, challenges and the way forward for the NAP.

This event was supported by the Governments of Sweden and Finland.

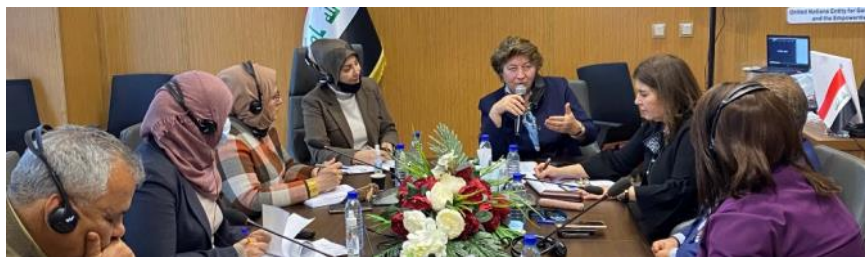
## The webinar highlighted the key priorities for the Parliament to support in the implementation of the NAP for UNSCR 1325

Baghdad, 6 December 2021 – Ms Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative to Iraq and Yemen, participated in an online webinar hosted by Iraq Foundation aimed at presenting two guides on gender equality in legislation and the role of parliament in monitoring and evaluating the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 in Iraq. The webinar highlighted the key

priorities for the parliament to support in the implementation of the NAP and provided a road map to support in achieving gender equality with gender-sensitive legislation. The Ambassador to Sweden, Mr. Jonas Loven, and the Head of the Iraq Department of Women Empowerment, Dr. Yusra Mohsen, participated in the webinar.



## A workshop aimed at highlighting the importance of sectoral planning in the implementation of NAP held in Baghdad



Baghdad, 21 December 2021 - UN Women strengthened coordination mechanisms between the Department of Women Empowerment and

ministerial/non-ministerial entities by arranging a workshop aimed at highlighting the importance of sectoral planning, identifying the roles of line

ministries/non-ministerial entities in the National Action Plan (NAP) and presenting the monitoring framework. Dr Yusra Mohsen, Director of the Department of Women Empowerment (DWE), initiated the workshop and revisited the main concepts of the NAP and highlighted some achievements of 2021. By the end of this 2-day workshop, all involved entities will be able to provide baseline data for the monitoring framework and develop their own sectoral plans to support in the implementation of the NAP.

### Human Rights

## UNAMI's Human Rights Office discuss with 18 judges and prosecutors strategies to prevent torture



Baghdad, 30 October 2021 - UNAMI's Human Rights Office met with 18 judges and prosecutors of the Iraqi human rights courts to discuss strategies to prevent torture and promote accountability.



## UNAMI HRO conducted a training for civil society organizations on 'United Nations Human Rights System on Protection from and Prevention of Enforced Disappearances'

**Baghdad, 14 November 2021** – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) conducted a one-day training for civil society organizations on 'United Nations Human Rights System on Protection from and Prevention of Enforced Disappearances'.

The training, attended by 11 representatives of civil society organizations working in the field of protection from enforced disappearances, was delivered by three international experts: two members of the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances and a representative of the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Center for South-West Asia and Arab Region.

Participants discussed the key role of civil society organizations in promoting protection against enforced disappearances, including by providing support to victims and their families to



obtain justice and redress, as well as through their engagement with UN Treaty Body Mechanisms. Participants also discussed the urgent need for the enactment of a comprehensive national law on the protection of all persons from enforced disappearances, in line with Iraq's international human rights obligations.

Speaking at the event, Mr Rupert White, the Officer in Charge of UNAMI

Human Rights Office emphasized that "addressing the continuing problem of enforced disappearance in Iraq requires a coordinated response by all stakeholders and Iraqi civil society plays a key role in encouraging the Government of Iraq to take all necessary steps to put an end to enforced disappearance, provide redress to victims and hold the perpetrators to account."

## Training on Cooperation with the United Nations Human Rights System on protection from and prevention of enforced disappearances

**Baghdad, 16 November 2021** - Today, the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) completed a two-day training in Baghdad for Iraqi judicial, security and law enforcement officials on 'Cooperation with the United Nations Human Rights System on Protection from and Prevention of Enforced Disappearances'.

Participants included 25 representatives, including eight women, from the Ministries of Defence, Interior, Justice, Foreign Affairs, and the High Judicial Council respectively. The training was delivered by a team of expert speakers including two members of the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances and a representative of the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Center for South-West Asia and Arab Region.

Key topics covered during the interactive training included: Iraq's international human rights obligations to protect all persons from enforced disappearance; the centrality of providing accountability and redress for victims, including through effective efforts to search for the missing;

improving engagement between the Government and United Nations mechanisms to promote the protection of all persons from enforced disappearances; international best practice in conducting effective investigations into enforced disappearances; and the importance of enacting comprehensive national legislation to prevent enforced disappearances in accordance with Iraq's international human rights obligations.

Speaking at the event, Mr Rupert White, the Officer in Charge of UNAMI Human Rights Office emphasized that, "This training marks a welcome step in

developing closer cooperation and coordination between Iraq and the United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms which will enable the issue of enforced disappearances to be addressed through a process grounded in Iraq's international human rights obligations, based on a shared desire to uphold the rights of those most affected."

The training forms part of UNAMI Human Rights Office's ongoing support to the Government of Iraq to improve its capacity to investigate allegations of enforced disappearances in Iraq and provide accountability and redress for victims.





## 34 couples in Diyala addressing domestic abuse and violence

**Diyala, 10 November 2021** – UNDP Iraq worked with 34 couples in Diyala employed under cash-for-work to address key drivers of intimate partner violence. It offered them a unique way to address domestic abuse and violence. This was implemented through the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme along with Oxfam.



## Human rights and diversity in Iraq

**Baghdad, 8 December 2021** – Today, to mark International Human Rights Day 2021, the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) launched the “Human Rights & Diversity in Iraq” art exhibition.

The two-day art exhibition brings together members of the Assyrian, Chaldean, Faily Kurd, Kaka’i, People of African Descent, Sabean Mandeian, Shaback, Syriac, Turkmen, Yazidi and Zoroastrian components, presenting

paintings, photographs, fabric, poems, sculptures, music, and other artefacts, celebrating Iraq’s rich linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity.

The event was also an opportunity to commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948. This year’s Human Rights Day theme ‘Equality – Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights’, reflects the spirit of Art 1 UDHR which provides that, ‘All Human beings are

born free and equal in dignity and rights’.

More than 30 participants from the international community, civil society and government representatives had the opportunity to exchange with artists and representatives of Iraqi components about the art and human rights issues in line with this year’s theme. The art exhibition was accompanied by a Zoroastrian musical performance.



**Mosul, 22 November 2021** - UNAMI’s Human Rights Office met with officials of the Ministry of Interior in Mosul to discuss implementation of safeguards in detention and during investigation to prevent torture and ensure accountability.



**Baghdad, 8 December 2021** – At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head of the Human Rights Department, Minister Plenipotentiary Dr. Ali Hilal, met Ms. Danielle Bell, Director of the Human Rights Office at the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

## The interaction between human rights and digital rights as well as security and protection of civic space formed the focus of two online workshops

**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** – The interaction between human rights and digital rights as well as security and protection of civic space formed the focus of an online workshop conducted by UNAMI’s Human Rights Office with the facilitation of the Iraqi Network for Social Media - INSM Network. The event brought together 19 participants including journalists, bloggers, civil society activists as well as human rights defenders from various governorates in Iraq.

Participants were introduced to practical measures to strengthen the safety of their digital environment, including communication, telecommuting, data storage as well as protection from hacking among other topics. The workshop forms part of a series of trainings delivered by UNAMI’s Human Rights Office in cooperation with INSM reaching more



than 200 individuals, which will be followed by the development of a digital security interactive guide for activists, a digital help desk, as well as tailor-made digital security assessments for 25 Iraqi NGOs.

On 17 December 2021 similar event was organized that brought together 41 participants including journalists, bloggers, civil society activists as well as human rights defenders from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

## Human rights in countering terrorism dialogue

**Baghdad, 16 December 2021** – Human rights in countering terrorism was the focus of a two-day policy dialogue co-hosted by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. The event brought together senior Iraqi Government officials including the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and the Office of the National Security Advisor, as well as United Nations entities, NATO and the European Union Advisory Mission in Iraq.

During the event, the participants exchanged views on practices and challenges relating to the effective implementation of human rights standards in counter-terrorism operations, including during investigation and in detention. Officials reiterated their shared commitment to

the protection of human rights and highlighted the legal framework and procedural safeguards in place. Participants also identified areas of potential reform and proposed various

measures to strengthen understanding and compliance with international standards relating to counter-terrorism and the prevention and countering of violent extremism.

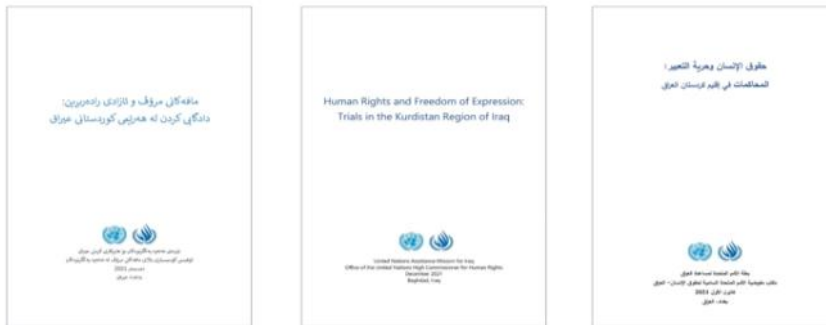


## UN Iraq Human Rights and the High Judicial Council work together to develop guidelines

**Baghdad, 18 December 2021** – UN Iraq Human Rights and the High Judicial Council work together to develop guidelines for judges aimed at strengthening effective legal defence, judicial oversight of detention, evidentiary standards, reasoning of decisions and torture prevention.



## New Report “Human rights and freedom of expression: trials in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq”



**Baghdad, 22 December 2021** - The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) have issued a report today on “Human Rights and Freedom of Expression: Trials in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq” available for download from the United Nations Iraq website at the following links:  
 English: <https://bit.ly/3qaS7K4>  
 Arabic: <https://bit.ly/3J4iGeN>  
 Kurdish: <https://bit.ly/3yPlsxD>

Here is the Executive summary of the report:

This report, Human Rights and freedom of expression: trials in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, was prepared by the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), pursuant to its mandate under Security Council Resolution 2576 (2021), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The report examines criminal justice proceedings in four emblematic cases in the Erbil Criminal Court, concerning individuals known for their public criticism of authorities. It sets out an

evidence-based analysis of the administration of justice in Kurdistan and provides an assessment of risks individuals may face, including coming into conflict with the law, for exercising legitimate rights to freedom of expression.

During its monitoring of the four cases documented in this report, OHCHR/UNAMI observed a consistent lack of respect for the legal conditions and procedural safeguards necessary to guarantee fair judicial proceedings before an independent and impartial tribunal. OHCHR/UNAMI does not purport to make any findings on the guilt or innocence of the individuals concerned.

In breach of the principle of legality, the criminal law provisions applied in these cases were formulated in broad and imprecise terms, leading to inconsistent interpretation of these provisions by the courts and a lack of clarity relating to the specific charges. In addition, the prosecution failed to clearly identify which specific underlying alleged acts formed the basis of the criminal charges, nor did it provide concrete evidence to substantiate those charges.

Other practices in relation to evidence

observed across these trials also fell short of international human rights norms and standards, including rights of the accused to call and examine, or have examined, the witnesses against them.

Judicial reasoning for decisions was not evident in any of the observed cases.

Although at least eight of the accused submitted in court that their confessions had been extracted under torture, the trial judge dismissed these submissions without further examination. Safeguards in place to prevent torture, including medical exams, access to defence lawyers, video-recording of interrogation, and processes for reporting torture and other ill-treatment, were not respected. Systematic barriers prevented defence lawyers from preparing an effective defence. At least two of the individuals were held in prolonged solitary confinement, and all were denied regular access to their families.

Additionally, various actions by the authorities - which could be perceived as attempts to unduly influence the outcome of the judicial proceedings - were observed.

In order for the authorities to address the concerns identified by OHCHR/UNAMI, the report provides recommendations on measures to prevent further violations of the right to a fair trial and provide redress for victims of violations.

OHCHR/UNAMI welcomes the long-standing partnership with the Kurdistan regional authorities on the protection and promotion of human rights, noting concrete steps toward the protection of the right to freedom of expression in recent months.

The response of the Kurdistan Regional Government is annexed to this report.

## UN Iraq Human Rights welcomes the commitment for continued cooperation to ensure protection of human rights in prisons

**Baghdad, 22 December 2021** – UN Iraq Human Rights welcomes the commitment expressed by H.E. Minister of Justice for continued cooperation to ensure protection of human rights in prisons.

His Excellency the Minister of Justice, Judge Salar Abdul Sattar Mohammed, confirmed that the doors of the ministry and prison departments are open in front of all international and local organizations to see the reality of

the changes that have taken place and expressed his full support for these organizations.

This came during his meeting with the Director of Human Rights Office in Iraq Ms. Danielle Bell and her delegation, in the presence of the Director of the Justice Relations Department in the Ministry of Justice, Mr. Ahmed Laibi Abdul Hussein, and the Director of the Human Rights Department, Dr. Mohammed Turki.



## Strengthening the role of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities

**Kirkuk, 11 November 2021** - Persons with disabilities in Iraq have been disproportionately impacted by conflict, displacement and economic hardship. Iraq has one of the largest populations of persons with disabilities in the world. Despite this, they have rarely been consulted by government and humanitarian and development agencies.

As part of efforts to strengthen the role of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), IOM Iraq organized a joint roundtable between OPDs, civil society organizations, local directories, and IOM Iraq's community stabilization unit in Kirkuk. Stakeholders discussed barriers faced by persons with disabilities and opportunities to strengthen the role of



OPDs as their representatives. The roundtable also discussed how to better engage persons with disabilities in civil society, as well as potential steps to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in IOM activities and

strengthen their access to IOM services.

This roundtable was made possible with support from Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## Flagship workshop for persons with disabilities makes history in Iraq, MENA region



**Erbil, 16 November 2021** - Iraq has one of the largest populations of persons with disabilities in the world. Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in Iraq are increasingly being asked to advocate for their rights to their government and humanitarian and development agencies. Yet, there has been limited opportunities for persons with disabilities from various governorates in Iraq to develop a strong and comprehensive understanding of their rights.

In partnership with the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations (IADO), and the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) organized the Bridge CRP-SDGs\* Module 1 training in Erbil from 9-16 November – the first Iraq-specific training of its kind, and the first national Bridge workshop in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA).

Bridge CRPD-SDGs\* is a three-module, intensive capacity building initiative. It supports persons with disabilities to comprehensively advocate for the realization of all human rights for all persons with disabilities.

“After waiting for years to find donors to support the implementation of Bridge in Iraq, finally our dream came true! 108 candidates with different types of disabilities applied from across Iraq,” said Mwafaq Al-Khafaji, Head of IADO. “Bridge is a great opportunity to improve advocacy skills of persons with disabilities in Iraq.”

23 participants with diverse disabilities and experiences were selected, representing 12 Governorates across Iraq. Global Bridge Quality Criteria were followed to ensure that representatives of underrepresented groups, including people with intellectual disabilities, Deaf people, people with psychosocial disabilities, autistic people, women with disabilities, youth with disabilities, older people, Yazidis with disabilities and internally displaced people with disabilities were included in the training. Accessible and inclusive facilitation included sign language interpreters; illustrators drawing concepts for participants with specific visual learning styles; personal assistants; translators; and accessible training materials. Arabic speaking trainers with disabilities from the MENA Region (including Iraq) facilitated the module.

“This training is very useful and relevant; I’m benefiting a lot,” said Yadgar Kareem, a Bridge participant and Head of Kurdistan Union for the Blind and People with Low Vision, during the first week of the session. “Such trainings [help empower] members of Organisations of persons with disabilities members to defend their rights.”

Globally, IOM is committed to reducing and addressing barriers facing people with disabilities. In December 2019, the IOM Iraq Disability Inclusion Strategy 2019–2021 was launched to help the government develop programmes that support the needs of migrants with disabilities. In 2021 IOM has been mapping and collaborating with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities; working towards making IOM community centres accessible; and developing guidance for staff to implement disability inclusive programming.

“It is significant to see the Bridge training hosted for the first time in Iraq, developed and led by persons with disabilities,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri. “They are best placed to speak about their barriers, and their perspectives must be considered first when developing inclusive programming. We thank our partners for their hard work organizing this workshop, and we thank the Government Australia for the ongoing support of IOM’s disability inclusion efforts.”

Bridge Module 1 is funded by the Government of Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) under the project “Supporting Durable Solutions, Social Cohesion and Reintegration in Iraq”, with additional contributions from CBM Global and IDA.

\*CRPD = UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, SDGs = Sustainable Development Goals.

## Australian delegation visited Bahirka camp for IDPs

**Baghdad, 17 November 2021** - Trust and partnership are key to providing quality services to women and girls and ensuring advocacy for their rights and needs.

Yesterday, a delegation from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australian Embassy, Iraq) visited Bahirka camp for internally displaced persons.

The delegation focused on the importance of the inclusion of persons with disabilities with refurbished infrastructure and access to services. They also toured the UNFPA-supported women centre and reproductive health clinic in the camp.



## UNFPA organized a training for healthcare providers to learn about sign language

**Baghdad, 19 November 2021** - Everyone of us has the right of privacy. Patient privacy during a consultation promotes effective communication of information between a patient and a doctor. This is important for patients to make independent decisions for themselves and govern their own bodily autonomy.

Persons with disability have the same rights, especially deaf people. The deaf communicate differently, most commonly in sign language. It is important that they enjoy the same right of privacy. That is why UNFPA organised a training for healthcare providers to learn about sign language for them to be able to communicate better with deaf people.

Thanks to SIDA (Swedish International



Development Agency) the training included the basic signs for common

conversations and communication of results.

## Improving accessibility for persons with disabilities

**Mosul, 03 December 2021** - In its ongoing public space rehabilitation project funded by the European Union in Mosul, the UN Habitat team carefully considered improving accessibility for persons with disabilities since the early stages of designing the sports facilities, children playground area and toilet facilities and creating opportunities for children, youth, and adults with disabilities to conduct physical open-air activities in a safe and inclusive setting.

Disability inclusion is an essential condition to upholding human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security. It is also central to the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to Leave No One Behind. The commitment to

realizing the rights of persons with disabilities in Iraq is not only a matter

of justice; it is an investment in a common future.



## Fighting for legal rights and quality of life for those living with disabilities, every day

**Baghdad, 03 December 2021** - International Day of Persons with Disabilities is an important reminder that we must continue to fight for legal rights and quality of life for those living with disabilities, every day.

UNICEF supports inclusive education which is accessible for the learning and development of every child, including children living with disabilities. Today on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UNICEF recommits to create a more inclusive, accessible and sustainable world.

Through UNDP Iraq flagship Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) programme, more than 26,000 damaged



houses have been restored after the ISIL conflict. To support people living with disability, modifications like

ramps, seated toilets and handrails are included, making daily life much easier for residents.

## Building a world where children and youth with disabilities reach their full potential

**Duhok, 3 December 2021** - Rebaz school in Dohuk, supported by UNICEF and the Government of Germany celebrated World Children's Day with a focus to include every single child.

UNICEF supports inclusive education which is accessible for the learning and development of every child, including children living with disabilities.

We must build a world where children and youth with disabilities reach their full potential, are heard and engaged in their communities.

This is central to UNICEF's mission to realize the rights of every child and leave child behind.

Today on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UNICEF recommits to create a more inclusive, accessible and sustainable world.



## Media professionals can play a key role in enhancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities

**Baghdad, 06 December 2021** - Media professionals can play a key role in enhancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in various areas of life by raising awareness of disability issues and challenges.

In collaboration with the Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations (IADO) and Handicap International (HI), IOM Iraq hosted a two-day training in Baghdad for members of the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission on the role of media in sensitizing communities to the rights of persons with disabilities. The IOM, IADO, and HI trainers also covered dominant attitudes towards persons with disabilities and how the media's



actions can change or reinforce prevailing stereotypes about them.

This workshop was supported by the Government of Australia.

## UNFPA, Australian Embassy, IADO celebrate persons with disabilities in Iraq: Laws must be enacted in support of rights of

**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** - Today, UNFPA with the Australian Embassy and the Iraqi Alliance of Disability (IADO) celebrated and recognised the rights of persons with disabilities in Iraq.

Persons with disabilities in Iraq have immeasurable potential and can largely contribute to the economy and society bringing compassion, innovation and resilience to their communities. At the same time, they are the ones who have been most impacted by the various crises that hit Iraq and continue to face significant barriers to be fully included and share equal rights.

The public event highlighted the achievements and the challenges faced by persons with disabilities on a daily basis through theatrical and musical



Photo: UNFPA/Iraq

performances by men and women and children with disabilities.

Speakers including Mr Adel Al-Rakabi, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Mr Mwafaq Al-Khafaji, Head of IADO, Mr Hussein Arab, Member of Parliament, Ms Paula Ganly, Australian Ambassador to Iraq, and Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative, highlighted the importance of endorsing and legislating laws that promote the rights of people with disabilities and their access to services, ensuring their effective participation in society. Messages insisted on joining efforts to end stigma and discrimination against all persons with disabilities and ensure their full inclusion.

On behalf of UNFPA, Dr Rita Columbia expressed a commitment to support persons with disabilities, especially

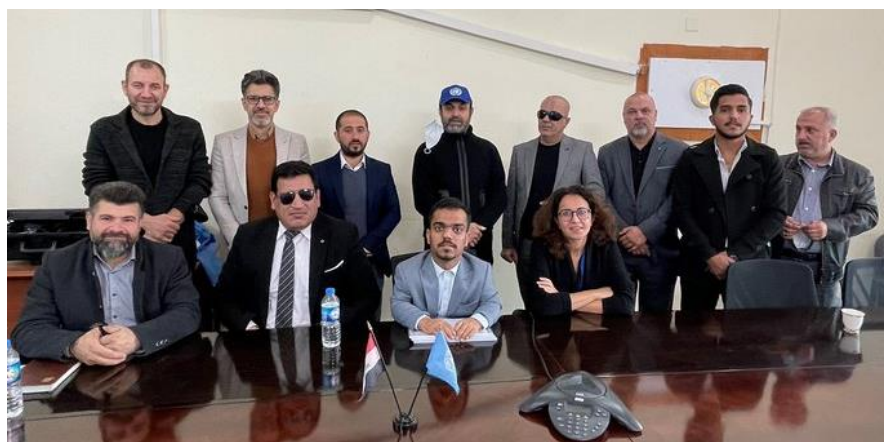
women and young people, to receive essential services such as reproductive health, prevention of gender-based violence, and life-skills education. She thanked IADO, local authorities and donor countries - Australia, Finland, Norway, and Sweden - for partnerships and strengthening disability inclusion in policy and programmes.

UNFPA works closely with the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, civil society and the international community to promote the rights of women and young people with disabilities to enjoy equal opportunities, live a life free of gender-based violence and enjoy their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The event ended with selecting disability ambassadors for 2022 and a handicrafts and painting exhibition by people with disabilities.



**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** - Disability inclusion must be central to all efforts for the promotion and protection of Human Rights. The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) today joined the Iraqi Alliance of Disability to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.



**Kirkuk, 15 December 2021** – Today, representatives of people with disabilities met the UNAMI Kirkuk office – colleagues from the Offices of Political Affairs, Human Rights and Development Support. They highlighted challenges in the sectors of employment, education, health and access to social services, while maintaining a positive attitude and recommending constructive solutions. Representatives called on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to advocate for the full implementation of Law 38 (2013) on the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs, and of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and for the protection of all their rights.

## Finland supports youth with disabilities in Mosul through UNFPA interventions

**Baghdad, 22 December 2021** - The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iraq welcomes the Government of Finland's new contribution of EUR 1,475,000 to the UNFPA programme in support of adolescents and youth with disabilities in Nineveh governorate.

This initiative will empower adolescents and youth with disabilities, especially girls, to be active citizens and exercise their rights through education including life skills, livelihood and civic engagement.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Ambassador of Finland to Iraq, HE



Matti Lassila, said: "The Government

of Finland and the Embassy in Baghdad are privileged to support the important work of UNFPA with this project," reiterating the importance of not leaving anyone behind.

UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, highly appreciated the support of the Finnish Government for equal rights of young people with disabilities in Iraq. She said: "This initiative will provide adolescents and youth with disabilities in Mosul with unique opportunities to build their skills and be engaged in their communities as youth leaders, peer educators and social entrepreneurs."

## Freedom of Press

### Citizen journalism skills workshops held in Basra and Erbil

**Basra, 21 November 2021** - As Iraq continues to make progress stabilizing social and cultural life, a robust media sector can help to bridge differences and create an informed populace.

IOM Iraq recently concluded a citizen journalism skills workshop with the participation of 50 TV correspondents and social media activists from Basra Governorate, supporting the role of a free press in strengthening society's awareness of valuable ideas aimed at fostering long-term peace and stability.

The workshop was also held in Erbil Governorate from 12-17 November, during which social issues, cultural



challenges and the cultivation of a culture of dialogue were discussed.

Citizen journalism skills workshops are supported by the European Union.

## Netherlands supports UNESCO Iraq to enhance the safety of journalists

**Baghdad, 28 November 2021** - The UNESCO Iraq Office welcomes a new generous contribution from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Netherlands Ambassador Michel Rentenaar and the director of UNESCO Iraq Office, Paolo Fontani, signed today the project agreement of the phase two of "Breaking the Silence: Enhance Accountability and Prosecution for Safety of Journalists and Fighting Impunity". The funding will help among others to establish the National Safety Mechanism for journalists.

The Netherlands support aims to improve the safety of journalists and their access to justice. The project will build capacity and trust among journalists, civil society, government officials, security forces and the judicial system in the country.

The project will assist the Iraqi National Committee of Safety of Journalists and Issues of Impunity in training and assisting judges, police officers and prosecutors in dealing professionally with criminal cases of crimes committed against journalists, as well as producing integrated annual reports containing investigative and judicial information. The new contribution will allow UNESCO to better support journalists across the country, through the National Safety Mechanism, and improve legal assistance for journalists and their families in need. The project will provide special support to female journalists. Since 2016, the Netherlands has been a generous partner of UNESCO. This partnership grew to include support for the protection of journalists, the establishment of a Special Investigation Unit on crimes against journalists, and

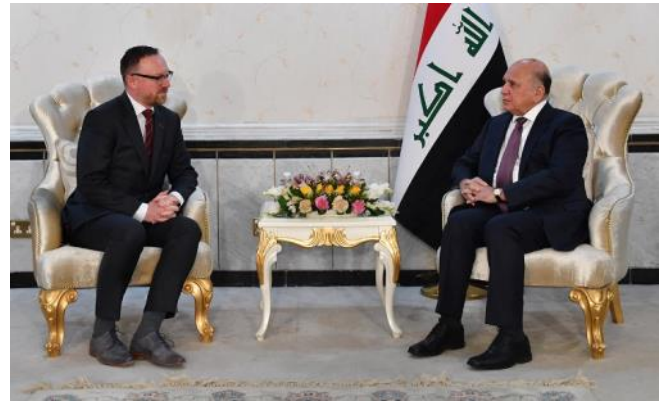


assistance to female journalists. The UNESCO Iraq Office in Baghdad has been spearheading the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, in close cooperation with the Iraqi authorities, media representatives, as well as national and international specialized NGOs. UNESCO has a global mandate to monitor and report on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity.





**Baghdad, 25 October 2021** – The Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher, met with the President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Judge Faiq Zidan, in Baghdad. They discussed ongoing cooperation and efforts to hold ISIL perpetrators accountable for the crimes they committed in Iraq.



**Baghdad, 27 October 2021** - In his meeting with Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein today, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher expressed his thanks for Iraq's continued strong support to UNITAD and underscored the importance of close cooperation with Government of Iraq to ensure justice for victims and accountability for ISIL. Photo courtesy of the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



**Baghdad, 28 October 2021** - Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher, and Iraqi President Dr. Barham Salih discussed UNITAD's ongoing work during their meeting in Baghdad today.

The Special Adviser thanked the President for his invaluable support and reiterated that the Team is committed to deepening its partnership with Iraq to hold ISIL members accountable.



**Erbil, 2 November 2021** - In his first meeting with community leaders, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met today in Erbil with representatives of the Christian community, and discussed efforts to hold ISIL members accountable for international crimes, including destruction of Christian cultural heritage. Special Adviser Ritscher was reassured by the commitment of Christian community leaders to support UNITAD's work, and to encourage victims and survivors to participate in the accountability process, and to give their witness accounts of those crimes.



**Erbil, 3 November 2021** – Head of United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Special Adviser Christian Ritscher, met Kurdistan Prime Minister, Masrour Barzani, for the first time today in Erbil and thanked him for his continued support to UNITAD's work. They also discussed ongoing operational cooperation in investigations, including archiving and digitizing evidence of ISIL crimes in Iraq. Photo courtesy of the Office of the PM KR.



**Baghdad, 17 November 2021** - During their first meeting, Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher, and Deputy Foreign Minister and Head of the National Coordinating Committee, Dr. Qahtan Al-Ganabi, discussed enhancing cooperation between UNITAD and Iraq's national authorities. Special Adviser Ritscher reiterated that Iraq is the primary intended recipients of the Investigative Team's work in pursuing accountability for ISIL international crimes.

## UNITAD welcomes Hungary's new support for investigations of ISIL crimes

**Baghdad, 17 November 2021** – The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) welcomes Hungary's contribution of 18 million Hungarian Forint (\$61,382 USD) to ongoing investigations into ISIL crimes, specifically crimes committed against the Christian community in Iraq.

This support will help ongoing investigative activities being conducted by UNITAD's investigative unit that focuses on ISIL crimes that targeted the Christian community and will include investigations into the destruction of Christian cultural heritage between 2014 and 2017.

Additionally, Hungary's commitment to

the UNITAD and to the people and government of Iraq will help UNITAD continue its work to deliver on its promise of justice and accountability for all communities in Iraq regardless of their faith or ethnicity.

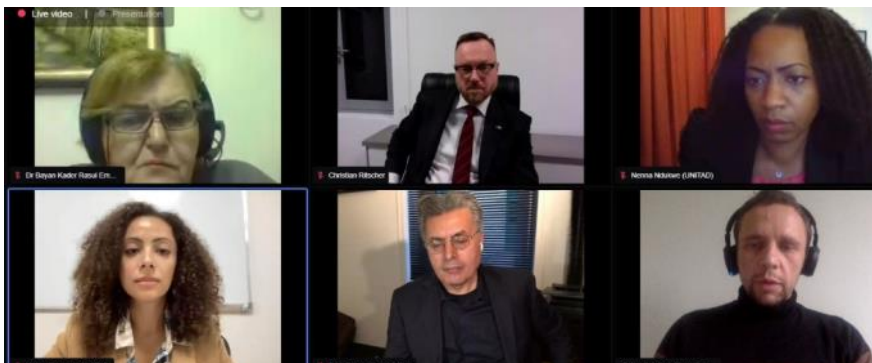
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary notes that "Hungary is committed to supporting multilateral efforts that aim to improve local livelihoods and foster sustainable development. In this regard, especially in conflict-affected regions, justice and accountability are essential pillars forming the backbone of long-term, peaceful development amongst communities. We therefore support UNITAD's efforts in promoting justice and accountability for all, thereby



aiming to heal divisions and foster partnerships on the local, regional and international level."

UNITAD was established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017) to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by

## UNITAD-NGO dialogue forum holds its third thematic roundtable, 'Psychosocial Support: Engaging Survivors in Accountability Efforts'



**Baghdad, 18 November 2021** – Under the title: "Psychosocial Support: Engaging Survivors in Accountability Efforts", the UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum held its third thematic roundtable meeting today. The events of the Dialogue Forum bring together a large number of Iraqi and international NGOs to discuss issues of relevance to UNITAD's mandate, and to enhance cooperation, exchange ideas and best practices, and ensure that the Investigative Team can draw on the expertise and knowledge of the NGO community.

The roundtable discussed ways through which UNITAD can strengthen its cooperation with NGOs to support providing psychosocial support to victims and survivors of ISIL crimes, through extending capacity building to local NGOs and mental health providers, and challenges facing NGOs in this regard.

In his opening remarks, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher underscored the importance of cooperation between

UNITAD and NGOs to fulfil the common goal of holding ISIL members accountable for their international crimes, and to serve justice to the victims and survivors from all affected communities.

The Special Adviser also highlighted the important aspect of the NGOs' work in Iraq, including the support they extend directly to survivors. "An important aspect of the work of NGOs in Iraq is the support you are able to extend to survivors, some of whom are from your own communities, in areas like psychosocial support, which is one key area of cooperation between UNITAD and the NGO community."

UNITAD's lead psychologist Dr. Nenna Ndwuke briefed participants on how trauma-informed approach is central to UNITAD's work, and how the Team's activities focus on capacity-building and support to NGOs in this regard. She added that UNITAD works tirelessly to ensure that victims, survivors and witnesses can come forward and take part in the

investigative process in an emotionally safe environment to reduce the risk of re-traumatization.

Dr. Jan Ilhan Kizilhan, Dean of the Institute of Psychotherapy and Psychotraumatology at the University of Duhok and Director of the Institute for Transcultural Health Science at the State University of Baden-Württemberg, and Dr. Bayan Kader Rasul of Emma Organization for Human Development took part in the roundtable as panelists, bringing both the international and local perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of provision of psychosocial support, with the aim of engaging survivors in accountability efforts.

Dr. Rasul provided an overview on the mental health situation in Iraq and the complex trauma reactions, elaborating on the challenges facing mental health services as well as those facing the work of NGOs in this regard.

In his intervention, Dr. Kizilhan reflected on his work with Iraqi survivors, and psychosocial support as a long-term work, stressing also the importance of accountability and pursuing justice for the mental health of survivors.

UNITAD partners with several NGOs with the aim of facilitating and increasing access to community-based psychosocial support provided by those NGOs to victims, survivors and witnesses of ISIL crimes, as an essential part of the Team's commitment to work through a survivor-centered and trauma-informed approach.

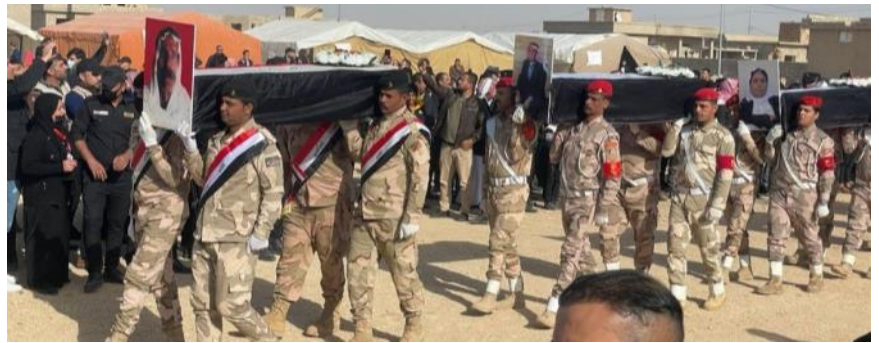
## Iraqi officials and UNITAD announce a new ceremony for the return of Yazidi remains, call on families to provide DNA samples to increase victim identifications

**Dohuk, 26 November 2021** – Iraqi representatives and members from the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) met with Yazidi community and civil society members to announce that the second return of identified remains will take place in Kojo on December 9, 2021.

“This second return of remains to Kojo helps to bring us one step closer to providing some closure to families of victims of ISIL international crimes. UNITAD remains committed to investigate these crimes to support holding ISIL perpetrators accountable”, underlined Gerald Casey, UNITAD Chief of Staff.

Sagvan Murad Jundi, general director in the Iraqi presidency said that President Barham Saleh stands ready to support the Yazidi community, recalling his tribute to the first group of identified victims who were returned to Kojo in February 2021. He also stressed the president's active role in the Parliament's adoption of the Yazidi Female Survivors law in March of the same year, adding that the law is we be implemented through the formation of a general directorate for it.

NCC representative and Kurdistan Regional Governmental (KRG) coordinator for international advocacy Dr. Dindar Zebari thanked UNITAD for organizing the outreach event and reiterated that the KRG will continue to provide utmost support to the process of identifying victims. He added that the upcoming return of remains ceremony will hopefully be a closure to the families of the victims, adding that all efforts should be intensified to support the rapid



identification of more victims.

The outreach event, which was facilitated by UNITAD, aimed to engage with the community on the planning for the return of identified Yazidis to Kojo. UNITAD appreciated the opportunity to hear directly and learn from affected community members their concerns and needs. Family members unable to attend in person were able to join the event remotely and pose their questions to officials who took part in the event.

The process of mass graves excavations and identifying and returning the remains of the victims is crucial for the communities that suffered from ISIL crimes, who stand at the heart of the work of Iraqi officials and UNITAD.

Director of MLD, Dr. Zeid Abbas announced that a five-day ante mortem campaign will follow the second return of remains ceremony and will run from 10 – 15 December in Kojo. He called on Yazidi families attending the ceremony to “make use of this opportunity while in Kojo to give their DNA samples, as collecting larger number of DNA samples is critical to increasing the number of identifications.”

Lead Clinical Psychologist Dr. Nenna

Ndukwe, who was present at the event, emphasized the trauma-informed approach to all of UNITAD's activities in support of the return of the remains, which is likely to carry a heavy emotional toll on affected families. Psychosocial support will therefore be provided on-site at the ceremony through a coordinated response with relevant NGOs.

Director of Mass Graves Directorate Mr. Dhiya Al-Saiidi added “the process of returning the remains to their families is one of the most important goals referred to in the Mass Graves Law No. 5 of 2006 and is a major step towards determining the fate of the missing victims and helping to end the suffering of their families.”

The process of returning identified human remains to the next of kin constitutes an important step towards granting families of victims some form of closure with the chance to lay their loved ones to rest in a dignified manner. A parallel track also exists where the DNA-based identification of the human remains of persons, whose fate was previously unknown, provides robust forensic evidence that can be used in building cases to hold members of ISIL accountable for their crimes.



**Baghdad, 29 November 2021** - Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher, visited the Nineveh Federal Appeals Court in Tal Kayf, and met its Vice President, Judge Raed al-Mosleh, and his team working on the joint project with UNITAD to digitize and archive evidence documents of ISIL international crimes.



**Mosul, 29 November 2021** - Mr. Najem Al-Jubouri, Governor of Nineveh, accompanied Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher, in Mosul showing him the aftermath of the war against ISIL, and the magnitude of destruction in the old city, including Al-Nouri Mosque, which is being reconstructed with UNESCO Iraq's help.

## UNITAD Special Adviser Christian Ritscher welcomes landmark genocide conviction of ISIL member

**Baghdad, 30 November 2021** – Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) Mr. Christian Ritscher today welcomed the landmark conviction of ISIL member Taha Al-J in Frankfurt for the crime of genocide.

“This conviction marks a significant moment in global efforts to deliver accountability for international crimes committed by ISIL, and in particular to achieving justice for the victims and survivors of the horrific acts they carried out against the Yazidi community. For the first time in a judicial judgement, we see these crimes called what they were: genocide. Victims have already waited so long but this provides hope of what can be achieved. I commend the work of the Office of the German Federal Prosecutor General, and all national prosecutors working towards this ultimate goal of pursuing accountability and achieving justice” Special Adviser Ritscher stated.

Mr. Al-J was found guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide by the Higher Regional Court following a 19-month trial in Frankfurt, Germany. This follows the conviction of his German wife, Jennifer W, for crimes against humanity in Munich earlier this year. In these proceedings, the court heard of Mr. Al-J’s role in the enslavement of a Yazidi female and her daughter in Falluja, and the subsequent death of the young girl as a result of Mr. Al-J tying her up outside in over 50oC temperatures.

UNITAD has recently concluded a

structural investigation into crimes against the Yazidi community in Sinjar, with its initial findings presented to the Security Council in May 2021 confirming that the Team had found clear and convincing evidence that the crimes committed against the Yazidis constituted genocide, as also reflected in today’s judgement.

In the Taha Al-J case, UNITAD supported German prosecutors by engaging with witnesses in Iraq and was able to help confirm that documentation purportedly indicating the deceased Yazidi girl had survived were fraudulent.

The Special Adviser added: “I am pleased that this conviction was achieved with the support of UNITAD, particularly given my involvement in

this case in my previous role as a German national prosecutor. This outcome demonstrates that through partnerships across national authorities, UNITAD, impacted communities and non-governmental organizations we can overcome the many hurdles faced in delivering justice for ISIL crimes”.

Mr. Ritscher further emphasized that the role played by UNITAD in this case represented a vindication of the vision and global leadership demonstrated by the Government of Iraq in establishing the Investigative Team and supporting its work. UNITAD will continue to work with Iraqi authorities in order to support further prosecutions of ISIL members in a manner that reflects the profound impact their crimes had on so many communities in Iraq.



**Qaraqosh, 29 November 2021** - In Qaraqosh, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met with the Christian community and religious leaders reconstructing entire towns that suffered from ISIL crimes including the destruction of cultural heritage. He met at Al Tahira Church the Supreme Board for Reconstruction and was inspired by the community's resilience.



**New York, 1 December 2021** - Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Mr. Christian Ritscher, was pleased to meet United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres for the first time since his appointment as Head of UNITAD. Discussions focused on progress made in evidence-collection and the harnessing of partnerships across UN actors, national authorities and civil society.



**New York, 2 December 2021** - Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher, was delighted to meet the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations, Ambassador Mohamed Bahr Al Uloom, during his visit to NY. They discussed progress in investigations ahead of the SA's briefing to the United Nations Security Council. The SA reiterated that partnership with Iraqi authorities is at the center of common efforts to deliver justice for ISIL crimes.

## Special Adviser Ritscher: Potential turning point in efforts to hold ISIL accountable before competent courts



**Baghdad, 2 December 2021** – In his first briefing to the UN Security Council on the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Special Adviser Christian Ritscher emphasized that a potential turning point was being reached in efforts to deliver justice for the victims of ISIL crimes.

“If we strengthen our unity in addressing the inherent challenges that the scale of ISIL criminality presents, I believe we have the opportunity to turn the tide from impunity to justice”, Special Adviser Ritscher said, after reflecting on the progress made by the Investigative Team in the last six months, in cooperation with Iraqi authorities.

He stated that it is now possible to envision a new landscape where criminals who previously believed themselves to be out of reach of justice

could be held accountable in a court of law. Thanks to the use of advanced technology to build structural case-briefs and detailed casefiles against ISIL members that link those individuals to specific international crimes.

Mr. Ritscher announced that conclusions had been reached in a key line of investigation into the mass killing of prisoners at Badush Central Prison, with the Team finding that these attacks constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity. A structural case-brief finalized by the Team could now be used to support domestic prosecutions for these crimes. The Special Adviser also outlined to Council members that forensic analysis of battlefield evidence collected by the Team showed that ISIL’s development and deployment of chemical weapons reflected a strategic priority implemented in line with a long-term

plan. He noted that more than 3,000 individuals impacted by ISIL chemical weapons attacks had been identified, with local medical records showing children admitted for burns leading to death and longer-term health impacts on communities. He added that he will present a comprehensive case-brief that details the Team’s findings and legal characterization of ISIL’s chemical weapons programme in his next report to the Council.

He informed the Council that the Team have uncovered the inner workings of the central department responsible for the collection, storage, management, and movement of ISIL treasury. He further confirmed that the Team has been working closely with Iraqi authorities to support the prosecutions of those responsible for ISIL financial crimes.

The Special Adviser underlined the critical nature of the ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq in the work of the Team, stressing that he would look to deepen collaboration as a priority in his time as Head of the Team.

“To deliver on the promise made through Security Council resolution 2379 (2017) we must put this evidence to work before competent courts”, he said, and clarified that effective cooperation meant the sharing of evidence must be done in a manner which feeds into competent courts to bring justice to victims and hold perpetrators accountable for their international crimes, in accordance with UNITAD’s Terms of Reference and the principles of the United Nations.

## Governments of Iraq and Germany join UNITAD in hosting a special event: “Ensuring Global Accountability for ISIL Financing”

**New York, 10 December 2021** – At United Nations Headquarters in New York, UNITAD and the Governments of Iraq and Germany hosted a discussion amongst Member States and international experts addressing how those who profited from ISIL crimes in Iraq, including acts that may constitute international crimes, can be held accountable.

In opening the meeting, H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom noted that Iraq welcomed cooperation and support of UNITAD in this area, building on the expertise already developed by Iraqi authorities and drawing on case-briefs disclosed by UNITAD to the Iraqi judiciary, stating:

“the Government of Iraq is committed to identifying those that enriched themselves through the crimes against its people and by the theft and pillage of oil and cultural heritage. It is crucial we do this in partnership with the international community”. He stressed that accountability for the financing of previous ISIL crimes also served a preventative and deterrent function, and was an important part of the ongoing fight to dry up the current financial resources available to ISIL. UNITAD’s investigation into ISIL financing are supported through a generous financial contribution by the Government of Germany. In addressing the meeting, H.E.

Ambassador Antje Leendertse, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, underlined the importance of identifying and prosecuting those who profited from ISIL atrocities. Referring to a conviction of an ISIL member by a court in Frankfurt for genocide earlier that week, she noted that UNITAD was already making a difference in supporting national investigations. In his statement, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher noted that investigations into ISIL financing reflected one of his key initial priorities as new Head of UNITAD to deepen insights into chains of command and decision-making hierarchies in the

## Governments of Iraq and Germany join UNITAD in hosting a special event: “Ensuring Global Accountability for ISIL Financing” *(continued)*

organization. He underlined that: “by uncovering the calculated and profit-driven nature of its internal mechanisms, we further remove any lingering attempt to cloak the actions of ISIL in any legitimate ideology or doctrine.”

Mr. Andrew Wright, Head of UNITAD Financial Crimes Unit, outlined the progress made by UNITAD in its financial investigations work to date, noting that through cooperation with Iraqi authorities and other key partners, the Team had uncovered the inner workings of the central ISIL treasury, Bayt al- Mal or “House of Money”, the central department responsible for the collection, storage, management, and movement of its wealth. In doing so, the Team has also identified a network of senior ISIL leadership who also acted as trusted financiers, diverting wealth that ISIL gained through pillage, theft of property from targeted communities.

Outlining his extensive work in the investigation of ISIL crimes, Honourable Judge Raed, Head of Ninewa Federal Appeals Court, Mosul, emphasized the need for cooperation



with all actors in such investigations, noting his collaboration with UNITAD to date in Iraq and the need for further engagement with other national authorities.

The discussion also benefited from the insights of Ms. Kristin Rosella, financing of war crimes expert and Mr. Jérôme Beaumont, Executive Secretary, The Egmont Group, who addressed the broader legal context of investigations into international crimes, including international

cooperation mechanisms.

Discussions amongst participants focused on ways in which international cooperation can be further strengthened in order to address challenges faced by national authorities in investigating ISIL financial networks. Special Adviser Ritscher concluded the meeting by noting his hope that prosecutions could soon begin to be taken forward by UNITAD and Iraqi authorities in Iraq based on their close cooperation in this field.

## Second phase of the return of remains of Yazidi victims of ISIL concluded, families lay their loved ones to rest



**Kojo, 12 December 2021** – Bringing a glimpse of solace to hundreds of Yazidi families and survivors, the Iraqi Government and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) returned the remains of 41 Yazidi victims recovered from mass grave sites in Kojo.

The burial ceremony took place on 9 December 2021 and was attended by representatives of the Iraqi Federal Government, the Kurdistan Regional Government, local authorities and Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD

Christian Ritscher.

The ceremony was joined by the families of the victims, Yazidi religious leaders, community representatives and thousands of Yazidi; many who traveled from abroad to give their loved ones a proper burial according to their religious and cultural tradition.

“Putting some soil on our beloved ones is a relief for us despite the hurt. Now we know what their destiny is, and where their grave is so we can visit and mourn” a relative of one identified Yazidi victim said.

Upon his arrival, Special Adviser

Ritscher offered his condolences to Yazidi female survivors and families of the victims and assured them that UNITAD will continue to work in partnership with the Medical Legal Directorate and the Mass Graves Directorate to support the DNA-based identification of the victims remains and return them to their next of kin.

In his statement during the ceremony, Mr. Ritscher commended the work of all those who helped identify the victims, particularly the work of Iraqi federal authorities and authorities in the Kurdistan region. He reiterated UNITAD’s commitment to holding ISIL perpetrators accountable for the crimes committed against the Yazidi and all communities in Iraq.

“The resilience and determination of the Yazidi community, of Yazidi women and girls in particular are truly inspiring in their demand for justice and accountability for ISIL’s horrifying brutality” he added.

Mr. Ritscher acknowledged that the wheels of justice turn slowly but highlighted the significant progress UNITAD achieved this year. He recalled that the Team informed the United Nations Security Council last

## Second phase of the return of remains of Yazidi victims of ISIL concluded, families lay their loved ones to rest *(continued)*

May that it had found, based on clear and convincing evidence, that genocide was committed by ISIL against the Yazidi as a religious group. He also highlighted how the recent conviction of an ISIL individual in Germany for the crime of genocide was “the first judgment in which these crimes against the Yazidi community are called what they are: genocide”.

“UNITAD will continue to build on this successful partnership with national authorities, you the impacted communities and non-governmental organizations so we can together overcome the many hurdles faced in delivering justice for ISIL crimes” the Special Adviser said.

Adorned with a photo of each victim and wrapped with the Iraqi flag, each coffin was carried to the burial area by Iraqi soldiers. Families were then able to say their final goodbyes before laying their loved ones to rest.

In response to the emotional and

psychological toll such events are expected to take on the families and the survivors, psychosocial support was provided on site – facilitated by UNITAD and led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Yazda, Emma Organization, Free Yezidi Foundation, Nadia’s Initiative and Norwegian Christian Aid.

This funeral and commemorative ceremony held in Kojo, Sinjar on 9 December 2021 is the second phase of returning the human remains of ISIL victims for dignified burial, by their relatives and community. The first ceremony was held in February of this year. It follows large-scale excavations of mass graves, including the Solagh mass grave which is often referred to as the mothers’ grave.

The identification of the victims’ remains happens through a series of campaigns that encourage the families of the victims to register their missing relatives with the national authorities

and provide information as well as DNA reference samples for identification. The Medical Legal Directorate is organizing a campaign in Kojo between 10 and 15 December 2021. All relatives with missing persons are encouraged to take the opportunity to participate in these campaigns to accelerate the identification of more victims, especially relatives who have travelled from overseas. UNITAD is also planning to support a similar campaign among the Yazidi community in Berlin, in cooperation with the Iraqi authorities.

Besides being an important moment on the path to healing for the families of the victims, the identification of remains help build forensic evidence that links the crimes committed against those victims to the ISIL perpetrators, and thus help in turning the tide from impunity to justice.

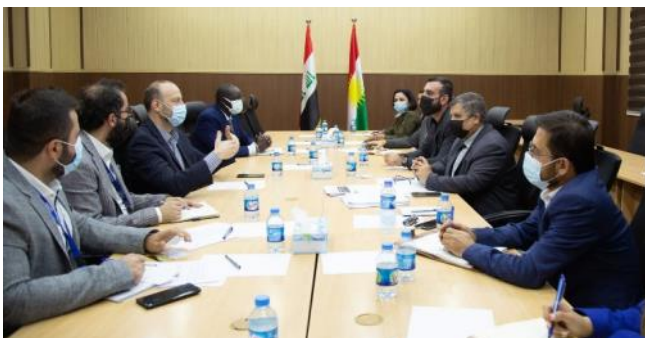


**New York, 2 December 2021** – The Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher, visited German Permanent Mission to the United Nations and met with the Head of Mission, Ambassador Antje Leendertse, who offered him and his team full support of Germany. UNITAD is a prime example of international support to the national judiciary in the prosecution of the most serious crimes under international law - a topic discussed today in the UN Security Council.



**Baghdad, 13 December 2021** – The Special Adviser Christian Ritscher received H.E. Mr. Jonas Lovén, Ambassador of Sweden to Iraq at UNITAD’s offices in Baghdad today. They discussed ongoing cooperation in the pursuit of ISIL accountability. Ambassador Lovén was also given a tour of the Team’s forensic lab.

## Migrations



**Erbil, 9 November 2021** - IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri met Kurdistan Regional Government officials in Erbil, to discuss latest updates and a way forward for the National Migration Strategy.



**Erbil, 20 November 2021** - UNHCR conducted a training session for the Department of Foreign Relations staff in the Kurdistan Regional Government on “International Refugee Protection and Enhancing the Protection Space for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in KRI”.

## IOM Iraq held a workshop in Baghdad focused on raising awareness about the risks of migrating via irregular channels

**Baghdad, 6 December 2021** - The International Organization for Migration is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. IOM Iraq recently held a workshop in Baghdad focused on raising awareness about the risks of migrating via irregular channels. The workshop also aimed to reduce stigma or fear of

voluntary return among community members, students, and religious leaders.

This workshop was funded by Government of Germany.



## International Migrants Day - IOM's flagship day to highlight the contributions made by migrants and internally displaced persons

**Baghdad, 16 December 2021** - IOM Iraq and the University of Baghdad's College of Fine Arts co-hosted an event to mark International Migrants Day - IOM's flagship day to highlight the contributions made by migrants and internally displaced persons, and the challenges that they face.

The event featured music, theatre and dance performances on the theme of regular migration, arranged and choreographed by students from the College. Opening remarks were delivered by representatives for IOM, the German Embassy in Baghdad, and the Dean of the College - Dr. Mudhad Al Asady.

Overwhelmingly, migration benefits individuals and societies. IOM and the UN at large, through the UN Network on Migration, will proudly work to support the Government of Iraq in implementing the Global Compact for Migration - and promoting safe, humane migration for the benefit of all. IOM Iraq is grateful to the Dean and College of Fine Arts for hosting the successful event, and particularly to the students for their creativity and passion! The International Migrants Day celebration was supported by the European Union and the Government of Germany.



## International Migrants Day celebrated in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 18 December 2021** - Today, the Bangladesh Embassy in Baghdad hosted a celebration for the International Migrants Day. The event, co-organized by IOM Iraq, was an occasion to show solidarity with and support for many Bangladeshis living and working in Iraq - some of whom found their economic opportunities significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was moderated by First Secretary Mr. Abu Saleh Mohammad Imran, and featured

speeches from IOM, ICRC, and H.E. Mr. Fazlul Bari, the Ambassador of Bangladesh.

After the welcoming speeches, the attendees were split into groups where they got to discuss their opportunities and challenges, as well as the role of Bangladesh migrants in Iraq; findings were presented in plenary to all participants.

This event was made possible with support from the Government of the Czech Republic.



## International Migrants Day 2021: Statement from the UN Network on Migration in Iraq

**Baghdad, 18 December 2021** - Every year, on 18 December, the United Nations observes International Migrants Day to highlight the contributions made by migrants, as well as the challenges that they may face.

Overwhelmingly, migration benefits individuals and societies — in countries of origin and destination. In spite of this, in recent years, several worrying

trends confirm that too often, migration doesn't happen under safe circumstances.

The public health crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have affected everything about how people live, work and travel. In Iraq, while a majority of the estimated six million people displaced by the ISIL crisis have returned to areas of origin, ongoing support is needed to help those who are

mostly unable to return achieve durable solutions.

This year, the extremely difficult conditions facing migrants and refugees at the borders between Belarus and Poland and Lithuania — including several thousand Iraqis — highlighted the plight of those who don't have access to legal means of migration and may put their lives in the hands of unscrupulous smugglers and



## International Migrants Day 2021: Statement from the UN Network on Migration in Iraq *(continued)*

traffickers.

“Both scenarios show that the promotion of safe migration – as called for by the Global Compact for Migration – is more crucial than ever,” said Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, and Resident Coordinator. “As Iraq continues to experience complex migratory flows, including return migration from Europe and elsewhere, a focus on migration policies that prioritise respect for human rights and rule of law will be essential.”

In February of this year, the UN Network on Migration welcomed Iraq’s decision to express solidarity with the

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and with the Network, in becoming a Champion country.

The Government of Iraq has made important strides towards improving migration policy, notably through the development of a National Migration Strategy. The UN Network on Migration will work to support the Government in implementing the Global Compact for Migration and expanding migration governance efforts.

The United Nations Network on Migration in Iraq is coordinated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and counts the UN

Refugee Agency (UNHCR); the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the International Labour Organization (ILO); the World Food Programme (WFP); the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); the UN Population Fund (UNFPA); the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS); the UN International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF); and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) as members.

### Humanitarian

## The Republic of Korea supports vulnerable families in Iraq to put food on the table

**Baghdad, 3 November 2021** - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has received a US\$1 million contribution from the Republic of Korea to support WFP’s food assistance for up to 327,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) and Syrian refugees until the end of the year, who are living in camps.

“Through the persistent pandemic and given that many families are still unable to return home, or are suffering in displacement for the second time or more, the Republic of Korea contribution will help us ensure these families are not left behind,” said WFP Representative in Iraq Ally-Raza Qureshi. “Our sincere thanks to the people and government of Korea for this generous support. The Republic of Korea is WFP’s long-standing partner in Iraq, helping families through this critical time.”

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt the lives of families, alongside

risers in food prices, which makes this contribution even more timely.

“With more than 2.4 million people, including IDPs, refugees, returnees and host communities, still being in acute need of humanitarian assistance in Iraq, the Republic of Korea is making continued efforts to support its partners in addressing these requirements,” said Jang Kyung-Wook, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Iraq. “WFP plays a critical humanitarian role in Iraq by providing emergency food assistance to those in need, and it is my sincere hope that Korea’s contribution this year will help WFP continue its life-saving operations to meet the food security needs of IDPs and refugees living in camps.”

In addition, WFP launched in July monthly cash assistance to displaced families who recently left camps, or who are no longer in formal camp settings. WFP assessments found that these families cannot afford the

minimum food needs and are resorting to negative coping strategies such as eating less or going into debt and, hence, need continued support outside formal camp settings.

WFP’s out-of-camp response is working to support 18,000 people. In parallel and as part of the UN’s ‘durable solutions’ approach, WFP is expanding livelihoods activities dedicated for 22,000 out-of-camp IDPs and host communities in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates, over 13 months.



## IOM Iraq's new Chief of Mission met with the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs

**Baghdad, 4 November 2021** - Today, IOM Iraq’s new Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri met with the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Dr. Abeer Al-Chalabi, at the Ministry’s headquarters in Baghdad. They reviewed ongoing programs and discussed a common vision to support

vulnerable groups and youth — including through supporting the Yazidi Survivors Law, and economic opportunities, and strong cooperation between IOM and MoLSA.



## Three recent studies focused on durable solutions for internally displaced Yazidis, the security sector in Ninewa Governorate and the needs of Yazidi women in Sinjar

**Baghdad, 07 November 2021** - In August 2014, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant launched a campaign of terror targeting ethnoreligious minorities residing in Sinjar and the Nineveh Plains. Soon after capturing those areas, ISIS committed a pattern of premeditated atrocities against the Yazidi people, in what the United Nations has recognised as a genocide. Three recent studies focused on durable solutions for internally displaced Yazidis, the security sector in Ninewa Governorate and the needs of Yazidi women in Sinjar, shed light on the work that still needs to be done to

support the Yazidi community's recovery, seven years on from the Sinjar Massacre.

The resulting reports — “Returning to Sinjar: Challenges, Opportunities and Dimensions of the Conflict” and “Mapping Needs of Yazidi Women in Sinjar and Displaced Communities” — were presented to officials at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad in late October by their respective authors: Professor Saad Salloum and researcher Megan Kelly. These studies are the result of intensive consultation sessions with communities, stakeholders and key informants aiming at better addressing

the needs of IOM and USAID's beneficiaries through better-targeted programming.

The studies were carried out with support from USAID and in collaboration with IOM Iraq, under the auspices of a project focused on recovery and sustainable returns for internally displaced persons in Ninewa Governorate. The studies can be accessed through the following links:

Returning to Sinjar; Challenges, Opportunities and Dimensions of Conflict

English: <https://cutt.ly/LTwEFPL>

Arabic: <https://cutt.ly/ITwELPM>

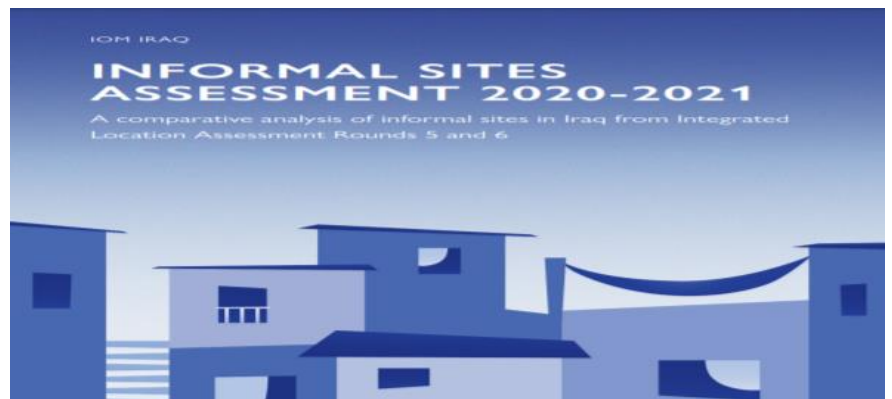
## Targeted support crucial for displaced persons in informal sites: IOM Iraq

**Erbil, 10 November 2021** - During the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), more than 6 million Iraqis were displaced from their homes. Nearly four years after the official end of the ISIL conflict, hundreds of thousands of families have returned to their areas of origin; however, an estimated 1.2 million individuals remain in displacement.

Over 103,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) live in 477 informal sites – locations outside of formal camps that are typically not integrated within the surrounding communities and excluded from public services. Families remaining in displacement in informal sites across Iraq will continue to face significant barriers to resolving their displacement — through returning home, local integration or relocating permanently to a new location — with basic services, agreements on land use and livelihood opportunities increasingly difficult to access.

Targeted research and programming are required to support this highly vulnerable population. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) commends the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster for publishing an Informal Sites Overview — presenting key information on the number of informal sites and population by governorate; district; shelter type; and urban/rural location breakdown.

The Overview summarizes the data contained in the CCCM Cluster's Informal Sites Masterlist published in September 2021, including analysis of notable informal site population



changes at governorate level over the last year. The Masterlist comprises data compiled from informal sites identified by the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) between May-July 2021, as well as sites reported by CCCM partners in 2021. The CCCM Cluster also published this data on an Interactive Dashboard, where it can be filtered by governorate, district, and shelter and location type.

Complementary data produced by IOM DTM's Integrated Location Assessment (ILA 6) in July 2021, and analysed in a recently published report, provides an overview of living conditions of IDPs and returnees in informal sites and highlights that the number of informal sites in which IDPs are unable to meet their basic needs has nearly doubled between 2020-2021.

For various reasons including remoteness, access and visibility, the populations living in informal sites often receive limited humanitarian or government assistance. IOM Iraq has been providing humanitarian assistance to some of these sites across

Anbar, Baghdad, Salah al-Din and Ninewa governorates, including in some sites which had not received any form of support since the end of the ISIL conflict. However, the needs in informal sites remain significant and will require strategic interventions from humanitarian and durable solutions agencies and donors in the coming year, in an effort to improve living conditions and resolve factors contributing to protracted displacement.

This data collection is an important step toward recognizing the scale and complexity of needs of displaced populations living in informal sites across Iraq; it should allow for better-informed humanitarian response and advocacy.

The CCCM Cluster is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee coordination mechanism that supports people affected by natural disasters and IDPs affected by conflict with the means to live in safe, dignified and appropriate settings. IOM is co-coordinator of the CCCM Cluster in Iraq.

## IOM Iraq distributed cash assistance to IDPs

**Baghdad, 3 November 2021** - Being able to afford housing is a major challenge for many of Iraq's internally displaced persons (IDPs). When the bulk of their budgets go toward keeping a roof over their heads, less is spent on needs like health care and nutritious food.

On 3 November, IOM Iraq distributed the second round of rental subsidies to IDPs in Kirkuk Governorate. Provided under the cash-for-rent programme, this assistance covered 125 families living in 100 units across three neighbourhoods: Gharnata, Al-Askary and Al-Oruba.

This rental assistance was made possible with the support of the Government of Germany.

In Iraq, years of conflict and a deteriorating economy have left many communities in need of assistance to cover their basic needs, with mobile populations such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) particularly vulnerable.

IOM Iraq, in coordination with the Department of Migration and Displacement in Diyala Governorate, distributed emergency cash grants to 40 displaced families throughout Muqdadiya district and in the Hamrin

area of Khanaqin district. Families can use this cash to directly purchase and access the goods and services they need.

The emergency cash distribution was made possible with support from the EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid – ECHO



## Newly appointed UNHCR Representative in Iraq assumed his duties

**Baghdad, 12 November 2021** - Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze is the newly appointed UNHCR Representative in Iraq.



Upon his arrival, he presented his letter of credentials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad last week. On behalf of the Government of Iraq, Minister Dr. Ali Shumran, head of Protocol Department extended the full cooperation to UNHCR and stressed that UNHCR's support is very essential for Iraq and he wished Mr. Beuze success in his new functions.

During his first visit to Erbil, he met with Mr. Safeen Dizayee, Head of Department of Foreign Relations and Minister Réber Ahmed, the Minister of Interior in the Kurdistan Regional Government. The Ministers similarly confirmed their support to UNHCR's mission in the KRG where some

270,000 Syrian and other refugee are hosted and over 800,000 Iraqi nationals still remain displaced mainly caused by ISIS violence.

In his first visit to the Kawergosk refugee camp near Erbil, Mr. Beuze met with refugees and partners operating in the camp, and visited the health centre where a COVID vaccination campaign was resuming. He passed by a lively kindergarten where children receive quality education and a community centre for children and youth have a safe space within the camp for personal growth and recreation.



Later, he witnessed two projects that are being constructed by UNHCR to support the local authorities that benefit the host communities in rural areas of Erbil Governorate, a primary

health care centre and a secondary school as part of UNHCR's endeavors to provide services to both host and refugee communities, which enhances coexistence and integration.

During his first visit to Erbil, Mr.



Beuze also visited the Baharka IDP camp, where IDPs were electing their camp committees, including a women and a youth committee. "That is democracy in motion" Mr. Beuze said. "For UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, it is critical that we get the views and opinions of the displaced families to inform our programming. Through this election which saw the participation of women, men and also persons with disabilities, through mobile teams that came to their homes to help them cast their vote, communities are empowered to decide about their future."

## Canadian delegation visited Khanke IDP camp

**Dohuk, 16 November 2021** - The UNHCR Dohuk team was pleased to receive Mr. Yves Duval, Head of Office of the Canadian Embassy in Erbil, at Khanke IDP camp in Dohuk.

During their visit, the Canadian delegation met with camp management, was briefed by the UNHCR team, and met with displaced persons residing in the camp to learn about the difficulties they are facing. Mr. Duval and his delegation were also

able to have a first-hand glance at residents' living conditions ahead of the winter, which is a challenging time for most of the displaced population in Iraq.

UNHCR appreciates the continuous support and generous contributions of the people and Government of Canada in the form of flexible funds that allow UNHCR to use the funds when and where they are needed most.



## IOM provides capacity building for the Government's ability to support voluntary returns

**Baghdad, 18 November 2021** - In Iraq, capacity-building assistance is needed to strengthen the government's ability to support informed, dignified and safe voluntary returns and reintegration.

"It is necessary for the migrant to be fully convinced of their voluntary return according to their circumstances and need. In our role as the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, we support the migrant, whether in the country they immigrate to or in their own country," said Rawa Maher, Ministry of Migration and Displacement, Basra Branch.

"Regarding our cooperation with IOM, IOM economically supports the migrants and facilitates their legal

return or migration through its programs. It empowers our staff to educate people who want to immigrate, so we are working on awareness campaigns to teach people about the dangers and consequences of illegal migration," she continued.

"There are legal and safe ways that

people can resort to if they want to migrate, and they must also meet certain conditions if they wish to migrate safely and legally – in a way that does not negatively affect their lives or the lives of their families – or they risk return, rejection and loss, as well," Rawa concluded.



## The United States supports WFP's assistance to vulnerable families in Iraq

**Baghdad, 23 November 2021** – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes a timely and generous contribution of US\$19.24 million from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID-BHA). The funding will help provide life-saving assistance to 181,000 displaced Iraqis and 72,000 Syrian refugees in the form of cash transfers that support their immediate food needs.

The U.S. support is helping ensure that people can meet basic food and nutrition needs during and in the aftermath of crises – including post-conflict and through the COVID-19 pandemic. This will also enable them to withdraw the money they are entitled to at their convenience without being limited to one location, encouraging a streamlined and efficient process of humanitarian assistance delivery and social distancing.

"With an estimated 1.2 million people in Iraq who remain displaced and 90,000 Syrian refugees in camps, the United States continues its support to WFP's life-saving efforts to address acute humanitarian needs," said

USAID/Iraq Mission Director John Cardenas. "This contribution will also aim to further digitalize the Public Distribution System (PDS), which is a critical step to strengthening the Government of Iraq's social protection system to address citizens' needs."

In addition to helping WFP provide vital food assistance to displaced Iraqi families and Syrian refugees, this new contribution will allow WFP to better support millions of Iraqis all over the country through the digitalization of the PDS system with the Ministry of Trade, which allows for more accurate and timely assistance of actual people in need with monthly food rations provided by the Government of Iraq.

"We are thankful for the steadfast support of the US government and

people of the United States in providing assistance to vulnerable displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees as well as in enhancing social protection, through the reform of the PDS and strengthening the capacities of the Iraqi government," said WFP Representative in Iraq Ally-Raza Qureshi. "The contribution will ensure that progress made in improving the food security of displaced families and refugees is maintained, and that essential technical

support to the Government of Iraq for digitalizing the largest public distribution system which supports millions of Iraqis, continues."

Since 2010, USAID has been a consistent partner to WFP's emergency operation in Iraq. This collaboration expanded to support social protection initiatives in 2019. WFP and the Ministry of Trade continue to roll out the 'Tamwini' ('My Food Ration') smartphone application to families in Najaf governorate and are in the process of scaling up to include people in 15 other governorates. The app enables households to easily and quickly update their data on their phone, such as a birth or a marriage, saving time and enhancing accuracy.



**Sulaymaniyah, 23 November 2021** - The OCHA Head of Office, Ms. Sheri Ritsema-Anderson, met with the Governor of Sulaymaniyah, local authorities, and local humanitarian actors to discuss services in camps, returns, conditions in areas of origin and response planning for 2022.



## IOM provides shelter assistance to IDP



**Anbar, 25 November 2021** - Abdullateef Ahmed, 64, from Rawa district, is one of hundreds of returnees whose homes were damaged when the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) seized control of Anbar Governorate. At the time, Abdullateef's wife was a cancer patient and was periodically undergoing chemotherapy sessions in hospitals outside the district. She was in desperate need of medications.

When ISIL took over Rawa in 2014, Abdullateef and his wife found themselves trapped in the city for two months. As extreme violence swept the area, his wife's condition deteriorated. In November, the two decided to flee

with their family to Erbil Governorate with the help of smugglers. "After sunset, we started moving through the desert in an old truck. We were afraid that ISIL guerrillas would show out of nowhere and catch us. They had been threatening residents and creating checkpoints to prevent people from leaving, but I had to flee for my wife's life," Abdullateef recalled.

The family rented a house in the city of Erbil. To cover their rental and livelihood expenses, one of Abdullateef's sons secured a job as a construction worker and the other as a sales representative. Their combined income was barely enough to get by.

When the Iraqi forces took back control

over Anbar, Abdullateef returned home. Profoundly exhausted after 4 years of displacement, he found that his house had been severely damaged; the outer wall had collapsed, and entire rooms had been razed to the ground. He and his family were forced to rent a house in a neighbourhood nearby.

"When we came back, we did not expect that extensive damage had been done to our home," Abdullateef continued. "I was very sad, but at the same time, I thanked God we came back safe after all the difficult circumstances we went through."

In March 2021, IOM Iraq's shelter team arrived at Abdullateef's destroyed home. The team rebuilt two rooms and the outer walls; installed new PVC doors and windows; and completed required maintenance work. "My hope started to bloom when IOM came to the district and the engineers started making assessments. I can say now without hesitation that our home is better than it was before," said Abdullateef.

This shelter assistance was made possible with support from the Government of Germany.

## 397 people from 89 IDP families departed Jeddah Camp to return to their areas of origin in Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates

**Baghdad, 28 November 2021** - During the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) crisis, more than 6 million Iraqis were displaced from their homes. Since the official end of the conflict, hundreds of thousands of families have returned to their areas of origin; it is estimated that nearly 1.2 million individuals remain in displacement. Ongoing support is needed to end internal displacement and achieve durable solutions – including voluntary returns to areas of origin.

On 28 November, 397 people from 89 IDP families departed Jeddah Camp to return to their areas of origin in Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. This facilitated voluntary return operation was supported by IOM Iraq in collaboration with the Ninewa Governorate authorities and Iraq's Ministry of Migration and Displacement.

"When we first got displaced from Mosul in 2017 because of the ISIL crisis, we were very anxious about what would happen to us; then we were moved to the camps. The organizations helped us a lot to settle in the camps by building schools and health centers, and I was able to get a job opportunity



to help our community here. Today I feel happy about the voluntary return of my family to Mosul after many years. We are grateful for IOM, not only for helping us move out of the camps but rebuilding our houses if damaged by war! We love to go back to our areas, and we want our country to be stable," said Sumaya, a female beneficiary.

Interested families registered their intended destinations and expected barriers or concerns. IOM Iraq staff worked closely with the families throughout the return process.

IOM Iraq also collaborated with local authorities and humanitarian actors to ensure that the returnees were

consistently informed about the assistance available to them before departure and upon arrival at their destinations.

These returns were made possible with support from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).



## ECHO and SWEDO support UNHCR's protection services and legal assistance for IDPs and returnees in Iraq

**Baghdad, 3 December 2021** - Lisa Monaghan, Technical Assistant for EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid - ECHO visited BzBz, an informal settlement in Ameryiat Al-Fallujah in Anbar Governorate, where a Civil Affairs Directorate (CAD) mobile mission supported internally displaced persons (IDPs) register and process their civil documentation.

ECHO supports UNHCR's protection services and legal assistance for IDPs and returnees in Iraq, including access to civil documentation.

Monaghan also visited the Kilo 7 informal settlement in Ramadi to learn more about the concerns and challenges faced by internally displaced families living there.

"This is a big achievement" - expressed Naktal after receiving newly issued Iraqi Nationality Certificates for his family, without having to return to his area of origin.

He is among thousands of IDPs from Nineveh that were targeted in a recent mission by Iraqi Ministry of Interior,

SWEDO (The Swedish Development Aid Organization) and UNHCR, to renew or issue their civil documents.

During the large-scale mission, SWEDO legal team prepared files for more than 4500 IDP cases living in camps and urban locations in Erbil governorate.



## International Volunteer Day marked in Iraq

**Baghdad, 5 December 2021** - Shirin was an elementary school teacher in Syria. Today, she volunteers with a group of women to support her community in Darashakran refugees camp in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

On International Volunteer Day, we honor inspiring individuals like Shirin.

Who rose against difficult circumstances and stood tall to help those around.

Last week, Shirin and her group volunteered to help UNHCR deliver over 3,400 sanitary kits to women and girls in Darashakran camp.



## WFP collaborates with Iraqi universities to improve resilience as part of Zero Hunger efforts

**Baghdad, 12 December 2021** - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is collaborating with Iraqi academic institutions including the University of Basra, the University of Mosul and the University of Sulaymaniyah on activities aimed at reducing the risk of food insecurity in vulnerable communities through resilience building and climate change adaptation. The collaboration is part of efforts to make progress towards Strategic Development Goal (SDG) 2 "Zero Hunger."

WFP signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the College of Agriculture - University of Basra focusing on creating opportunities for new graduates through capacity strengthening and training sessions for youth, with an aim to improve people's food security. Together, WFP and the University of Basra launched a business incubator project to encourage youth to carve a path in entrepreneurship.

"The business incubator project launched by the University of Basra, in collaboration with WFP is an important first step towards utilising youth

energies," said the Dean of University of Basra, Dr. Sajid al-Noor. "The absence of work opportunities for fresh graduates for a number of years is a true waste of their potential and this project to fund graduate projects and create jobs is one of our innovative solutions."

In parallel, WFP signed an MoU with the University of Mosul, to improve focusing resilience-building interventions on the most vulnerable groups, including those affected by climate change, and tailoring efforts to match the evolving needs of people who returned home after years of displacement. The University of Mosul is also assisting WFP via facilitating and supporting discussions with academic institutions all over the world, highlighting on the global level the needs of Iraqis in and around Mosul.

"We are engaging the power of Iraqi academia in our programming, to improve and streamline our assistance to families most in need," said WFP Iraq Representative, Ally-Raza Qureshi. "Iraq is by tradition an academically rich country, and we hope that our partnerships with universities will yield results that best meet the needs of

vulnerable communities, through work opportunities, help to confront climate change, all paving the way for more active collaboration with academic institutions."

In the Kurdistan Region, WFP continues to collaborate closely with the University of Sulaymaniyah on the 'Empowerment in Action' (EMPACT): digital skills and English training youth project. Since 2017, WFP has been able to support tens of thousands of vulnerable youths and their families through skills development, building young people's confidence and enabling them to access work opportunities online. Sulaymaniyah is one of several locations where WFP and partners run the EMPACT initiative, including Anbar, Baghdad, Duhok, Erbil and Mosul.

WFP intends to continue such productive collaboration with the academic sector and harness the existing capacities of institutions in Iraq, working to enhance them, and partner towards achieving food security in the country and ultimately Zero Hunger.



## UNHCR and AsiaHawala launch partnership and winter fundraising campaign to support displaced people and refugees in

**Erbil, 12 December 2021** - Today, Adel Essam Hameed, Deputy CEO of AsiaHawala and Jean-Nicolas Beuze, Representative of UNHCR in Iraq, signed a partnership agreement to launch fundraising campaigns to support Syrian and other refugees and Iraqi families displaced by armed violence in the past in Iraq.

AsiaHawala and UNHCR announced the launch of the winter fundraising campaign, the first of a series of seasonal campaigns, throughout Iraq. All received donations will be used to provide essential cash assistance to the most vulnerable displaced families in the country. With this financial assistance, families will be able to pay their rent, buy food or medicines and keep warm during the winter months by buying extra clothes or kerosene.

“This partnership shows the contribution of the private sector to the humanitarian response in Iraq. By joining hands, we can help more displaced families to go through their current dire living conditions. We all need to stand together to give warmth to those trying to survive the cold winter,” said Jean-Nicolas.

“AsiaHawala is proud to partner with UNHCR to assist the most vulnerable refugees and displaced people during the winter season. This partnership comes as part of AsiaHawala's efforts to stand by the most vulnerable,” said Adel.

As winter closes in, over 1.2 million IDPs and 290,000 refugees in Iraq suffer from the extremely cold weather, with many not having the financial resources for basic items like kerosene

or winter clothes to keep their homes and families warm. The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively and heavily impacted the economic situation of IDP and refugee families in Iraq, leaving many in debt and in desperate need of humanitarian support.



## Emergency cash grants distributed to 298 displaced families living in Baquba

**Baquba, 16 December 2021** - Adequate housing for displaced persons in Iraq continues to be a major issue, especially during the harsh winter when families need protection from the cold.

IOM Iraq recently cooperated with the Department of Migration in Baquba Governorate to distribute emergency cash grants to 298 displaced families

living in the governorate's districts.

The grants will assist these families to pay their rent, and for those who need it, they will help with purchasing necessary supplies to get safely through the winter season.

This emergency cash distribution made possible with the support of EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid - ECHO.



## France expands its support to UN-Habitat to help communities supporting recent returnees

**Baghdad, 19 December 2021** - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) welcomes an additional contribution of EUR 425,882 from the Government of France to provide support to internally displaced persons who have recently returned to their communities and struggling to rebuild their lives.

The proposed project aims to improve the rights and living conditions that contribute to sustainable return of families from Sinjar and Baaj Districts. Damage to infrastructure remains one of the primary obstacles that may prevent many internally displaced persons to return to their areas of origin. The timely contribution from France will be utilized to amplify support to approximately 27,000 people by providing legal assistance for 200 families and rehabilitating two schools. This initiative aims to also encourage other displaced families who may still be

in camps, renting or living with relatives to return to their communities, knowing they will have access to education for their children. At the same time, families will also have access to legal assistance to file compensation claims for lost or damaged property.

Ambassador Eric Chevallier said that “France is proud to support this UN-Habitat project centered on basic services such as housing and education. Infrastructure rehabilitation is an essential condition for the return of displaced people, especially in Sinjar and Baaj. We are and will remain at the Iraqi people's side in the reconstruction of areas liberated from Daesh”

“To ensure durable solutions, it is important to help people in their areas of return. UN-Habitat appreciates the continued support from France to expand our response in Ninewa,” said Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq County Programme.

UN-Habitat has been working in Sinjar since 2016 and in Ba'aj since 2020 with funding from the Japanese Government, the United States and the European Union to build core houses for those who have lost their homes, register their land claims, provide rehabilitation and upgrades to secondary infrastructure, public facilities, and public spaces, provide vocational training and job opportunities for unemployed youth, and provide legal assistance to those who have returned.



## UNAMI on Twitter

**Baghdad, 17 December 2021** - UNAMI has followed with concern the news about the floods in the Kurdistan

Region. We send our condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and sympathize with those who lost

their homes and properties and wish a speedy recovery to the injured.

## WFP provides immediate food assistance to flood victims in Iraq



**Baghdad, 21 December 2021** - As an immediate response to the flash floods that hit northern Iraq last week, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and its partner World Vision International (WVI) have provided 235 flood-affected Syrian refugee families in Qushtapa camp in Erbil with emergency ready-to-eat food assistance. On 16 December, torrential rains caused serious flooding in some areas of Erbil governorate. Qushtapa refugee camp was one of the heavily affected areas. Approximately 1400 Syrian refugees had their tents and homes

severely damaged by the rains.

WFP is coordinating with the local Government of the Kurdistan region, other UN agencies, and humanitarian partners in the area to provide aid and support to camp residents affected by the natural disaster. So far, no fatalities or injuries have been reported in the camp following the event. The water level rose to half a meter in the damaged areas, ruining food stores, refrigerators, electric heaters and other household items. Many families also discarded their clothes and carpets that were ruined by the water.

"We are here today to provide much needed humanitarian assistance to families affected by the floods," said WFP Iraq's Deputy Country Director, Asif Bhutto. "Providing food to vulnerable people in times of emergency, is at the core of WFP's mandate and capacity."

"This unfortunate event highlights the need to further build the capacities of the governments of Kurdistan Region and the Federal government of Iraq on emergency preparedness and response to ensure that relevant stakeholders are better equipped to deal with these events in the future," he added.

WFP Iraq is scaling up its assistance to provide more support to vulnerable communities in Iraq, helping them build resilience against shocks including climate change in addition to enhancing the capacity of the Government of Iraq in social protection and other areas.

WFP continues to provide food and cash assistance to thousands of vulnerable displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees across the country who rely on this assistance to meet their basic food needs.

## In Iraq humanitarian assistance continues to be critical for displaced families

**Baghdad, 22 December 2021** - In Iraq, humanitarian assistance continues to be critical for families displaced as a result of the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

When ISIL took control of Karma city in Anbar Governorate in 2014, Suhaila, a 50-year-old widow, and her family fled to the Sahwa area of Abu Ghraib district in Baghdad Governorate. There, they lived on informal land where many of Anbar's displaced are clustered. The family lost all their possessions during displacement, forcing them to live without basic household items.

Suhaila and her 8 children all depend on her son Muhammed's low income, which he earns as a construction worker. They had difficulty carrying out daily household chores due to the defective water tank that supplied the kitchen and the bathroom and were unable to access clean water as a result

of deficiencies in their local water network. "The bathroom and the toilet were roofless, and that made them hard to use in the winter," Suhaila added.

In June 2021, IOM Iraq's shelter team provided Suhaila with a new water tank, water purifier and water heater, in addition to a tarp, mat and two ceiling fans.

"Now I use the tank for the bathroom and the toilet through a connected hose. It also helps me to wash the dishes. In the coming winter, I will use the tarp to cover the bathroom and toilet to prevent water seepage. What the organization did for us was enough to meet our needs," said Suhaila.

IOM Iraq was able to assist Suhaila with support from the Republic of Korea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which also supports IOM Iraq's distribution of non-food items such as rechargeable lights and other household supplies for families in need.





## UNFPA launches “Social Responsibility Skills for Young Entrepreneurs” project

**Erbil, 28 October 2021** - UNFPA and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the Ministry of Culture and Youth in the Kurdistan Regional Government launched the Social Responsibility Skills for Young Entrepreneurs project in Erbil. The project was based on the success story of the “Orange Corners Erbil Programme” implemented by MSelect with support from the Kingdom of Netherlands.

For the next two months, 20 young women and men will receive mentorship and training in leadership skills, entrepreneurship and financial management focusing on the social responsibility aspect of the businesses. The participants will benefit from sessions on gender equality, prevention of gender-based violence and reproductive health rights.

During the event, Mr Himyar Abdulmoghni, UNFPA Iraq Deputy Representative, highlighted the importance of investing in youth, especially girls, to harness the Demographic Dividend in Iraq: “Currently, young people represent 41% of the population in Iraq. It is crucial to empower them to become independent, entrepreneurial and socially responsible citizens. Only when young people are healthy and well educated, can they take the country



upwards in development”.

Mr Hawre Jabbar Hamad, Deputy Director of Funds [to support small projects for youth] at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs said: “We are happy to announce the launch of this important project along with the Ministry of Culture and Youth and UNFPA. The project will help young people gain much-needed employability and entrepreneurial skills focusing on gender equality and giving back to their communities. We hope to extend the project to other youth centres across the country to reach the maximum number of young people who can make a difference.”

To support social entrepreneurship and

young people empowerment, UNFPA will provide seed money to selected start-up proposals demonstrating sustainable social impact. Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will offer participants short-term loans to help them launch their businesses based on specific eligibility criteria.

UNFPA is strongly committed to supporting and empowering adolescents and youth, especially girls, in their quest to be heard and build the future of Iraq. UNFPA strategy to achieve the 2030 vision for Sustainable Development puts youth at the centre of scaling up the global, regional and national needs of young people.

## Happy World Cities Day!

**Baghdad, 1 November 2021** - More than 50% of the world’s population lives in urban areas. But with the effects of climate change, planting more trees

and urban forests can make cities cooler, greener, healthier, and happier places for people to live in.

To help, UN-Habitat Iraq has planted

over 3,200 trees across major cities in Iraq. It also has built green parks like Al-Yarmouk Park, where gardening and horticulture are encouraged.



**Basra, 2 November 2021** - WFP Representative in Iraq, Ally-Raza Qureshi, met with Basrah Gas Company Director, Malcolm Mayes. They discussed WFP’s work in the south to achieve food security and sustainability via resilience activities to deliver sustainable solutions to those in need and youth support.



**Baghdad, 4 November 2021** - IOM Iraq’s new Chief of Mission, Giorgi Gigauri, met with the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA), Dr. Abeer Al-Chalabi, at the Ministry’s headquarters in Baghdad. They reviewed ongoing programs and discussed a common vision to support vulnerable groups and youth — including through supporting the Yazidi Survivors Law, and economic opportunities, and strong cooperation between IOM and MoLSA.

## The Steering Committee of the Social Protection Programme in Iraq held its first meeting last week



**Baghdad, 9 November 2021** - The Steering Committee of the Social Protection Programme in Iraq held its first meeting last week, headed by Deputy at the Ministry of Planning, Dr.

Maheer Hammad Johan. Supported by the EU International Partnerships, the programme aims to enhance the effective response and accelerate social protection reform.

UNICEF Iraq, the ILO office in Iraq and WFP Iraq are implementing the programme with the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Trade, including the Ministries of Planning and Labour in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The social protection programme includes developing a strategy and roadmap for reform for a period of five years, and reforming the current social safety nets, in addition to expanding access of young workers, and workers in the informal sector to social security, based on employment and active labour market programmes.

The programme will help establish a unified registry system for all social protection provisions and services.



**Baghdad, 10 November 2021** - IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri met with the deputy minister of Planning, H.E. Dr. Maheer Hammad, at the Ministry's headquarters in Baghdad. They discussed IOM Iraq's programming in the fields of community stabilization and livelihoods, as well as ongoing support for vulnerable communities.



**Baghdad, 12 November 2021** - IOM new Chief of Mission in Iraq, Giorgi Gigauri, met today with the Charge d'Affaires of the German Embassy in Iraq, Peter Felten. They discussed mutual cooperation on assisting Iraq tackling issues of deradicalization, community policing, returnees and reintegration.

## Area-Based Coordination (ABC) meeting held recently to do a gap analysis of current needs and strengthen coordination efforts of humanitarian and development actors in Mosul

**Baghdad, 17 November 2021** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, recently attended the Area-Based Coordination (ABC) meeting together with officials from the office of the Governor of Ninewa to do a gap analysis of current needs and strengthen coordination efforts of humanitarian and development actors in Mosul in order to help IDPs return home. The United Nations in Iraq reiterates the continuous support to the Government of Iraq in its efforts to achieve dignified, safe, and voluntary durable solutions to displacement in Iraq.



## IOM Iraq is implementing a Renewable Energy Solutions Promotion Pilot in Ninewa

**Baghdad, 12 November 2021** - In 2020, IOM Iraq conducted a Renewable Energy Feasibility Study, which found that renewable energy small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) had a limited ability to operate because customers lacked access to finance and credit to buy their products.

Based off this study, IOM Iraq is implementing a Renewable Energy Solutions Promotion Pilot in Ninewa, working with a microfinance institution to partner with Economic Development Fund-supported SMEs to extend consumer credit that will help the SMEs to sell and deploy renewable energy solutions to customers.



Learn more about the Economic Development Fund here: <http://edf.iom.int/>

## The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) restores hope to rural women in the traditional dairy processing in Nineveh Governorate

**Baghdad, 16 November 2021** - As part of its efforts to develop and diversify livelihoods, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is working to empower rural women and restore hope to returnees through the project "Support to livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Ninewa Governorate, Iraq, funded by the European Union and implemented in close cooperation with Ministry of Agriculture (Nineveh Directorate of Agriculture).

It aims to develop the value chain of milk production, processing, and marketing of traditional dairy at the home level within the framework of practical training courses that will last for a period of six months to involve 50 women groups (1,000 women) from all project target sites in Nineveh Governorate. The project organized training courses entitled "Improving the Processing and Marketing of Traditional Dairy Products" from 7 to 11 November 2021, in the presence of 50 women from Bartella and Al-Hamdaniya Districts. Participants gained techniques on good practices of handling and processing dairy, while implementing an illustrative practical demonstration for making traditional dairy products (Laban, cheese, butter, ghee, labneh).

This introduction of new techniques on how to make different types of cheese, to get healthy and safe dairy products along with ideas for making great products that can be competitive in the market. Also, participants received training on the correct milking methods

for cows and buffaloes and how to follow the steps of milk hygiene and animal health standards.

During the training period, which lasted for five days, the FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan praised the efforts made in the training and stressed the active participation of women's groups and their keenness on the courses, expressing that this comes among the priorities of the organization to find a real partnership for these groups, and that these practical courses will improve the capacity of the private sector in the dairy industry. Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan also highlighted that the priorities of the FAO are to seek a real partnership with these groups and empower them to support their families independently, emphasizing the need to activate their role. Furthermore, adding that these courses will improve the competitiveness of the sector and contribute to the local development

process and the development of the quality of the dairy products.

While the FAO International Livestock Expert, Dr. Chedly Kayouli, the supervisor and trainer in these courses, said that the practical training on the processing of new cheeses, are delivered in a participatory and interactive approach, this is what reflects the spirit of teamwork and self-development. Also, it contributes to the introduction of expertise to produce new types of cheese produced for the first time by rural women at home level in Nineveh, such as the manufacture of Akkawi cheese, Halloumi, Mozzarella, Double cream, Ricotta and Labneh. The attendance and interaction during the workshops were very fruitful and encouraging, and the participants showed great interest in learning basic and new ideas and practices in dairy processing, while a family atmosphere prevailed during the trainings.



## PepsiCo Partners with the UN World Food Programme in Iraq to support farmers affected by conflict, displacement, and climate change



**Erbil, 17 November 2021** - Today, PepsiCo Inc and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced a new partnership to support farmers in Iraq impacted by conflict and climate change and help build a more sustainable agricultural supply chain in the region, particularly for potato crops. This partnership supports the Government of Iraq to reach its Zero Hunger goal as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

A USD 250,000 grant from PepsiCo Foundation, the philanthropic arm of PepsiCo, will enable WFP to expand its ongoing resilience-building program in Iraq, 'Food Assistance for Assets,' that strives to help rural communities become self-reliant and withstand shocks such as climate change. The program has garnered support from high-ranking government officials in Iraq and the U.S.- Iraq Business Council.

The collaboration will empower Iraqi smallholder farmers to establish reliable market linkages, gain access to much-needed finance, increase crop quality and yields, and progress towards internationally recognized food and safety standards for sustainable

agriculture. Through PepsiCo Foundation's support, WFP will provide farmers with training and technical expertise, and share agricultural best practices, such as the targeted use of irrigation and fertilizer. PepsiCo will purchase potatoes from the farmers to use in food production, helping build the farmers' livelihoods.

"We are honored to join hands with the World Food Programme to help support Iraq's agricultural sector and build sustainable livelihoods, while contributing towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on Zero Hunger and a better and more sustainable future for all. This partnership is a great example of how the public and private sector can work together to address a pressing global issue – food insecurity – and will have a significant impact on tens of thousands in local communities," said Wael Ismail, Vice President for Corporate Affairs, Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan as well as Sustainable Packaging Lead for Africa, Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (AMESA).

The partnership is part of PepsiCo's positive (Pep+) agriculture strategy which focuses on regenerative farming

practices and empowering farming communities to improve the livelihoods of more than 250,000 people in its agricultural supply chain, and sustainably source 100% of the company's key ingredients by 2030. Over 32,000 of PepsiCo's AMESA farmers are part of its Sustainable Farming Program focused on promoting responsible agricultural practices that can boost crop yields, improve farmer livelihoods, advance respect for human rights and protect the local environment and natural resources.

"We welcome this new partnership with PepsiCo, especially now as the COVID-19 pandemic has had a grave impact on the livelihoods and food security of vulnerable communities. By sharing expertise and resources with WFP and communities in Iraq, PepsiCo is helping to build a more sustainable food system, providing solutions for vulnerable farmers to increase the productivity of their land, and improve their income through better market linkages – ultimately changing their lives," said Ally-Raza Qureshi, WFP Iraq Representative. "Working together towards this common goal highlights the significant impact of private sector engagement in the region."

The PepsiCo Foundation has been a long-standing partner and supporter of the UN World Food Programme. Since 2006, the Foundation has supported WFP's mission and programs with more than USD 12.2 million in funding, including grants and employees' donations. This program is part of 'Food for Good,' PepsiCo's global commitment to advance food security in communities where the company operates, harnessing the power of collaboration with leading local partners.

## FAO holds a workshop on: exchange of experiences and training program between peers in the livestock sector in Al-Najaf Al-Ashraf

**Najaf Al-Ashraf, 16 November 2021** - Under the patronage of the Minister of Agriculture, Eng. Muhammad Al-Khafaji, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) held a workshop on the exchange of experiences and training between counterparts in the livestock sector in the governorates of Najaf and Karbala, in the presence of Dr. Hadi Hashem Hussein - representative of the Agriculture Minister, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan,

FAO Representative in Iraq, and large number of experts, veterinarians, and local livestock extension staff.

In his opening speech, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, stressed the organization's interest in supporting the rural agricultural sectors and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and local governments in order to improve the agricultural sector and support farmers with all available

efforts.

While Dr. Hadi Hashem conveyed the greetings of the Minister to the participants in the workshop and his keenness to provide the necessary support that serves this important and vital sector. He also praised the successes achieved by the organization, especially the Nineveh project on livelihood support funded by the European Union and implemented in cooperation and partnership with the

## FAO holds a workshop on: exchange of experiences ... (continued)

Ministry of Agriculture “Nineveh Agriculture”.

During the workshop, good practices and ways to serve the development of the livestock sector were discussed, in addition to preparation to implement a number of interventions that include capacity building for rural women, farmers and extension workers in livestock related activities.

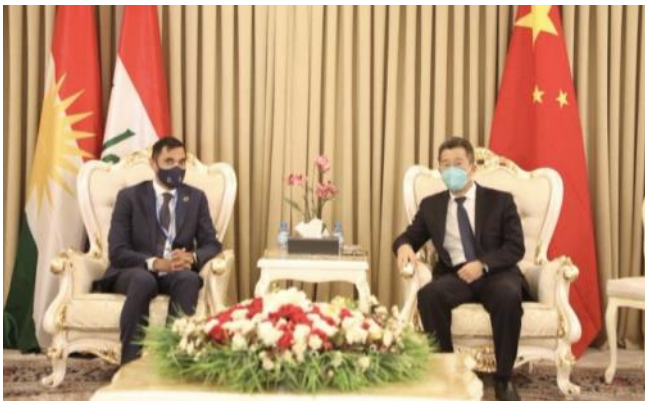
The FAO Senior International Livestock Expert, Dr. Chedly Kayouli and Eng: Hayder Nasser ALSammak, Chief Engineer (Nineveh Agriculture Directorate), gave presentations and detailed explanations of the successful interventions in Nineveh Governorate, which will be transferred and implemented, as they include improving animal nutrition through qualitative forage crops and utilization of local nutritional supplements that will increase local feed availability, in addition to improving the productivity



and marketing of milk and dairy products. The International Livestock Expert, Dr. Chedly Kayouli, insisted that a participatory and similar approach will be applied in the two targeted governorates, with extension officers who will be supported by their Peers from Nineveh Project.

Moreover, working teams were formed

from the participants in the workshop to take field steps with the aim of reviewing the conditions of the farmers who will be targeted through the executive activities to determine their needs and move forward with implementing the steps that would support and assist these farmers and improve their capacity.



**Erbil, 18 November 2021** - Today, Consul-General of China in Erbil, Mr. Ni Ruchi, met with WFP Iraq Representative, Mr. Ally-Raza Qureshi and discussed WFP's work across the country to support youth, strengthen skills and achieve food security for vulnerable families.



**Baghdad, 19 November 2021** – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano visited today key UNDP Iraq project sites, including the College of Engineering in Shirqat and met with students to talk about their aspirations for building Iraq back stronger.

## IOM Iraq presents “Informal sites assessment 2020-2021 - a comparative analysis of informal sites in Iraq from Integrated Location Assessment Rounds 5 and 6” report

**Baghdad, 21 November 2021** – IOM Iraq report “Informal sites assessment 2020-2021 - a comparative analysis of informal sites in Iraq from Integrated Location Assessment Rounds 5 and 6” provides a detailed overview of the conditions faced by IDP and returnee families residing in informal sites at the time of data collection of the Integrated Location Assessment 6 (ILA 6, May-July 2021), as well as a summary of trends since the ILA 5 (July-August 2020).

The ILA informal sites assessment was conducted in two parts. First, the location, population and shelter type of all informal sites was collected nationwide.

Second, if the informal site contained 15 or more families, a full assessment of the

location was conducted using a longer form designed in partnership with the Cluster members of the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). In this report, data attributed to “fully assessed sites” refers only to sites with 15 or more families.

As of July 2021, ILA 6 recorded a total of 418 informal sites. IDP families were present in 389 informal sites and returnee families were present in 31 sites. Dahuk Governorate contains 38 per cent of the informal sites nationwide (160), with Ninewa and Salah al-Din accounting for a further 18 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively (76 and 52 sites).

Overall, 13,533 families were recorded as residing in informal sites in ILA 6 (12,490

IDP families and 1,043 returnee families). The largest share of this population is in Anbar Governorate (28%), followed by Dahuk (24%) and Salah al-Din (14%).

This report was made possible with support from the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Full report is available at:

[https://iraqdtm.iom.int/files/ILA/20211174429537\\_iom\\_DTM\\_Informal\\_Sites\\_Assessment\\_2020\\_2021.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0Sw8lUQ48h0TkK587uSDY-A84iaGd0WCQSVpN0lWPHKrWDLKD1w\\_fQeBk](https://iraqdtm.iom.int/files/ILA/20211174429537_iom_DTM_Informal_Sites_Assessment_2020_2021.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0Sw8lUQ48h0TkK587uSDY-A84iaGd0WCQSVpN0lWPHKrWDLKD1w_fQeBk)

## Bridging businesses



*How rebuilding a popular bridge in Falluja has helped relink a cement factory to the market.*

**Baghdad, 15 November 2021** - As you drive off the newly rehabilitated bridge towards Al-Shebabi, a sub-district within Anbar, you will be welcomed by factories lined up along both sides of the road. There are over 20 cement, gypsum, cement, tile, and brick factories based there. At first glance, it is clear that business is booming.

However, this was not always the case. "I have lived in Falluja all my life. During the liberation from Islamic State in Levant (ISIL), we were forced to shut down the factory and flee for our lives," says Majid Al-Halbousi, 48, from Falluja. He manages investor relations at a cement factory based on one side of the bridge.

On returning in 2017, Majid was met with absolute devastation. Especially as he went back to work, the 62-acre factory he works at was left damaged. "In 2018, we were able to bring the business back up and running after

rebuilding some of the equipment we lost. But transportation stayed a challenge as the main bridge connecting us to the market was not accessible," he says. Adding to the daunting task of rebuilding the business, the Al-Shebabi bridge leading up to the factory was destroyed by ISIL.

The damage to the bridge severely affected the businesses in the area. It forced them to use alternate routes to transport products to the main market in Falluja's city center. As Majid explains, "We produce over 2000 tons of cement daily. This needs to reach the market in time. The rerouting doubled our transportation costs and added unnecessary delays. It impacted our profit margins as we were unable to increase the cost of the products."

It was also a challenge for staff to travel to and from the factories, as they had to take longer alternate routes. "Residents and staff suffered a great deal when the bridge was damaged. We had to find alternative routes by crossing the railway line close to the bridge. This also resulted in many

unfortunate accidents," says Majid. "For instance, we have over 150 people working at the factory. Almost all of them found it difficult to travel to work every day."

Supporting the businesses and residents build back, UNDP rehabilitated the bridge with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Today, this relinks over 9,000 residents living in and around the area.

Post rehabilitation, factories have been able to save on transportation costs and shorten delivery times. This has also improved connectivity between residents of Al-Shebabi and Falluja city to access the city's health care, schools, and offices.

Today, the factory that Majid works at is booming with business. "Now, we produce 1.5 million tons of cement every year. Most importantly, my staff feel safer coming to work, and we can deliver our products on time. Thanks to USAID for their generous support," he says with a smile.

About the programme:

The project was implemented through UNDP's flagship programme, the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), with generous support from USAID.

Since 2015, FFS has worked with the Government of Iraq and local actors to ensure safe, dignified, and voluntary returns and to lay the foundation for the successful reintegration of displaced populations into the community.

To date, as the largest donor to the Facility, USAID has supported 396 projects in Anbar, of which 78 projects are under implementation. This support to stabilization has benefitted over 1.8 million people, of which over 898,000 are women.

## Facilitating Iraq's WTO accession process in collaboration with Iraq's National Committee on WTO Accession

**Baghdad, 24 November 2021** -Iraq's National Committee on WTO Accession participated in a technical session organised in Baghdad on 23rd November.

The session provided a comprehensive overview of the accession process and highlighted the crucial role of the National Committee on WTO Accession in this process.

Iraq initiated its process to WTO Accession in 2004 but due to political and economic instability this was stalled until 2017 when Iraq expressed

interest to reinstate their determination to join the WTO. Since then, Iraq has made considerable progress in this front including the recent submission of key technical documents to the WTO secretariat.

Representatives from various government institutions from Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq including officials from the Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry participated in the session. Various private sector institutions also attended.

The workshop was organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC) a joint agency of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and United Nations (UN), through the "Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving trade policy in Iraq" (SAAVI) project.

Funded by the European Union (EU), the project is contributing to inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for youth, by improving Iraq's agriculture competitiveness and supporting trade development. It is also

## Facilitating Iraq's WTO accession process... (Continued)

particularly focuses on providing support to Iraq in the process of acceding to the WTO.

Mr. Adel Al-Masoodi, Director General, Foreign Economic Relations Department, Ministry of Trade opened the day and reaffirmed Iraq's commitment to the accession to the WTO and assured the support of his team to the SAAVI project. In his opening remarks, Mr Al-Masoodi also recognised and congratulated the progress that has been made in Iraq's Accession progress through ITC's SAAVI project.

The delegation of the European Union to Iraq was also present at the event and was represented by Mr. Mauro Gioe, who stated that "becoming a member of the WTO will result in a reduction of trade barriers, predictability and transparency of international trade rules, and increased competitiveness, all of which will increase trade for Iraq" adding that "the advantages gained by a new WTO member are always greater than the potential losses that some economic actors may initially face. Overall, the whole country wins".

On behalf of ITC, Mr. Rajesh Aggarwal,

the Director of the Division of Market Development opened the session. In his remarks, Mr. Aggarwal focused on the importance of a strong National Committee in place to progress on WTO Accession. The National Committee provides a platform for both the public and private sector to come together and to take key decisions in line with national priorities and domestic policy reform," he said.

The workshop provided an opportunity to reassemble members of the National Committee on WTO accession, created 2004 through a ministerial order.

Participants were updated by the Ministry of Trade of Iraq about the recent development which occurred in relation to Iraq's accession process to the WTO. This was followed by a number of technical sessions aimed at building a common understanding of all members with respect to substantive and procedural matters of immediate relevance for Iraq's accession to the WTO.

This session is part of a series of capacity building sessions that will be organised through the SAAVI project to support Iraq to accede to the WTO.



## Iraq: Rising fiscal risks, water scarcity, and climate change threaten gradual recovery from Pandemic

**Baghdad, 24 November 2021** – Iraq's economic outlook has improved on the back of the recovery of global oil markets, with its GDP projected to grow from 2.6% in 2021 to over 6% in 2022–23. Nevertheless, without accelerated economic reform, unforeseen domestic and fiscal risks could cause reverses.

The World Bank's new Iraq Economic Monitor titled "The Slippery Road to Economic Recovery" finds the country's economic rebound partly aided by government moves to act on previously recommended reforms. Public transfers, as well as schemes aimed at increasing credit to businesses, had a small stimulus effect, leading to GDP growth of 0.9% in the first half of 2021, in contrast to a 16% contraction a year earlier.

Higher oil prices turned a fiscal balance of 2.2% in GDP surplus, boosting central bank reserves to almost US\$55 billion (15 months of imports) in the first half of 2021. Recovery was to some extent curtailed by severe water shortages and widespread electricity cuts following historically low rainfall, impacting the agricultural and industrial sectors. Healthcare services also deteriorated amid a growing number of cases of

COVID-19's Delta variant.

GDP from oil, still the main driver of medium-term growth in Iraq, is expected to rise in step with the gradual phase-out of OPEC+ production quotas, while non-oil GDP growth is forecast to remain under 3% in 2021–2023. Upstream risks could include oil shocks, droughts, and new COVID-19 variants. Potential problems could arise from fiscal and other risks, such as growing budget rigidities, the low clearance of arrears and the large exposure of state-owned banks and the central bank to sovereign debt, and the effect of public investment management constraints on public services. Progress on regional economic integration and security, however, could provide new momentum for growth and diversification.

Of key importance to Iraq is dealing with water scarcity and the degradation of water quality in its rivers and groundwater. The new Economic Monitor's special focus titled "Overcoming Water Scarcity and Climate Change Impacts," calls for dramatic sector reforms to capture opportunities and manage risks. A fall of 20% in Iraq's water supply and the related declining

crop yields that could accompany climate change, could reduce real GDP in Iraq by up to 4%, or US\$6.6 billion.

"Investing in climate smart water management practices provides a concrete opportunity to spur inclusive and green economic growth and development," said Saroj Kumar Jha, World Bank Mashreq Regional Director. "Without action, water constraints will lead to large losses across multiple sectors of the economy and come to affect more and more vulnerable people."

Iraq's water sector relies on highly centralized institutional architecture that creates coordination issues in resource management and service delivery. The sector suffers from a lack of financing (given existing constraints) as well as weak private sector participation and limited revenues from users. The Monitor identifies areas where reforms could improve Iraq's resilience to water scarcity and climate change—efficiency, productivity, and demand management policies; institutional solutions; and regional solutions.



## United Nations meets with donors to discuss Development Strategy for Iraq

**Baghdad, 23 November 2021** - A high-level meeting between the United Nations and international donors took place in Baghdad to discuss the United Nations' updated development strategy for Iraq. The meeting focused on the 2020-2024 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), which was signed by the Government of Iraq in September.

The UN was represented by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, who also serves at the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. Also present were representatives of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Iraq, which consists of 22 agencies, funds, and programs. The donor community was represented by several Ambassadors and high-level representatives from embassies in Iraq, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States.

The UNSDCF is the consolidated strategy for the UNCT to support the Government in meeting the needs of



Iraqi people in economic growth, basic services, social protection, and the environment. The updated UNSDCF also has a new focus on durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) so that families displaced by the war against Daesh (ISIL) can return to their areas of origin or integrate into new communities.

"This is the time where we have to come together to support Iraq to emerge from this pandemic stronger, achieve safe durable solutions to displacement and

accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and towards a peaceful and prosperous society for all Iraqis. Together with the Iraqi society let us all harness resources and assets to make it happen," said Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano.

In the meeting, the UN agencies highlighted key interventions and efforts in supporting Iraq's development priorities and Iraqis' needs through 2024 while discussing the donors' critical role in supporting this joint effort.

## ILO and UNICEF joint initiative supports young engineers to play a key role in promoting Green Works in Iraq

**Dohuk, 25 November 2021** - Youth from forcibly displaced and host communities in Iraq will be trained to support and monitor green jobs initiatives, that aim to restore and protect their local environment.

Supported by the Government of the Netherlands under PROSPECTS, the initiative is part of an on-going collaboration between the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to help youth in their transition from training to decent employment.

Under the unique collaboration, young women and men who have completed a UNICEF-supported life skills and entrepreneurship training programme, are being referred to ILO's employment intensive investment programme (EIIP) interventions in Dohuk for further training and capacity building to further their employability skills.

EIIP links infrastructure development with employment creation, poverty reduction and local economic and social development. It uses local labour and resources to create much needed employment and income and increase the capacity of local institutions. In Iraq, EIIP interventions under PROSPECTS focus on infrastructure improvement and Green Works, which aim to improve

water irrigation systems on farms, promote sustainable waste management and promote forest restoration.

"One of the greatest opportunities in Iraq is to invest in future changemakers - young people. They have the potential to contribute to peace and stability and to expand economic opportunities. Our ongoing partnership with the ILO contributes to boosting social inclusion of young people, benefitting entire communities" said Mads Sorensen, Chief Adolescent Development and Participation for UNICEF Iraq.

"Building on UNICEF's life skills training, the ILO will engage the young engineers from Duhok Governorate at its EIIP interventions, which will allow them to learn these labour-based approaches and skills at the workplace that will support their transition to decent employment," said Shaza Al Jondi, Chief Technical Advisor for ILO PROSPECTS for Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

The youth, many of whom come from engineering backgrounds, will be given theoretical and on-the-job training in project management, Occupational Safety and Health, Decent Work principles, and specialised technical training in EIIP related to water irrigation, waste management and forest



restoration.

Following the completion of the training, some of the youth will have the opportunity to become team leaders in specific EIIP interventions, providing technical support to new partners and organizations to help mainstream Employment Intensive Approaches into planned infrastructural improvement.

The collaboration between the two agencies is being carried out under the partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS), a four-year global partnership between the Netherlands, the ILO, UNICEF, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the World Bank. PROSPECTS operates in eight countries across the East and the Horn of Africa and the Middle East to support education, employment and protection in the context of forced displacement.



## Germany, IOM reaffirm partnership to support economic recovery in Iraq

**Baghdad, 29 November 2021** - Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which employ roughly half of Iraq's workers, were severely impacted by the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the resulting economic slowdown undermined the gradual progress SMEs had made toward recovery, exacerbating vulnerabilities and increasing economic challenges for Iraqi businesses and their workers.

These economic difficulties, combined with the impacts of dramatic environmental degradation across the country, underscore the need to support Iraqi workers and small and medium businesses on the path toward socioeconomic recovery.

The German Government, via KfW Development Bank, is supporting the International Organization for Migration's continued efforts to boost economic recovery and sustainable job creation in Iraq by providing further funding for November 2021 through November 2025. This is the fourth such grant presented by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with financing provided through KfW; from the first grant in 2018, BMZ has now committed a total of EUR 86 million to



IOM Iraq through KfW.

"The German Government and KfW's continued generous support recognizes the link between migration and economic development in working toward durable solutions to displacement," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri. "This continued partnership and additional funding will allow IOM to expand its support for livelihoods and job creation in collaboration with the Government of Iraq and local communities."

The new project, "Contribute to the economic recovery of Iraq through employment creation and revitalization of local economies – Phase IV", will build upon the experience of previous phases, particularly targeting vulnerable groups including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees and other conflict-affected populations. Phase IV will also have a broad geographical reach to include

more diverse Iraqi populations.

"We are very pleased that with this additional grant of 30 mio. EUR we are able to continue contributing to employment creation and the revitalization of local economies for vulnerable groups in Iraq," said Dr. Anna-Christine Janke, Director of KfW Office Iraq.

With this funding from the German Government through KfW, IOM Iraq will increase support to the SME sector through the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) mechanism, which contributes to sustainable job creation and private sector revitalization. IOM will also support efforts to increase women's economic opportunity and participation and assist individuals to improve their employability through vocational training. Additionally, the funding will allow for continued rapid cash injections into communities in need via Cash-for-Work programmes, which also support reconstruction in communities still rebuilding after the ISIL conflict. Since December 2018, the Government of Germany and IOM Iraq have supported a total of 369 SMEs through EDF grants, leading to the creation of 1,941 jobs. A further 3,146 individuals received microenterprise support packages or vocational training.

## ILO, IOM collaborate to improve business development services for small enterprises in Iraq

**Erbil, 30 November 2021** - (ILO News) The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq are collaborating to support the development of existing national small-scale enterprises and potential entrepreneurs from displaced and host communities in Iraq through entrepreneurship skills training.

Under the new collaboration, the ILO has introduced its advanced entrepreneurship and business management training programme, Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB), to selected staff from IOM to enable them to deliver the programme to IOM-supported existing and potential entrepreneurs.

This will provide entrepreneurs with quality support services that will allow them to start or enhance the performance of businesses and, in turn, create employment opportunities for internally displaced and host communities.

SIYB is made up of a comprehensive set of training materials and tools for various target groups in the small and medium-sized business sector to help them develop and strengthen their basic management skills. It is structured into three separate training packages that are designed to respond to the progressive stages of business development, including "Generate Your Business Idea," "Start Your Business," and "Improve Your Business."

In Iraq, the global training package was

recently adapted to the country's context, including sector-specific exercises and case studies, under another ILO project, supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and in partnership with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), entitled "Improved BDS and Entrepreneurship Education targeting MSMEs and youth for decent work creation in the KRI". In addition, the project embarked on adapting SIYB material to reflect regional and national legal, economic, and cultural aspects, including linguistic differences. As a result, SIYB is now available in Arabic, Kurdish Sorani and Badini languages to ensure widespread outreach in Iraq.

As part of the programme's activities, a two-week Training of Trainers workshop took place in Erbil to build the capacity of some 50 IOM trainers on the programme. The training focused on a number of topics related to market research, generating a business idea and business plan, productivity and costing. A key element of the training was the development of action plans by the participants for the next steps of the Training of Trainers' cycle.

Following the completion of the Training of Trainers' workshop, each trainer will train 25 women and men on the entire SIYB programme by conducting IOM Trainings of Entrepreneurs and Trainings of Potential Entrepreneurs to fulfil their



requirements as certified trainers. This will also be complemented with follow-up services for the targeted small enterprises.

"The Training of Trainers' methodology will ensure the sustainability of the programme in the longer-term, by creating a capable pool of national trainers from IOM, who will continue to deliver this package to potential and existing entrepreneurs beyond the project's duration," said Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq.

The SIYB programme has been introduced in over 100 countries and adapted to meet specific national and regional needs. In Iraq, the ILO has rolled out the package through various projects that have introduced the training to national Business Development Services (BDS) providers and which support young refugees, internally displaced people and vulnerable host community members who are interested in setting up their own small business or improving existing ones.

## UNICEF with support from UNDP Iraq and implementing partner Mercy Hands have realized the Flood Preparedness Project



**Mosul, 30 November 2021** - The Mosul dam is the biggest dam in Iraq

and the fourth largest dam in the Middle East. Since 2003, the dam has

been under the threat of collapse which could generate floods affecting 4-6 million people along the Tigris River floodplain.

UNICEF with support from UNDP Iraq and implementing partner Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid have implemented the Flood Preparedness Project for mobilizing communities, generating awareness and deliver culturally specific messages to populations in Mosul City, Baghdad and Salahuddin Governorates for emergency preparedness and response.

## Republic of Korea contributes additional US\$ 3 million to stabilization in Iraq

**Baghdad, 01 December 2021** - The Republic of Korea has contributed an additional US\$ 3 million to UNDP's flagship programme the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which has been implementing critical initiatives to stabilize areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

This is Korea's seventh contribution to the FFS since 2015, bringing its total contribution to US\$27 million. With this additional funding, UNDP will be able to support more essential services such as housing, and the rehabilitation of critical infrastructure in the sectors of electricity, water and education ensuring the delivery of basic services to return communities.

"The impact of our collective stabilization efforts with generous support from the FFS from key partners such as the Republic of Korea are clearly visible across Iraq. Schools are reopening, clean water is reaching homes, roads are connecting people, and homes are rehabilitated," says UNDP Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad.

"However, critical stabilization needs

remain as 1 million people are still internally displaced, including the hardest-to-return populations. The Republic of Korea's contribution comes at a critical period for Iraq, as the international community looks to safeguard the hard-won stabilization gains and prevent ISIL's resurgence," she adds.

"I am very pleased that the Republic of Korea has provided contributions to FFS for seven consecutive years since its launch in 2015. I hope this year's contribution can help facilitate the implementation of UNDP's stabilization programme to provide returnees and local communities with housing and public infrastructure rehabilitation and livelihood opportunities," says Jang Kyung-Wook, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Iraq.

"We appreciate the hard work of UNDP and its partners to rebuild the lives of internally displaced persons and returnees in areas liberated from ISIL, and we hope to further strengthen our long-standing partnership with UNDP and make joint efforts toward achieving stabilization in Iraq," adds Jang

Khyung-Wook.

At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the FFS in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism. The mandate was extended to 2023 due to the scale of urgent remaining stabilization needs and the request from partners to continue our interventions.

In 2021, the FFS is placing greater emphasis on utilizing an integrated approach that includes promoting sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities by rehabilitating supportive infrastructure for productive sectors, such as agriculture and small industries.



## IOM Iraq presented the publication of three value chain assessments

**Basra, 2 December 2021** - A value chain is a series of activities performed in a specific order by a business — for example: production, marketing and wholesale — to create a valuable product. In Iraq, support is particularly needed to strengthen value chains in the agricultural sector, which is suffering due to severe environmental crises.

IOM Iraq presented the publication of three value chain assessments on 2 December at the Agricultural College at University of Basra. A roundtable of

representatives from various government offices and UN stakeholders validated the choice of 12



regional value chains identified as high potential in the report. Discussions centered around priority areas of intervention and support, as well as relevant ongoing initiatives. As a result of the value chain assessments, a series of grants will be made to value chain actors in Basra, Missan, Thiqr, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Ninewa governorates based on recommendations made in the reports. This event was made possible with support from EuropeAid.

## The Social Safety Net's Management Information System assessed

**Baghdad/Erbil, 2 December 2021** - UNICEF jointly with The Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Kurdistan Region of Iraq held a workshop to assess the Social Safety Net's Management Information System.

These workshops are part of the EU-

supported (EU International Partnerships) joint program between UNICEF, International Labour Organization, and World Food Programme to support the reform of social protection in Iraq to integrate social protection and social services to ensure a comprehensive response to poor households and children in Iraq.



## Chaldean Catholic Archbishop teams up with FAO to support returnees dependent on agricultural livelihoods in the Nineveh Plains



**Baghdad, 4 December 2021** - A FAO Iraq delegation visited the Chaldean Catholic Cleric and current Archbishop of Erbil, His Eminence Bashar Matti Warda, headed by Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, together with a number of female farmers and milk producers from Bartella and Hamdaniya districts, as well as agricultural extension cadres from the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate.

With financial support from the European Union, FAO is implementing

a agricultural livelihoods project for returnees and rural and peri-urban communities in Nineveh Governorate. One of the very successful components is the development of the livestock and milk production chain of the project, implemented in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture. The meeting included a mini-exhibition of dairy products produced at the headquarters of the Archdiocese in Ainkawa, Erbil.

During his conversation with the Archbishop, Dr Salah explained the

importance of FAO's interventions: "There is no doubt that the interventions carried out within the Project, has resonated widely with the public, from local officials, farmers and livestock breeders in Nineveh and throughout Iraq. The project has supported more than 4,000 families through introduction of new technologies, equipment, other inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilizer, sprinkler irrigation), and training. Also, 35 milk collection and processing centers were rehabilitated that support a total of 1,500 rural women.

Clear evidence has emerged that recently displaced farmers have returned to their area of origin and has given them a reason to stay and farm. The Archbishop thanked FAO and the EU for their support in providing so many families with a secure livelihood. "This is a good example of a project that I - and others - have been asking for since the liberation of Nineveh. Support to families reestablishing themselves is essential to help them return." He said that about 2,600 Christian families have not yet returned and more needs to be done from the government side to support economic growth. He offered to help by promoting local fresh dairy products with the people in Ainkawa.

## IOM Iraq held its first arts and handicrafts exhibition born of the integrated MHPSS and livelihood programme (MLI)

**Baghdad, 9 December 2021** - Conflict-affected individuals can face daily stressors that make it challenging to earn a living. IOM Iraq integrates mental health and psychosocial support with livelihood interventions to help such individuals build coping and stress management mechanisms to apply at work and in other settings.

On 9 December, IOM Iraq held its first arts and handicrafts exhibition born of the integrated MHPSS and livelihood

programme (MLI). The exhibition showcased art, carpentry, knitting and other handicrafts for purchase, created by internally displaced persons during MLI activities at the Hassan Sham (U3) camp. The one-day exhibition was held at the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH). All proceeds went directly to the artists at Hassan Sham (U3) camp.

This exhibition was made possible with support from Canada in Iraq.



## Germany increases support to boost employment opportunities in Iraq with new EUR 18m contribution



**Baghdad, 07 December 2021** - Germany and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have today signed a EUR 18.29 million agreement (US\$ 21.78 million) to boost employment and economic opportunities for vulnerable communities in Iraq.

The generous contribution is the second provided to the Building Resilience through Employment Promotion (BREP) project that focuses on strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities by enhancing their economic empowerment. The project prioritizes vulnerable areas within Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din.

This contribution brings Germany's total support for the BREP project to EUR 48.29 million (US\$ 57.07 million). The contribution is made available by

the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with financing provided through Germany's KfW Development Bank. With this renewed support, Germany has committed more than EUR 543 million to various UNDP-led reconstruction programmes in Iraq over the last six years.

"We are extremely grateful to Germany, one of our longest-standing partners, for this important contribution. This support is vital in ensuring we leave no one behind. Through this funding, at UNDP, we will bolster our efforts towards building resilience by creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities. We hope to provide Iraqis with the opportunity to build forward better after suffering from years of

conflict and instability," said Zena Ali-Ahmad, UNDP Iraq Resident Representative.

German Chargé d'Affaires Peter Felten stated, "The creation of economic perspectives and employment opportunities is a prerequisite for sustainable recovery and resilience. Through our support to the successful BREP programme in close cooperation with UNDP, Germany helps to provide economic opportunities for people who have been severely affected by conflict. I trust that our engagement will help to create success stories that can be replicated by our Iraqi partners and serve as a blueprint for strengthening resilience of communities and promoting inclusive growth.

"We are very pleased that based on the funding by the German government, KfW is able to provide this grant of 18.3M EUR for BREP. With this additional amount, we will continue to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities by enhancing their economic empowerment and the reconstruction of conflict affected regions of Iraq," Dr. Anna-Christine Janke, Director of KfW Office Iraq, added.

Through BREP, the support from Germany will provide Iraqis with short and medium-term employment opportunities, enhancing skills in economically promising sectors such as construction and agriculture and strengthening the private sector through boosting small and medium enterprises.

## Our soil is our gold - engaging youth and farmers in building profitable business models in Iraq

**Mosul, 9 December 2021** - "I learnt about bringing back agriculture as profit generating activity to our communities – our soil is our gold," says a student who attended discussions held at the prestigious University of Mosul in Iraq. Brimming with innovative ideas, 30 young male and female university students of agriculture openly expressed their aspirations towards agripreneurship in the context of entrepreneurial ecosystems and policy in their country. These conversations also provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the International Trade Centre's online tools that will be developed for students to support their business ideas.

A small group of Ninewah farmers and



buyers also came together to relay their respective perspectives, needs, challenges and opportunities. Together

they explored mechanisms for setting up mutually beneficial business deals. Farmers also learnt about various aspects of trade including quality, storage, delivery requirements, and contractual terms instrumental in helping them compete in the market. These interactions were organized by the International Trade Centre, through the EU funded "Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq" (SAAVI) project.

The project aims to contribute to inclusive growth and job creation for Iraqi citizens, particularly for youth. It seeks to enhance the competitiveness of Iraq's agribusiness value chain, while improving the country's trade policy.

## Infrastructure projects for socio-economic development in Iraq accelerated with partnership renewal between UNDP Iraq and JICA

**Baghdad, 07 December 2021** – UNDP Iraq and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have signed a renewed partnership agreement to monitor and support acceleration of the implementation of socio-economic infrastructure projects in Iraq. The projects are implemented by the Government of Iraq (GoI) with loan assistance from JICA with the aim of improving the economic recovery and living conditions of Iraqi communities. Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq Zena Ali Ahmad emphasizes, “This 11th renewal of JICA – UNDP partnership agreement is a demonstration of confidence and strong partnership showing the solid commitment of the Government and People of Japan. UNDP and JICA will work together to support the Government of Iraq in achieving and laying the foundation for growth in key service sectors, with focus on electricity infrastructure, water and sanitation, oil, transportation, and health.”

JICA Chief Representative Kei Toyama states, “Since 2009, UNDP has been an important partner for JICA in Iraq. JICA and UNDP had jointly supported for the enhancement of the project management capacity of our Iraqi

counterparts to overcome many challenges by close monitoring and various trainings. We look forward that our partnership will further contribute to the acceleration of the implementation of GoI’s projects under our joint support in this 11th agreement.”

Despite the challenges imposed by COVID-19, two major Official Development Assistance Loan projects in electricity and fertilizer production sectors were completed during the first half of 2021 with support from JICA, adding 330 Megawatts from Al-Mussayab Thermal Power Plant in Babil governorate to the national grid

and an increased annual output of 300,000 tons of urea fertilizer from the rehabilitation of one production line against the previous two-lines production of 180,000 tons from the South Fertilizer Company in Khor Al-Zubair, Basra Governorate, feeding reliable supply of urea fertilizer to 50% of local market demand.

Through signing this agreement, the GoI, JICA and UNDP reaffirm their commitment to improve the state of national infrastructure, public services, and private sector development, advancing Iraq closer to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



## UN-Habitat has launched the rehabilitation activities in Telafar



**Telafar, 9 December 2021** - In close collaboration with Telafar Education Directorate, UN-Habitat has launched the rehabilitation of the Shuhada Kindergarten in northern Telafar. Workers are busy removing large quantities of debris and charred waste from the air strike that perforated the roof over the main hall. The large hole in the roof will be repaired as part of the works, but the team has decided to install within the hole a solar tube to improve the lighting of the hall. The project also includes the realisation of a

playground and a garden. Once completed, the kindergarten will be able to receive more than 400 children. This initiative is being funded by the European Union, under the programme ‘Supporting Recovery and Stability through Local Development’, implemented by UNDP Iraq in partnership with UN-Habitat.

“UN-Habitat’s intervention was just in time” stated the head of Water Directorate upon the supply of a new bank of 92 cadmium cell batteries to Telafar city’s main water pumping

station. The existing batteries which are used to operate, control and protect the circuit breakers were very close to their expiration date and risk bringing the whole pumping process to a halt. The ongoing intervention includes the maintenance works of the pumping station transformer and rehabilitation of damaged drinking water pipes in Al-Muthanna and Al-Oroba neighborhoods which will benefit overall more than 5,000 inhabitants. The project, also supported by EU, will help the Telafar Water Directorate to formalise residents’ water connection to the neighborhood water pipe.

UN-Habitat, in partnership with the European Union through the #EUMadadFund, will rehabilitate and upgrade key marketplaces, water facilities and infrastructure in Sinjar, Ba’aj and Tel Afar districts in western Ninewa to facilitate sustainable returns, urban recovery and peacebuilding in western Ninewa.

In support of these activities, UN-Habitat recently kicked-off the ambitious rehabilitation of 24 stores in

## UN-Habitat has launched the rehabilitation activities... (continued)

Tel Qasab Marketplace in close collaboration with the Qairawan Municipality and community members. The rehabilitation will contribute to inclusive economic growth by raising people's incomes and contributing to poverty reduction by creating jobs and opportunities for people who have returned.

UN-Habitat, in partnership with the European Union through the #EUMadadFund, will provide 2,700 people with core houses across three districts in western Ninewa to replace homes that have been fully destroyed.

UN-Habitat recently received a delegation in Tel Afar District from the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) and Mines Advisory Group (MAG). The



delegation carried out field surveys of land plots upon which UN-Habitat will construct core houses. UN-Habitat would like to thank

representatives from MAG and representatives from the Regional Mine Action Centre – North for their support to rebuild communities.



**Baghdad, 12 December 2021** - Asiacecl CCO Ms. Chra Hussain met with World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq Representative, Ally-Raza Qureshi. They discussed WFP's work to support youth and smallholder farmers, to strengthen skills and achieve food security for vulnerable communities. Looking forward to a fruitful partnership.



**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, recently visited the World Food Programme's resilience-building project in Salah al-Din. The initiative is run within the durable solutions framework to achieve dignified, safe, voluntary approaches to ending displacement in Iraq. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano met with Ahmed, a Shirqat farmer who returned to his family's ruined orchard after being displaced. Ahmed explained how he is able to cultivate again with seeds, fertilizer and farming equipment provided by WFP and partners.

## Gardening project empowers IDP women in Akre



**Baghdad, 12 December 2021** - A UNIDO programme funded by the Government of Japan is providing displaced women in Akre with vital skills to be able to grow their own

produce and support their families. Mamilian IDP camp, where the din of chatter is overshadowed by the hum of tractors ploughing the adjacent fields, will soon be home to 80 vegetable gardens, run by the women of the camp. Most of the camp residents are from Nineveh who fled the ISIS onslaught in 2014.

Mayan Ismail, a mother of five from Bashiqa, used to travel around northern Iraq, working in farmlands in Rabia, a town on the Syrian border well-known for its agricultural produce. One of 80 women participating in the project, she now has the tools she needs to grow a variety of produce, just as she did at home in Bashiqa.

“Most of the people here are jobless.

This is a good training course because it provides income for our families. Some women are widows, and the heads of their households, and they don't have a source of income,” she said. Home to 170 families, the camp is located down a remote dirt path overlooking farmland near the town of Akre. Its location, and lack of amenities, makes basic tasks difficult for camp residents. Mayan says she has to hitchhike from a nearby highway to be able to buy food. Now, she is planning to grow beans, onions, and garlic over the winter months in the large allotment allocated to each woman.

On the final day of the week-long training course, the women gather

## Gardening project empowers IDP women in Akre *(continued)*

around a square plot of bare land where three of their colleagues rake the soil, turning over stones as the trainer provides some final advice. Thanks to UNIDO, the Japanese Government, and the Camp Management, the women will have piece of land to grow their vegetables with a set of gardening equipment and vegetable seeds for four full seasons.

"The project is very good. It really benefited us a lot," said Sabre Murad, who fled to the camp from Mosul seven

years ago. "As you can see, we live in tents. It is a very poor and difficult life. Now, I can both sell and eat my produce."

Sabre is excited to be able to provide further support for her family of five children, and take sole control of the allotment. Each woman is given her own space next to her living quarters.

"It gives me independence," she said.

The UNIDO project is a lifeline for women in the camp, according to camp manager Mohammed Mutalib, and has

been designed to involve a woman from each of the 170 families, providing them with business and marketing training, advice on how to grow produce, garden equipment, and information on COVID-19 mitigation.

"We don't have many organizations working here, just UNIDO and UNICEF. World Vision provides cash aid," he said. "Most of the women here are asking for training courses. They say that men can work, but that women need this training."

## WFP and partners revive olive production in Iraq

**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and partners have inaugurated a new olive press machine as part of economic regeneration efforts for the local community in Bashiqa, Iraq. WFP, the Governor's office, Mayor's office, the Bashiqa Olive Association and Samaritan's Purse's aim is to bring this renowned olive-producing community back to the levels of production before conflict and connect producers to markets.

"It's time for this community to bounce back and build on its enormous economic potential," said Ally-Raza Qureshi, WFP Iraq Representative. "Supporting the revival of olive production is part of WFP's durable solutions, rural development work to ensure that the most vulnerable people are not left behind."

WFP and Samaritan's Purse organised training for 30 Olive Association leaders and farmers, on selecting the best olive tree varieties for optimum oil production, olive agroforestry systems, effective irrigation, harvesting and mechanisation, as well as olive oil extraction, with a focus on medicinal properties. WFP and partners also created new information sharing groups among local olive producers, so they can easily continue to share best practice and lessons learned.

The initiative also includes market linkages created by WFP and partners such that when products are ready to sell, the sales channels are also in place, creating a circle of sustainable supply and demand.

WFP and partners have planted nearly 13,000 olive, fig, pomegranate, pear trees and grape vines in the area, and



are supporting people to start up small businesses in Bashiqa and across the country. WFP provides complementary support to communities across Iraq which are affected by conflict and climate change. Several women's cooperatives have been set up and are successfully selling local products.

## Project launched to promote inclusive economic growth and job creation in Iraq

**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** - A ceremony was held to formally launch the 'Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy' (SAAVI) project. The five-year project worth EUR 22.5 million is funded by the European Union and is being implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in close collaboration with the Government of Iraq and other local partners.

Representatives from public and private sector, innovators, farmers, and development partners attended the event that served as an occasion to discuss opportunities and present solutions to build more inclusive agri-food value chains in the country.

A fast-paced business breakfast opened the day. ITC presented the key findings from the nation-wide market analysis



for high potential agri-products. Private sector representatives shared their experiences in the Iraqi market offering ideas to improve the competitiveness of agribusinesses in the country.

A plenary session brought together

private sector actors, innovators, farmers, and development partners to discuss opportunities and present solutions to build more inclusive agrifood value chains from 'farm to fork'. Participants experienced unique flavours and a live 'cooking

## Project launched to promote inclusive economic growth... (continued)

demonstration' using ingredients from the local cuisine by a renowned chef. This was followed by a technical session dedicated to climate change risks and opportunities in Iraqi agrifood value chains concluded the event before the closing remarks.

SAAVI seeks to enhance the competitiveness of agriculture and related activities and improve trade policy in Iraq. It addresses farm and firm level challenges and strengthens the value chains in the agriculture sector. This is done through the elaboration of strategies for high potential products, by building productive and commercial agricultural value chain analysis, while introducing upgrades in the production and marketing systems through capacity building to farmers and firms, the provision of a wide range of business development services, and technical agriculture training, among others. By fostering more competitive food systems, SAAVI also makes a considerable difference in enhancing food security through the improvement of people's access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

SAAVI also builds the capacities of micro, small, and medium enterprises and broadens the knowledge and skills

base for youth including training on entrepreneurship and business skills. Through SAAVI, technical and vocational skills programmes are also strengthened to better match the needs of the private sector.

Support is given to policymakers and key institutions involved in the WTO accession process, including capacity building on trade negotiation, policy formulation, and coordination. WTO membership will help Iraq to complete domestic policy and reforms for the modernization of its business environment and achieve effective integration into global economy. Speaking at the ceremony, Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation, European Union Delegation to Iraq said "The EU is proud to support the Iraqi government and its people in the development of the agricultural sector. SAAVI is a very important project that will provide an example of how public and private sector can work together in order to successfully promote diversification in Iraq by supporting agricultural value chains."

Dr Mahdi Al Jubori, Iraq's Deputy Minister for Agriculture and other high level government representatives participated in the launch ceremony.

Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano UN

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator also participated.

Ms. Pamela Coke Hamilton, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre in her message on the occasion said, "Together with the EU and the government of Iraq, ITC is excited to work with MSMEs in Iraq to increase their competitiveness. We see improved food production as a pathway to diversify the economy and create jobs. This can also support Iraq's accession to the WTO. In this way, SAAVI is contributing to inclusive, sustainable, and resilient growth in Iraq."

In his speech, Mr. Eric Buchot, who leads the SAAVI project highlighted that "SAAVI builds the capacities and brings together key economic and institutional actors across the agrifood industry to enable Iraqi producers and firms to compete and connect to their own market".



## Sustainable living in Iraq: a milestone 1,000 SMEs financed through IOM's Enterprise Development Fund (EDF)

**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** – At the conclusion of Iraq's devastating conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), small and medium enterprises (SMEs) found themselves without access to the finance necessary to rebuild in the wake of the war's large-scale destruction.

In 2018, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq launched the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF), a financing mechanism to provide SMEs with access to capital to stimulate their recovery and growth and increase their demand for workers. Since then, the EDF has supported 1,000 Iraqi businesses across the country to help create 4,975 jobs for men and women, returnees and host community members alike, in key economic sectors. On 14 December 2021, IOM Iraq marked this achievement with a ceremony in Baghdad.

"In the face of wide-spread economic decline in Iraq, celebrating such progress supports momentum for economic recovery across the country, particularly in locations with large

displaced and returnee populations," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri. "As 2021 ends, we can see many opportunities to support decent, sustainable work opportunities in Iraq's private sector. IOM is thankful for the collaboration with the Government of Iraq and our partners to carry out this innovative and essential programming."

The EDF uses a demand-driven, market-based approach to identify businesses with the greatest chance of success to grow and create jobs. Regular research allows IOM Iraq to continuously adapt and improve to target critical sectors – such as agriculture and renewable energy – and specific groups – such as women entrepreneurs and SMEs combatting the spread of COVID-19.

Jobs don't just increase income and stimulate spending; they also give people a sense of purpose and dignity. The ability to make a sustainable living is also a key factor in decisions to migrate and return.

Since the programme's start, EDF grantees have hired 753 women into



full-time, paid employment; and 92% of people hired by EDF grantees were either unemployed (55%) or in unstable daily employment (37%) previously. Efforts also aim to protect workers by promoting employment contracts, minimum wages and a focus on safety in the workplace.

Interventions will continue to evolve to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. The EDF program has been supported by the governments of the United States, Japan, Germany and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and by the European Union and Korea International Cooperation Agency.



## With high official and popular presence FAO organizes various activities in Baashiq; FAOR receives the Medal of Excellence



**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** - FAO has ascended further through the intervention of the project “Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq”, funded by the European Union, hosting various activities with high official and popular participation in the Assyrian Cultural Center in Bashiqa district, on Thursday, 9-12-2021.

The events were attended by the Representative and Technical Undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Mithaq Abdul-Hussein Obaid, FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El-Hajj Hassan, the FAO Senior International Livestock Expert, Dr. Chedly Kayouli, and the Representative of Nineveh Governor and Director of Bashiqa district, Mr. Thanoun Younis, Deputy Director of Nineveh Directorate of Agriculture, Abdullah Saeed Hammo on behalf of the Director of Nineveh Agriculture, the President of the Local Union of Agricultural and Cooperative Societies - Nineveh Branch, Sheikh Abdul Hamid Fathi Al-Rashidi, and a number of extension cadres from the governorates of Najaf and Karbala, along with cadres of the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate, as well as a large number of FAO partners.

The Opening Ceremony set off with welcoming speech followed with Iraqi national anthem. Then Dr. Mithaq Abdul-Hussein conveyed to the attendees the greetings of the Minister of Agriculture, Muhammad Karim Al-Khafaji, saying “We, as the Ministry of Agriculture, salute everyone who contributed to this project, which began in Nineveh and will then move to the South. Nineveh was the nucleus of the project, which impressed everyone who witnessed its interventions on the ground”.

“Finally, I say that today we are here to celebrate this success achieved by FAO with financial support from the European Union, and fully supported by Ministry of Agriculture staff”, he concluded his speech.

FAO Representative Dr. Salah, greeted the participants delivering his welcoming speech, commenting on the FAO project “There is no doubt that the interventions carried out within the Project, has resonated widely with the public, from local officials, farmers and livestock breeders in Nineveh and throughout Iraq. The remarkable achievements that covered a large segment of the farmers of Nineveh Governorate, especially the displaced returnee farmers to their areas, whom the project helped in settling them back

into their lands, which changed their thinking to migrate out of the country and Nineveh Governorate in particular. The project contributed to improving income and supporting more than 4,000 producers.

The Representative of the Nineveh Governor, Mr. Thanoun Younis, the Director of Baashiq district, praised the FAO experience, especially in the Nineveh Plains. He said to be fully aware of the achievements through his strong presence in Bashiqa, Bartella and Al-Hamdaniya districts and his direct contact with farmers and livestock breeders.

On behalf of the Director of Nineveh Agriculture, Mr. Abdullah Saeed Hamo, the Deputy Director of Nineveh Agriculture, pointed out the success of the FAO project that has had a clear impact on improving the agricultural reality, both plant and animal sectors. FAO Senior International Livestock Expert, D. Chedly Kayouli said, “Today we celebrate together with extension cadres of the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate the distribution of sprinklers to the beneficiaries of the FAO-EU funded project. This especially appreciated with the drought hitting the region hard. We supported livestock breeders with sprinklers to increase the local production of fodder, as well as adopting economical system with irrigation water.

During his speech, The President of the Local Union of Agricultural and Cooperative Societies - Nineveh Branch, Sheikh Abdul Hamid Fathi Al-Rashidi stated, “We are pleased with the FAO support to the farmers, and for this reason, on behalf of the farmers, I present the Medal of Excellence to each of the official attendees from the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO Representatives, Dr. Salah Hajj Hassan and FAO Expert D. Chedly Kayouli”.

## How can Iraqi youth build their strength and resilience?

**Ninewa, 14 December 2021** - Since the mass displacement caused by the ISIL crisis, thousands of families have returned to their areas of origin, but further support is needed to assist communities with post-conflict transition and recovery.

240 young people in the Alaydiyah, Tel Afar Markaz and Zummar subdistricts of Ninewa Governorate have gone through IOM Iraq’s Information Counselling and Referral Service

(ICRS) programme, through which they develop their psychosocial strengths, media literacy, critical thinking and livelihood skills. The youth worked together across varying ethno-religious backgrounds to focus on creating positive change within their communities.

This programme is run by IOM Iraq with support from the Government of Japan.



## Finland renews commitment to stabilization with new contribution

**Baghdad, 20 December 2021** – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq welcomes an additional EUR 1.5 million (US\$ 1.7 million) contribution from the Government of Finland to its flagship programme the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS).

The critical support will bolster ongoing efforts to stabilize the five governorates liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Since 2015, the FFS has supported over 3,000 projects, restoring essential services, supporting livelihoods, building municipal capacity and fostering cohesion in areas liberated from ISIL.

“UNDP’s ability to deliver to the highest standard at speed and scale makes us the development partner of choice. This would not be possible without the continuous and generous support from international partners such as the Government of Finland,”

says UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmed.

“However, critical stabilization needs remain as over 1 million people are still internally displaced, including the hardest-to-return populations. The Government of Finland’s contribution comes at an important time in Iraq’s recovery from years of conflict, as the country looks to safeguard the hard-won stabilization gains and prevent ISIL’s resurgence,” adds Ms. Ali Ahmad.

“Finland has been supporting the Facility since 2016 and we are proud to renew our commitment. UNDP and its partners have achieved many concrete results during these years, but Iraq still faces a multitude of challenges. Finland is a long-standing and solutions-oriented partner to Iraq,” says Ville Skinnari, Finland’s Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade.



To date, FFS projects are estimated to have benefitted more than 6 million individuals in the target areas with 17.5 million benefits accruing to them, mostly in Ninewa and Salah al-Din, and in sectors such as electricity, health and water.

## Germany and UNICEF support Kirkuk Governorate to provide 18,000 people with access to safe drinking water

**Kirkuk, 22 December 2021** – The Kirkuk Water Directorate and UNICEF held today the opening ceremony of the Maktab Khalid Water Treatment Plant in the Al Multaq sub-district of the Kirkuk Governorate. The ceremony was attended by local authorities, followed by a tour of the facility.

The Maktab Khalid Water Treatment Plant was originally established in 2012, benefiting 18,000 individuals, as the only water source providing safe drinking water to the four main villages in the district (Makhtab Khalid, Tal -Alwarad, Al-Obeter, and Al-Asalia).

The water treatment plant, with a production capacity of 400m<sup>3</sup> per hour, had been out of service due to damages to the facility, and is now operational again through the rehabilitation implemented by UNICEF and Kirkuk Water Directorate, financed by Germany.

“These projects are considered among the most important vital projects that restore life to these areas, which encourages families to return to their homes after leaving them due to the conflict,” said Rakan Saeed Ali, Kirkuk Governor (OIC) at the opening event.

“The water treatment plant facilitates the dignified return of internally displaced populations. Children and their families will have safe drinking water and will help them rebuild their lives. UNICEF will continue to support the Government on critical water infrastructure, ensuring durable solutions for the most vulnerable children and their families” said Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

In addition, UNICEF is supporting water infrastructure in the area by extending transmission pipelines in four villages in Hawija district (Al-Mustafa Al-Abbasi, Talao, Tar-Fadhil



and Al-Zab) and Al Sayada in Kirkuk district. These projects will ensure access to safe drinking water for around 13,820 individuals, including women and children.

Adequate and safe water supply ensures the survival and growth of children. Long-term sustainability of a water system positively impacts their health, nutrition, education and every other aspect of their lives, particularly girls, women and people living with disabilities.

## FAO provides veterinary service staff with advanced training on animal health

**Baghdad/Erbil, 23 December 2021** - The UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organized an advanced and specialized training for 35 veterinarians from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and KRG’s Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR) that serves their field of work, designed to

strengthen the capabilities of the veterinary services to detect, diagnose and record animal diseases and enhance early warning systems and rapid response to control it through developing the participants’ skills, and encouraging exchange of experiences within the activities of the project, “Improving Delivery of Animal Health

Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq”, implemented in coordination with the MoA and MoAWR, funded by the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), where the training commenced in Erbil on 19 December and concluded on 23 December 2021.

The Representative of the MoA, Magda

## FAO provides veterinary service staff with advanced ... (Continued)

Baddr Whaib, and the Representative of the KRG'S MoAWR, Councillor Rizgar Hama Khader, along with a number of veterinarians working in the sector from Kurdistan region and Iraqi governorates, participated and completed the training sessions, organized under direct supervision of FAOR in Iraq, D. Salah El Hajj Hassan, who characterized the interactive and participatory approach, as creating an opportunity for the participants to develop their tools and expertise.

D. Salah El Hajj Hassan opened the training session with thanking and greeting the participants and showed deep gratitude for the FAO-MoA-DTRA partnership. He added, "The importance of these workshops lies in the fact that they provide the possibility and create a real opportunity for exchanging expertise and increasing the capabilities of participants working in the field of disease surveillance through assessing of veterinary services and electronic reporting systems of animal diseases, in addition to enhancing skills related to detection, diagnosis and reporting, which has also included supporting them with field and laboratory equipment, devices and materials, thus improving animal health services.

He also said that the organization will make more effort in the future towards completion of the 'One Health' system to gain the highest level of animal health by strengthening the

collaboration between veterinary services and public health services.

The Representative of the MoA, Magda Baddr Whaib, classified the training as a success. She said in this regard: "The lectures presented were within the training title and the information was up-to-date and comprehensive, as it gave the trainees a good opportunity to understand the topics. The organization, timing and the number of days of the sessions were suitable for everyone".

FAO International expert and lecturer for the training, D. Karim BenJebara, expressed his happiness while welcoming the participants. He emphasized on the effectiveness of these activities in strengthening the technical and scientific cooperation between MoA and FAO by improving the capabilities of the workers in the sector as part of its role and mission in adopting training as a way to achieve sustainable development goals.

This training is an implementation of

the recommendations of the surveillance assessment conducted in the veterinary laboratories and surveillance and reporting centers late last year. The assessment highlighted capacity gaps across the surveillance systems at central level and in the targeted governorates.

A total of 30 veterinarians and animal health officers from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and KRG's Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR), were trained in a 5 days' workshop "Clinical Diagnosis and Disease Recognition" in Baghdad from December 19 to 23, 2021, in the context of the US Defence Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) funded project "Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq", implemented by FAO in collaboration with the MoA with MoAWR.

Participants have given a certificate of completion at the conclusion of the trainings.



## Labor Issues

## ILO strengthens capacity of Iraqi inspectors on effective labour inspection procedures

**Baghdad, 26 October 2021** - (ILO News) The International Labour Organization (ILO) organised a week-long training for thirty-five labour and occupational safety and health (OSH) inspectors of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Baghdad, to strengthen their capacity in the promotion and enforcement of labour regulations and procedures in Iraq.

The training, which is part of a wider capacity building training programme designed for the ministry's staff and inspectors, is the first step towards the establishment of a labour inspection training center within the premises of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Baghdad.

These efforts are being implemented

with the support of the European Union (EU) through ILO's "Enhancing labour governance, inspection and working conditions in response to COVID-19," which seeks to strengthen the labour inspection system and improve OSH in line with international labour standards, through policy development and capacity building.

"This training was an opportunity to introduce labour inspectors to international good practices in relation to innovative strategies related to inspection, as part of our efforts to lay the ground for the establishment of the labour inspection training center that will promote a stronger and more effective labour inspection system in the country," said Maha Kattaa, ILO

Country Coordinator in Iraq.

The training, conducted jointly with the International Training Centre, the training arm of the ILO, covered key aspects related to labour administration and inspection; inspection visits; working conditions; and designing strategies for promoting compliance. It also covered a wide range of areas of work in line with international labour standards related to labour inspection, such as child labour, forced labour, employment conditions, and gender-related issues.

It aimed to strengthen the capacity of inspectors to apply key principles in the preparation, implementation, and follow-up of inspection visits; identify key issues related to the planning and

## ILO strengthens capacity of Iraqi inspectors... (Continued)

implementation of labour inspection policies; and identify various compliance strategies.

“Under the direct guidance of His Excellency the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, the ministry has previously conducted nation-wide inspection campaigns, and we will continue with these inspection campaigns as they contribute positively to workers,” said Raed Jabbar Bahedh, Director General of the Department of Labour and Vocational Training at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. “These training workshops organized by the ILO further enhance the capabilities and expertise of labour and occupational health and safety inspectors. The ministry is collaborating with the ILO on several initiatives which seek to raise the awareness of workers and employers on the Iraqi Labour Law No. 37, and these trainings which target labour and occupational safety and health



inspectors are of great importance as it is necessary to ensure the full application of the labour law by inspectors through equipping them with the knowledge on mechanisms and modern inspection procedures.” Rajaa Tahseen, from the Department of Labour and Vocational Training at the ministry, who took part in the training, said: “This workshop was very useful, as it covered modern concepts (in relation to inspection). It also provided in-depth discussions on issues related to the labour law, child labour and legal

procedures which need to be followed by inspectors during inspection visits. We also discussed several important topics, some of which were not fully familiar to us, such as those related to leave, working hours and wages. We hope that such training sessions will continue to take place as they greatly contribute to raising the awareness of the inspectors, and reflect positively on their work.”

A series of capacity building workshops will continue to take place throughout 2021 and early 2022.

## Workshop: National Employment Policy to facilitate job creation and decent work in Iraq

**Amman, Jordan, 11 November 2021** - (ILO News) A committee, composed of government officials, social partners and other relevant stakeholders met in Amman to discuss the development of a comprehensive national employment policy for Iraq that will facilitate job creation, decent work and social protection for all workers in the country. Organised by ILO, the week-long event brought together representatives of various ministries, including His Excellency Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Adel Al-Rikabi. It was also attended by representatives of the General Federation of Iraqi Trade Unions and academics.

“One of our main challenges in Iraq is unemployment and the lack of clear plans to address these challenges,” said Minister Al-Rikabi. “It is important to ensure not only the development of a modern policy for employment but also its implementation, based on your visions and ideas.”

The event focused on the employment policy-making process; elements of a policy implementation strategy; relevant monitoring and evaluation systems and impact assessment techniques. It examined some of the major challenges facing Iraq and the role of social dialogue in improving labour market conditions and promoting decent work for all.

“The participation from multiple sectoral stakeholders and the dialogue process will be critical to ensuring national ownership of the employment policy. Having the

tripartite inter-ministerial committee present with us here today is the right start,” said Acting Decent Work Team Director and Senior Employment Policy Specialist at the ILO Regional Office for Arab States, Tariq Haq.

The ILO is providing technical support, including policy advice and capacity building to the Government of Iraq and its social partners across the different phases of the process; from the design and implementation to the monitoring and evaluation of the national policy. It is also working with the Central Statistical Organization and the Kurdistan Statistical Organization on the development of a national Labour Force Survey, the first to be implemented in over a decade.

The survey results will feed into the development of the national employment policy, focusing on the immediate needs of livelihoods and employment creation in addition to the longer-term structural

and decent work needs of Iraq’s labour market.

“The national employment policy will be based on a clear understanding of the strengths, challenges and needs of Iraq’s labour market, to promote employment, especially among women and youth,” said ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, Maha Kattaa. “The national Labour Force Survey will provide the basis to formulating this employment policy.”

The development of the national employment policy is part of broader efforts being implemented under the Iraq Decent Work Country Programme, in partnership between the ILO, the Government and social partners. The programme focuses on supporting private sector development and job creation; strengthening social protection and addressing child labour; and strengthening labour governance and social dialogue.



## New report identifies drivers of informality in Iraq's labour market



**Baghdad, 27 November 2021** - A new diagnostic report examining the drivers of informality in Iraq's labour market highlights the multiple and wide-ranging factors contributing to informality and the burdens imposed on the formalisation of enterprises and workers in the country.

Iraq's private sector, which accounts to roughly 40 per cent to 50 per cent of employment, is mainly informal. Compared to the public sector, employment in the private sector has lower average wages, job security, benefits, and often lacks formal contracts.

Some of the barriers identified in the report include gaps in the legal framework for employment and enterprises, in terms of labour and social security coverage and protection, barriers related to the structure of the labour market and macro-economic conditions, limited awareness among workers and enterprises of their rights and obligations, and the lack of incentives by workers and employers to formalise. The report also highlights a gap in up-to-date and representative

data on the labour market that can feed into decision-making processes.

The report was launched in Baghdad on Saturday (November 27), during an event which brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from the Government and social partners, UN and development partners, and civil society organisations.

"The formalisation process is a long road, which requires all of society's efforts. With all the resources, both financial and human resources in Iraq, we are confident that this will be a successful road," said Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, UN Deputy Special Representative and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, during the event.

Findings from a second assessment examining more specifically the state of small-scale enterprises and vulnerable workers eight months into the COVID-19 pandemic were also presented, further highlighting the significant vulnerabilities resulting from high levels of informality in Iraq. It found that the vast majority of surveyed enterprises were economically and operationally affected by the pandemic and relevant containment measures, with many closing down and others being forced to adapt. This also had a direct effect on workers themselves: indeed a significant share of surveyed workers had faced temporary or permanent unemployment, a fall in their income, and a reduction in working hours. The high level of

informality entails that most of these affected enterprises and workers were not able to access government support to weather the economic impact of COVID, including due to the lack of social security coverage.

Both reports were developed in partnership between the Government, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Women, the European Union (EU), the Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research (Fafo) and the Cash and Livelihoods Consortium for Iraq (CLCI), which is comprised of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Oxfam.

They are part of efforts to promote a transition from the informal to the formal economy in Iraq.

"The evolving impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Iraq's labour market has highlighted the critical need to adequately address the underlying challenges faced by informal enterprises and workers in the economy," said the partners in a joint statement. "Through this collaboration, we seek to address the root causes of these challenges and find practical solutions that would pave the way for a transition to greater formality, which will ultimately lead to better working and living conditions for workers and their families."

## Giving young Iraqis the right skills for today's job market

**Kirkuk, 1 December 2021** - 300 young Iraqis who have completed a three-month on-the-job training have received six-month employment contracts.

After years of conflict and economic turmoil, young Iraqis have been severely affected by poverty and lack of jobs. In a country with over 2.5 million people unemployed, providing young people with the right skills for the job market can play a crucial role in tackling this challenge.

In partnership with Sahara Economic Development, UNDP Iraq organized an apprenticeship project that included a three-month on-the-job training. The project supported 300 young people in Kirkuk and Mosul. Of which, over one-third of the apprentices were women. UNDP collaborated with over 226 enterprises and private sector companies to link apprentices to local jobs.

Today, on completion of the training, all 300 young participants have successfully secured six-month full-time contracts with their employers based on their performance.

This shows that bridging the world of learning and work gives young people the opportunity to pick up the practical skills required by employers.

At the recent graduation ceremony held in Kirkuk and Mosul on 29 and 30 November, we spoke to them about their experience. Here is what they had to say.

Ola Amer, 26, was placed as an English at a coaching institute in Mosul: "My special message to young Iraqis. Never let go of your dreams. Keep exploring new ways to do business. We need to stay thirsty to keep learning and being innovative. I see no other for us to progress and build a better future for Iraq."

Difaf Salim, 24, was placed as a cashier at a grocery store in Kirkuk: "I learned about the apprenticeship opportunity while scrolling through social media. I picked up skills that were otherwise not taught to me during my university education. This included skills such as financial management, client relations and inventory keeping. I am happy to get this experience as it has prepared me better to enter the job market. I can confidently say that I am ready to build a promising career for myself." The project was implemented by UNDP's flagship programme, the Funding Facility for Stabilization, in partnership with Sahara Economic Development, thanks to generous funding by the Government of Canada. To date, over 90,000 people have received livelihoods support through the UNDP-led stabilization programme.

## 15 young Iraqis received an intensive training preparing them for work

**Baghdad, 10 December 2021** - Economic decline means that support for dignified, sustainable employment is more important than ever in Iraq, particularly for vulnerable groups like youth.

With support from the Government of Japan, the Toyota Iraq Corporation and IOM Iraq cooperated to hold a graduation ceremony celebrating the success of its traineeship programme in support of UN Sustainable Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals.

Through this unique collaboration, 15 young Iraqis (from Kirkuk, Baghdad, and Ninewa (11 men and 4 women) received a two- to three-month-long intensive training preparing them for work in one of two specialized fields: auto technician or contact staff.

This cooperation aims to provide Iraqi youth hands-on training that can address capacity gaps and equip them with transferable professional skills to



enable their success in the auto and sales industries.

“During the two months of the intensive training, we developed many skills not only professionally but also socially, as many of the participants were from different parts of Iraq and different specializations. The training covered many aspects of the automobile

industry, we gained a lot of experience in vehicle performance, inspections, administrative parts of car companies and how to communicate with customers. We feel very lucky for being selected and trained by such a professional staff,” said Baraa Yousif, electrical engineer and one of the trainees.

## Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and ILO launch activities to combat child labor in Iraq

**Baghdad, 19 December 2021** - The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the International Labor Organization kicked off a series of activities that support a nation-wide campaign to tackle the worst forms of child labor in the country.

The campaign, which will target over 10,000 children, their families and guardians, teachers, employers, and the media, includes awareness raising sessions in schools and districts where child labor is widespread and school drop-out is common.

A team composed of representatives and experts from the Ministry has been established to undertake the activities in Baghdad and other cities across the country, in efforts to highlight the increasing dangers of child labor and the importance of education.

“The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, under the supervision of His Excellency Minister Adel Al-Rikabi, has launched this campaign to combat the worst forms of child labor, in collaboration with the ILO and which is being implemented jointly with various partners including civil society organizations,” said Raed Jabbar Bahedh Director General of the Department of Labour and Vocational Training at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. “We are ready to cooperate with all entities involved in

this campaign to raise awareness on this important issue, among children and families but also among employers in sectors where child labor is most prevalent.”

The first visits took place at schools in Baghdad’s Sadr City, where leaflets, hats and T-shirts were distributed among young students and discussions were held to shed light on the importance of staying at school.

“In recent years, Iraq has witnessed an increase in child labor, including its worst forms, which has continued to interfere in children’s education, causing harm on many levels, including mental, physical and social,” said Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq. “For the ILO, tackling the worst forms of child labor is a critical priority

in Iraq and joining forces with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and social partners in this campaign will ensure that we spread awareness on the dangers and consequence on child labor to the heart of communities most affected by the rise of child labor in Iraq.”

Other activities will include workshops with the media and stakeholders on national and labor standards and practices related to child labor, and the production of a series of videos, radio and TV programmes to raise awareness among students, teachers, parents, and the general public on the role they can play in addressing child labor.

Iraq has ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which are central to the fight against child labor. In December 2019, the ILO signed and launched a Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in Iraq in partnership with the Government and social partners for the period 2019-2023. Under the programme, the ILO is working with government, worker and employer organizations to support national initiatives on employment promotion, rights at work, social dialogue and social protection, including developing an effective framework to address child labor.



## Children, journalists and local organizations say “No to Child Labor” in Iraq’s Kurdistan region



**Sulaimaniyah, 21 December 2021** - Young children at a school in Sulaymaniyah took part in awareness raising activities promoting education and highlighting the dangers of child labour in Iraq.

T-shirts, hats, balloons and leaflets were distributed among the young school children with the slogan “No to Child Labour”, to encourage them to better understand the dangers of child labour and the importance of staying at school.

Child labour has been on the rise in Iraq in recent years due to a combination of factors including armed conflict, displacement and economic challenges. The risk of children

entering the workforce has been further compounded by COVID-19, which has forced a growing number of children to drop out of school.

Located in an impoverished part of the city, the school brings together children from different socio-economic backgrounds, including those who have recently been pulled out of child labour and brought back to the classroom.

Najat, the school’s principle, explains that the main reason for school drop is largely linked to financial difficulties. “We have children who are doing well, and children who are extremely poor and who are often forced to drop out of school,” Najat said. “But in order for these children not to miss out on their

rights to an education, we, along with social workers and teachers, go to their homes and try to bring them back to the classroom, because children need to go to school and their rights must be protected.”

The event at the school is part of broader activities taking place across the country to raise awareness on the dangers of child labour and promote the importance of education among communities most affected by child labour.

Led by the ILO, the nation-wide campaign is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, as well as other national and social partners in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It is being rolled out across major cities including Baghdad, Basra, Diyala, Dohuk, Kirkuk, al Najaf and Ninewa.

The campaign is targeting more than 10,000 children, their families and guardians, teachers, employers, and the media through a series of activities. These include sessions for local journalists on national and international labour standards related to child labour and the role the media can play in shedding light on the plight of working children.

### Security Sector Reform

## Stronger forensic services: Iraq and UAE exchange forensic experience and knowledge

**Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 07 November 2021** - “Crime is rapidly advancing. We should aim to develop forensics and use new techniques and equipment that are important to analyze forensic evidence.”

Forensic evidence has an immense value in aiding criminal investigators, the police, and prosecutors, in bringing criminals to justice and solving crimes. In illicit trafficking and organized crime cases, forensic investigation can play a crucial role in providing and analyzing evidence for the adjudication of cases. For example, when suspicious powder or pills are seized from a certain crime scene, it is up to the forensic services in the laboratory to identify the composition of these substances and whether it is indeed a prohibited narcotic, not only that, but forensic services can also link these substances to other criminal cases,

track its sources and where it was manufactured, thereby helping authorities in capturing major criminal networks and not only the low-level dealers and users.

Considering the international component of illicit trafficking and organized crime and the continuous adaptability of methods criminal use to avoid detection, regional and international cooperation are key for an effective intervention. The need for knowledge exchange and cooperation between law-enforcement authorities in the region is crucial to tackle the issue in a comprehensive manner.

To counter that, Iraqi authorities have been enhancing their response and partnering with UNODC to enhance their capacities. As part of the project “Strengthening the Capacities of Iraqi Law Enforcement and Criminal Investigation Services (2020-2023),”

funded by the U.S. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), UNODC organized a study tour for nine Iraqi forensic experts to the Emirati forensic services. The Iraqi team was made of crime scene and narcotics forensic experts part of the Ministry of Interior



## Stronger forensic services: Iraq and UAE exchange forensic experience and knowledge *(continued)*

(MoI) and the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Some of the study tour's foreseen short-term and long-term achievements include the development of recommendations by the Iraqi delegation based on the outcome of the visit, the creation of a forensic networking channel focused on tackling criminal networks related to narcotics and psychotropic substances and the establishment of cooperation mechanisms for forensic intelligence and information exchange.

The tour was hosted by the General Department of Forensic Science and Criminology (GD-FRC) in Dubai, as this institution was previously noted by the Iraqi forensic services as one of the most significant key partners they envision collaborating with on the issue of countering illicit trafficking.

The Iraqi delegation, represented by Major-General Raheem Hashim Mohammed, thanked UNODC and

UAE for their efforts and noted that the "UAE and Iraq have a lot of mutual similarities and a shared vision for the future. Developing a strong expertise in forensics is crucial for our security forces to be able to face challenges that target our nation."

During the 4-day study tour, Iraqi participants exchanged experiences through case studies with their Emirati counterparts. Moreover, they were also able to visit specialized and relevant sections/departments of the GD-FRC.

As the senior pharmacist manager of the laboratories in the Iraqi Medical Legal Directorate (MLD), Dr. Zeinab Kareem Jaafar added that the scientific expertise does exist in Iraq, but the advanced equipment is missing as well as proper SOPs.

Dr. Jaafar highlighted that "Drugs' forensics is a broad field and not a routine one. It is not exclusive to men or women, in my opinion, but I believe women can have a better ability for

investigative work. As a matter of fact, in the MLD we have a lot of women in leadership positions as heads of departments."

In the final day, recommendations were developed by both the Iraqi delegation from the Ministries of Interior and Health regarding key steps for improving their forensics services, as well as possible future channels of exchange of knowledge and experience in forensic services between Iraq and the UAE.

Mr. Raheem affirmed that "Crime is rapidly advancing. We should aim to develop forensics and use new techniques and equipment that are important to analyze forensic evidence. Developing our capacities will be beneficial to the whole country. This visit is the main foundation for building a future for forensic services in Iraq, I'm confident this will enable us to counter illicit trafficking and organized crime more effectively."

## The standard operating procedures (SOP) for the referral mechanism for victims and survivors of gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking launched in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 7 November 2021** - As part of an ongoing commitment to strengthening Community Policing in Iraq, IOM held a ceremony in Baghdad in late October to launch the standard operating procedures (SOP) for the referral mechanism for victims and survivors of gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking.

These SOPs help to encourage coordination, accountability, and effective use of resources when providing protection services and assistance to vulnerable groups.

The event also provided an opportunity to share the terms of reference and organigram that have been developed to promote effective coordination and communication across all levels of

Community Policing, particularly the Strategic Centre for Community Policing (SCCP) and the National Advisory Forum (NAF).

The ceremony opened with a speech from Brigadier General Ghaleb Al-Attiyah, head of Community Policing in Iraq. The audience included law enforcement officers from across the

country, representatives from the SCCP and NAF, and heads of Community Policing Forums from different governorates.

This activity was made possible with support from the Government of the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Near East Affairs and the Government of the Netherlands.



## A Community Policing Forum established in Maysan Governorate's Al-Hussein Al-Askari neighborhood

**Baghdad, 11 November 2021** - In Iraq, long-term instability has deepened distrust between communities and law enforcement agencies, weakening the ability of law enforcement to protect public safety and diminishing community accountability.

IOM Iraq recently held a training course for 20 community members in Maysan

Governorate's Al-Hussein Al-Askari neighborhood. The five-day course dealt with the concept of community policing and formally established a Community Policing Forum, an open and inclusive platform where security issues affecting the community can be discussed to encourage joint problem solving. Forum members

were elected from among the participants in a democratic and transparent manner and will work closely with the Community Police to identify security and safety issues within the community and to propose and implement the best solutions.

This training course was supported by the Government of Germany.



## Community Policing in action takes many forms, including sports!

**Anbar, 18 November 2021** - IOM Iraq worked with the Qadisiyah Community Policing Forum and Community Police in Rawa District, Anbar Governorate, to hold two football tournaments to educate the community about the legal consequences of drug abuse and trafficking.

During the football tournaments, Community Police officers implemented an awareness campaign about the negative effects of drugs. This is a particularly important message for

young people who are most often targeted by drug dealers.

Outreach events like these football tournaments are one way that the Community Policing approach helps build trust between community members and law enforcement and find positive, inclusive solutions to safety and security issues.

These activities were made possible with support from the Government of the Netherlands.



## Joint special meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee on latest terrorism financing trends and threats, as well as the implementation of Security Council resolution 2462 (2019)

**New York, 22 November 2021**—“All around the globe, terrorists and terrorist groups continue to raise funds through a wide variety of means, including the abuse of legitimate enterprises and non-profit organizations; the exploitation of natural resources, donations, and crowdfunding; and a range of criminal activities.”, noted H.E. Mr. Tarek Ladeb, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tunisia to the United Nations and Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

On Thursday, 18 November 2021, the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee held a joint special meeting at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on “Terrorist-financing threats and trends and the implementation of Security Council resolution 2462 (2019)”.

The joint special meeting was held pursuant to paragraph 36 of resolution 2462 (2019), the first Council resolution exclusively devoted to preventing and suppressing the financing of terrorism. Held in hybrid format, the meeting was attended by representatives of Member States and a broad range of United Nations and other partners, including international and regional organizations and civil society organizations.

The discussions served to highlight numerous trends and evolving threats in the area of terrorism financing, including, inter alia, financing methods currently used by UN-designated terrorist organizations (e.g., the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Daesh, and Al-Qaida), as well as by other types of terrorists, including those motivated

by xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance; linkages between terrorism financing and transnational organized crime; abuse of new technologies and payment methods such as virtual assets and crowdfunding; the raising of funds for terrorist purposes through exploitation of natural resources; risks associated with the use of cash and money and value transfer services; and region-specific risks and vulnerabilities (presented by several FATF-Style Regional Bodies (FSRBs)). It was noted that, if States and relevant financial institutions do not understand the nature of current risks and threats, they cannot adequately prevent or respond to abuses for terrorism-financing purposes.

In her introductory remarks, Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), said, “If Member States are to keep pace with the rapid evolution in financial tools and terrorism-financing methods, there is an urgent need to enhance the specialized expertise of personnel engaged in handling increasingly complex cases that involve advanced investigation techniques and complex international cooperation mechanisms”. Mr. Edmund Fitton-Brown, Coordinator of the Analytical Support

and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, noted an emerging consensus that ISIL’s financial resources were depleted, although far from gone, adding that recent assessments put the group’s financial reserves at between \$25 million and \$50 million.

“An enduring concern are the thousands of ISIL fighters and their family members who remain in detention or in displaced persons camps in the region. Financial flows in and out of these facilities suggest that the risk of terrorism financing remains high”, he stated.

A concept note for the open meeting can be found at: [https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/18nov2021\\_jsm\\_cft\\_draft\\_conceptnote\\_0.pdf](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/18nov2021_jsm_cft_draft_conceptnote_0.pdf)

The agenda is available at:

[https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/cft\\_joint\\_special\\_meeting\\_18\\_nov\\_2021\\_final\\_agenda.pdf](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/cft_joint_special_meeting_18_nov_2021_final_agenda.pdf)

The full broadcast of the meeting is available at: <http://media.un.org/en/asset/k13/k13001n7dd>



## UNODC and the Government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG) address threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) through technical assistance to law enforcement, corrections, and justice sector



**Erbil, 29 November 2021** - With the participation of His Excellency KRG's Minister of Interior Rebar Ahmed, Her Excellency Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Ms. Kwestan Mohamed, and Director General of the Social Reformatory Department of KRG Mr. Ahmed Najmaddin, as well as Consul General of the United States of America in Erbil Mr. Robert Palladino, and UNODC International Programme Coordinators, as well as several high-profile international experts; The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) - Iraq launched the first Training workshop on the "Risks and Needs Assessment (RNA) Protocols in Prisons and the Related Sentence Planning, and Developing policies and protocols for the implementation and operation of a specified risk and needs assessment for terrorist and FTF prisoners" for the managers and staff of the prisons and reform centers under the jurisdiction of the Kurdistan Regional Government. This workshop is within the Framework of the Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighter Detention Programme (FTF) implemented by the UNODC Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA).

In his opening remarks, Mr. Ali El-Bereir, Senior Programme Coordinator and Head of UNODC Office in Iraq, warmly welcomed the Senior government officials, USA Consul General, participants as well as experts and stated that "The main purpose of this programme is to enhance capacities of partner government Ministries and Departments to manage threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) through providing technical assistance to the sector of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. He added that UNODC is working very closely with the Federal Government in Baghdad

and also the Kurdistan Regional Government, and has established strong cooperation based on shared objectives, priorities and mutual trust to implement this programme successfully across Iraq" and thanked the United States for their generous funding to this programme. Mr. EL-Bereir, highlighted the programme's aim to develop tailored and gender-sensitive strategies to address and counter-terrorist narratives within the prison system, consistent with national priorities, international humanitarian law and human rights law, as applicable and in accordance with relevant international law such as United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as (the Nelson Mandela Rules). On behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government, His Excellency, Mr. Rebar Ahmed, Minister of Interior expressed gratitude to UNODC and USA for this much needed support to strengthen relevant government departments' capacities to manage and mitigate the threats posed by the terrorist prisoners. Mr. Ahmed highlighted the difficulties and challenges posed by terrorist prisoners and the need for violent extremism prevention strategies and policies at prisons and reform centres. Minister Rebar expressed the government's full cooperation and openness to bring in international best practices and to benefit from the UNODC's technical expertise to enhance prison management systems in Kurdistan in line with the human rights laws and standards.

Furthermore, Ms. Kwestan Mohamed, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs delivered a remark and thanked UNODC for this initiative and technical assistance to the prisons and reform centres under her Ministry's mandate.

The Minister stated that the purpose of prisons needs to be changed from detention and punishment centres to rehabilitation and reform centres to help the offenders to heal and reintegrate into society after completion of their sentences.

"An integral part of the international community's efforts to counter terrorism and stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters is bringing perpetrators of terrorist acts to justice and holding them to account for their actions, in accordance with the rule of law and human rights", said Mr. Robert Palladino, Consul General of the United States in Erbil in his address to the audience and he added that since 2011, the United States has supported partners around the world by increasing awareness of humane terrorist prisoner management practices and helping them to institute reforms to address further radicalization of terrorists in prisons. This week's workshop is the first in a series of events designed to help Iraq manage and mitigate the security risk posed by terrorist and foreign terrorist fighter prisoners and to prevent radicalization to violence of other prisoners in its prison systems.

Mr. Torben Adams, UNODC International Programme Coordinator presented an overview about the objectives of the RNA and highlighted that in April this year, the United Nations system as a whole has developed and adopted a Common Position on Incarceration, with a common framework for UN support to the Member States on incarceration-related matters. The Common Position reiterates that prison systems around the globe continue to face fundamental challenges that undermine the ultimate purpose of a prison sentence. Instead of protecting society from crime and preventing re-offending by preparing prisoners for their social reintegration upon release, over-incarceration, prison overcrowding, neglect and abuse rather reinforce inequalities, exclusion and marginalization in many countries. He stated, "The Common Position firmly positions prison reform and the treatment of offenders as urgent justice and rule of law priorities, and as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's commitment to "leave no-one behind".

## Efforts of the Iraqi judiciary in prosecuting ISIL/Da'esh discussed

**New York, 07 December 2021** – The Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate discussed with H.E. Judge Raed Hameed, Commissioner of the Iraqi Federal Commission of Integrity, efforts of the Iraqi judiciary in prosecuting ISIL/Da'esh and explore ways in which Iraq can share its expertise with the Member States.



## IOM Iraq held a workshop for community members on principles of community policing

**Diyala, 08 December 2021** - Interventions are needed to help build trust and promote a collaborative relationship between communities and law enforcement in addressing security needs in Iraq.

In Balad Ruz district, Diyala Governorate, IOM Iraq held a workshop for community members on principles of community policing. Participants elected members to the Community Policing Forum – a platform where local leaders,

community members and police can work together to identify and resolve security issues – and learned best practices for its management. The workshop also addressed topics including gender and human rights, and the development and implementation of a community safety plan through community safety initiatives.

This workshop was supported by the Government of Canada.



## Joint efforts to combat corruption in Iraq

**Baghdad, 9 December 2021** –The fight against corruption requires collective action with the full participation of public authorities, the private sector, civil society, the media, and all citizens. It will be essential all actors coordinate and synergize their efforts to enhance effectiveness and achieve significant results for the country.

International Anti-Corruption Day is observed annually on 9 December since the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003. Attitudes on corruption are changing, as people worldwide stand publicly against corruption as never before.

Corruption affects all segments of society. Combatting corruption underpins progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, helps protect the environment, creates jobs and inclusive growth, increases gender equality, and supports access to essential, basic services such as education and healthcare.

The 2021 International Anti-Corruption Day seeks to highlight the obligations and responsibilities of all stakeholders – including states, government officials, law enforcement officers, media representatives, the private sector, civil society, academia, citizens, and youth –

in tackling corruption. The theme of the International Anti-Corruption Day 2021 is "Your right, your role: say no to corruption" to raise awareness about the effects of corruption in times of crisis and stress that recovery can only be obtained with integrity and accountability.

This year, the European Union Delegation to Iraq, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Iraqi federal and Kurdistan regional institutions united their efforts in the joint initiative entitled "Fostering justice to curb corruption and promote arbitration in Iraq" which was officially launched in May 2021. This project aims to bolster transparency and public accountability, supports Iraq to deliver on its national and international commitments concerning the fight against corruption, enhance the Iraqi legislative and strategic core for combatting corruption, support the justice sector to better process corruption offences, and foster and empower Iraqi civil society to take a more active role.

The Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq, H.E. Ville Varjola, affirms: "Accountable government lies at the heart of the European Union and our values. Today, on the International Anti-Corruption Day, we stand united

with the Iraqi people in its demand for transparency and good governance. Through this EU-funded initiative, we are working closely with the Iraqi government to respond to this call for change. To ensure the success of this project, I count on the strong ownership and engagement of the Iraqi state institutions and civil society alike."

"Anti-corruption efforts, alongside the promotion of more sustainable, inclusive forms of economic growth, are overwhelming public demands: by heeding these calls, Iraqi political leaders can help build lasting solutions for unrest and conflict," said the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano. UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, Ms Zena Ali Ahmed stressed: "We are encouraged that federal and KRI authorities have initiated measures to improve the public transparency of state institutions by opening discussion on federal and regional access to information legislations. The right to know is crucial in enabling citizens to actively take part in the fight against corruption."



## Community policing interventions can help build trust and promote a collaborative relationship between communities and law enforcement

Anbar, 13 December 2021 - As part of recovery efforts following the ISIL conflict, community policing interventions can help build trust and promote a collaborative relationship between communities and law enforcement in addressing security needs in Iraq.

Today, the first Community Policing Office with a Referral Guidance centre was inaugurated in Haditha, Anbar Governorate. The ceremony was attended by key figures in the community, and the local Community Policing Office, including: Brigadier-Abdulrazaaq Abdullah, Head of Community Policing in Anbar; Brigadier- Mohammed Abdulmajeed of the Police Command, Anbar; Brigadier Khlalil Rithaeye, Haditha Police Director; and Mabruk Hamid Mahidi,



Mayor of Haditha. The Community Policing Office is supported by IOM Iraq and the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

## First annual Community Policing Conference held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 15 December 2021 - Today, IOM Iraq held the first annual Community Policing Conference in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and supported by international partners, including the Governments of Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, the United States and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Safer societies are built on mutual trust between communities and law enforcement. In Iraq, this relationship has been damaged during years of conflict.

IOM has been working with the Government of Iraq to rebuild the relationship between communities and law enforcement since 2014, when it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Iraq's MoI to



strengthen and institutionalize the Community Policing model. At the local level, Community Policing Forums provide a platform where communities

and law enforcement can have open and inclusive dialogue, collaborating to address security risks, prevent conflict and mitigate crime.

## COVID-19 Pandemic



Baghdad, 26 October 2021 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, met with Dr. Hani Al-Eqaby, acting Minister of Health to finalize the last preparations for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign targeting the whole territory of Iraq.



Erbil, 7 November 2021 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, together with Dr. Saman Barzangy, Minister of Health of the Kurdistan Region, launched today the mass vaccination campaign against COVID-19 in Kurdistan. MoH Iraq, KR MoH and WHO Iraq aim to vaccinate 40% of the population in KRI and in Iraq before the end of 2021.

## Iraq launches nationwide vaccination campaign to scale up immunity against COVID-19



**Baghdad, 8 November 2021** - The World Health Organization (WHO), in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Health, today launched a national COVID-19 mass vaccination campaign covering all Iraq including the Kurdistan Region and targeting over 12 million people with children 12 years old and above.

The campaign which commenced today will last until December 31st 2021, and will certainly give momentum to the vaccine rollout process in Iraq to reach up to 40% vaccination coverage rate among the general population by end of this year.

“COVID 19 continues to be the biggest challenge of our time and we must all unite to overcome this devastating public health threat as no one is safe until we are all safe,” said Dr. Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq.

“WHO and the Ministry of Health in Iraq raised the challenge to vaccinate the maximum number of people possible to control the COVID-19 Pandemic as soon as possible, under the theme of “COVID19 Vaccine is a gateway to a normal life”. Vaccination has today come in a new outfit and will be delivered in easy-to-access sites, open for long working hours extending to the evening. There will be a lifesaving dose of immunity against this vicious disease for every Iraqi, no one should be left behind” Dr. Zouiten added.

This new external vaccination setting will witness the opening of more than 100 external mass vaccination sites distributed to the 18 Iraqi governorates based on the demographic situation, health indicators, and capacity of each governorate. The sites will further be supported by more than 225 vaccination and direct registration

teams deployed with the required daily supply of vaccine doses.

This new COVID-19 inoculation arrangement will support the health system in Iraq to maintain the routine immunization program which was significantly affected by the designation of the health facilities to the delivery of COVID-19 health care services in 2020-2021.

“The Ministry of Health in Iraq and WHO are happy to announce the launch of a massive COVID-19 vaccination campaign today,” said Dr. Riyadh Al Hilfy, Director General of the Public Health Directorate in the Iraqi Ministry of Health. “The campaign will target a vast majority of the vaccine eligible population in Iraq through external vaccination outlets with on-spot registration. Our short-term goal is to vaccinate a minimum of 40% of our people including our children aged 12yrs upwards.”



**Baghdad, 24 November 2021** - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, visited a Mass Vaccination Site in Al-Mustansiriyah Health Center alongside, Dr. Hani Al Eqabi, acting Minister of Health of Iraq, and Mr. Peter Felten, Chargé d’Affaires of the German Embassy in Iraq.

The Mass Vaccination campaign in Iraq is very successful as witnessed today.

“Vaccines are now available, and we urge our citizens to go get their jabs. Let’s stand by each other to overcome the difficulties resulting from this disease and bring life back to normal with our determination and the support of our partners,” Dr. Alhilfy added.

The vaccine rollout process in Iraq started in March this year accessing 15.1% of the total population with the first dose and only 9.0% with the two vaccine doses as of 6 November 2021. Committed to WHO global vision of scaling the vaccination coverage in all world’s countries to 40% by end of this year, the coverage rates in Iraq have raised the concern of the health authorities and WHO in Iraq and necessitated an urgent action to intensify the vaccination activities in an innovative and accessible to all approach.

“WHO would like to reiterate that we cannot end the pandemic without COVID-19 vaccines. We will stop this pandemic only when the majority of people in Iraq take the vaccine,” but vaccines should be complemented by public health and social measures. WHO calls upon citizens to seize the opportunity of direct vaccine administration to stay safe and keep our loved ones safe,” explained Dr. Zouiten.

WHO Iraq would like to express its gratitude to the German People and Government for their generous financial contribution which enabled the planning and the implementation of this remarkable event, the first of the kind in the region so far.

# 17,000 posters in six minority languages on COVID-19 awareness distributed across Iraq

**Baghdad, 18 November 2021** - Six Iraqi NGOs partnered with the UNAMI Human Rights Office to inform the minority communities of Iraq in their own language on the human rights impact of COVID-19, advocate adhering to the health protection measures and the need to get vaccinated. The tailored awareness-raising campaign over the last two months included the dissemination of 17,000 posters translated into six minority languages spoken in Iraq - Assyriac (Christian), Avesta (Zoroastrian), Kurmangi (Yazidi), Mandeian (Sabeian Mandeian), Turkmen (Turkmen) and Macho (Kaka'i). Posters were distributed by volunteer teams from the Christian (Etana Women Organization) Kaka'i (Methra Organization for Yarsan and Cultural and Development), Sabeian Mandeian (Yardana Charity Organization), Turkmen (Turkmen Rescue Foundation), Yazidi (Yazda NGO), and

Zoroastrian (Yesna Organization for Philosophy Affairs and Zoroastrian Religion) civil society organizations. The volunteers - 70 men and 51 women - fanned out, distributing posters at schools, hospitals, police stations, places of worship and public locations. In all, the campaign reached 67 city neighbourhoods and 12 remote villages in 25 districts across nine governorates which had not previously received awareness-raising material in their mother languages. In addition to disseminating key messages on COVID-19, the awareness-raising campaign had a mutually reinforcing effect of raising awareness about minority languages spoken in Iraq amongst local diverse communities, including those not familiar with the languages. The campaign builds on the ongoing awareness-raising efforts across the country in the Arabic language, and in Kurdish in the Kurdistan Region.



# IOM Iraq supports COVID-19 vaccination centers in various IDP camps in Iraq



**Baghdad, 29 November 2021** - In Iraq, hesitancy and refusal to get vaccinated against COVID-19 puts vulnerable populations like internally displaced persons (IDPs) especially at risk of contracting the virus. Thousands of Iraqi families still live in displacement camps across Iraq, primarily in Anbar, Ninewa and Duhok governorates. For many of these families, access to COVID-19 vaccination facilities is difficult. IOM

Iraq, in cooperation with the health authorities, has set up vaccination centers in Sheikhhan and Khanke camps in Duhok Governorate; Jeddah 5 camp in Ninewa Governorate; and Amriyat Al-Fallujah camp in Anbar Governorate to conduct a mass COVID-19 vaccination campaign. IDPs receive the first dose of the vaccine during the first round of the campaign, which started on 14 November and will end on the 30th.

The second round starts on 5 December and will last for two weeks, during which the beneficiaries will get their second dose of the vaccine. As part of a COVID-19 vaccination campaign launched in Amiriyat Al-Fallujah camp and the Bzebiz informal settlement area, IOM Iraq collaborated with the Department of Health (DoH) in Anbar Governorate to support multiple trainings for community mobilizers, DoH officials, community health workers and health promoters on engaging communities and communicating the information they need to make informed judgements about their health and safety regarding the vaccine. The teams mobilized partners and residents alike to raise awareness about the vaccination campaign by conducting door-to-door activities and small public gatherings to discuss concerns, answer questions and encourage vaccination. A total of 1,076 IDPs - or approximately 50% of the population above 18 - were vaccinated during the first round of the campaign. This activity is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

## Iraq receives almost 3 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine through COVAX



**Baghdad, 1 December 2021** – Over 2.9 million doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Iraq in November, bringing the total vaccines procured for this country through the COVAX Facility to over 6 million doses.

Vaccination rates in Iraq have recently been a priority of national health authorities, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and other health partners. As of 1 November, the vaccination services were significantly expanded across the country where over 120 external vaccination sites were set out Iraq-wide to target 12 million people including children aged 12 years and above. The local health authorities, WHO, UNICEF, and other health actors are collaborating on efforts to rapidly increase COVID-19 vaccination coverage by end of this year.

“The Ministry of Health of Iraq affirms the continuity of its efforts to provide vaccines procured through the COVAX Facility, of which Iraq is a partner, and

to increase the number of outlets to increase vaccine uptake in the shortest possible period. The Ministry would like to thank all our local and international partners for their efforts to make the vaccine accessible to all eligible recipients in Iraq,” said Iraqi Acting Minister of Health and Environment, Hani Mousa Badr Al-Akabi.

UNICEF, WHO and the Iraqi Ministry of Health have, moreover, intensified the vaccine uptake activities in the past few months, by building the capacity of the local delivery system in Iraq and engaging communities in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout process. Collaborative work on the timely procurement and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines is also ongoing, and more doses of WHO-approved vaccines are expected to arrive over the next few months.

“We welcome the arrival of these vaccines as they arrive at a time where Iraq is stepping up efforts to contain

the pandemic. This shipment is an important part of the continuing fight against COVID-19 in Iraq,” said UNICEF Representative in Iraq, Sheema SenGupta.

“We cannot end the pandemic without the vaccine. However, vaccines alone do not replace the need for public health and social measures; they complement them,” said Dr. Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq. “These recent vaccine shipments from COVAX are a step in the right direction in our joint quest to increase population immunity against COVID-19 in Iraq,” Dr. Zouiten added.

The COVAX Facility is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi and the World Health Organization (WHO), alongside key delivery partner UNICEF. Its aim is to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines, and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world. It is the only global initiative that is working with governments and manufacturers to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available worldwide.

These deliveries of BioNTech Pfizer vaccines to Iraq are another milestone towards the COVAX Facility’s goal on access. In addition to ensuring sufficient vaccine supply, partner agencies are working to ensure community awareness and provide support to vaccine administration by local health authorities. WHO, UNICEF, and other key health contributors are striving to end this pandemic in Iraq, and globally, as quickly as possible.

## IOM COVID-19 preventive measures discussed at a workshop



**Baghdad, 20 December 2021** – Dr. Ahmed Zouiten, WHO representative in Iraq, participated in the launch of a workshop organized by WHO Iraq and Iraqi Ministry of Health (MoH). The workshop brought together Shia and Sunni clerics in Iraq to discuss COVID-19 pandemic, including the preventive measures and the vaccination as gateways for controlling the pandemic in Iraq and globally.



## After years of destruction, vaccines bring hope to Mosul



The story of a father's commitment to vaccinate his baby for her healthy growth and development

By Asami Nei, UNICEF Iraq

**Mosul, 26 October 2021** - After the escalation of violence in Mosul, Iraq in 2014, over 60 health facilities came repeatedly under attack, severely disrupting access to basic health services for children and families. In 2018, as many as 750,000 children in Mosul and surrounding areas were struggling to access basic health services, even after the violence had subsided. Less than 10 per cent of health facilities in Ninewa Governorate were functioning at full capacity.

Saad and his family stayed in Mosul during the ISIS occupation of the area. "After ISIS left, the situation in Mosul returned to normal, but then COVID-19 hit. It made a lot of people lose their jobs and many closed their shops and markets, so all of this affected the economy in Mosul," says Saad. It also made it difficult to access health

services. But slowly, the health facilities are reopening and restoring hope among the people.

Among many families waiting in the overcrowded corridor at Al-Mithaq Health Center in Mosul, Saad and his wife Noor are in the hospital for the fifth routine vaccination of their baby, Sedra.

"We advise all the parents to stick to the vaccination schedule without any delay, because it is better to boost the immunity of the child. It also prevents diseases," says Saad.

To support the Government of Iraq's efforts to restore health services in the areas retaken from ISIS, UNICEF and its partners have been supporting primary health care facilities to provide important health services, so that children and families can remain healthy and rebuild their lives. This includes providing equipment for and supporting training on good quality antenatal and postnatal care, growth monitoring and nutrition counselling, promotion of breastfeeding practices, and funding the provision of routine immunization for displaced persons and refugees. UNICEF also supports the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines in Iraq, through training of vaccinators, risk communication and community engagement, supplies procurement and improving access to the vaccine for remote families.

While Saad is waiting for his baby's

turn, he takes out the vaccination form and shows the vaccination schedule for Sedra. "Now we have access to health services. When we go to the health center, they give us a schedule which includes the vaccination dates in it." Saad again explains the importance of sticking to the vaccination schedule: "When your children go to school, they need to have this schedule with them as proof of the vaccines received. It is so important; we will continue all her vaccinations until she becomes six."

In order to ensure routine vaccination for children like Sedra and support COVID-19 vaccination, with funding from the Japanese Government, UNICEF and its partner Peace Winds Japan have built temperature-controlled warehouses to store vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, in Mosul and in nearby Dohuk. The health center which Saad is attending stands next to the newly built vaccine warehouse in Mosul.

The warehouse will contribute to strengthen the effective management of Iraq's vaccine supply chain. Families like Saad's will be able to benefit from the warehouse soon. This should reflect positively on vaccine availability and effectiveness for both routine vaccination and COVID-19 vaccines.

"Noor and I have also registered our names and we are waiting to be informed when to take the COVID-19 vaccine", says Saad.



### 4th Iraqi International Hypertension Conference started in Erbil

**Erbil, 04 November 2021** - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, and Dr. Saman Barzangy, Minister of Health of the Kurdistan Region, opened today 4th Iraqi International Hypertension Conference in Erbil.

It was an opportunity to partner with public and private associations to implement a strategy aimed at reducing by 25% the burden of hypertension in Iraq by 2025.



### Panel discussion on diabetes organized on the occasion of World Diabetes Day and International Children's Day

**Baghdad, 24 November 2021** - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, attended today a panel discussion on diabetes organized by the Media and Communications Commission on the occasion of World Diabetes Day and International Children's Day under the title "Together.. for children with diabetes". Representative of the World Health Organization and the Ministries of Health, Culture, Tourism and Antiquities were also present.



## Qayara General Hospital was inaugurated today!

**Qayara, 14 November 2021** - UNDP is excited to announce that the Qayara General Hospital was inaugurated today!

The hospital was only four months old when ISIL captured Qayara, and it suffered extensive damages. Equipment was stolen and infrastructure destroyed.

Today, it is a much more spacious and purpose-built health facility that serves over 200,000 Iraqis in Ninewa. This 110-bed hospital is the largest health facility between Mosul and Tikrit.

The rehabilitation was implemented by UNDP in Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization, thanks to the programme's largest donor USAID.



## Fighting tuberculosis in Iraq



**Baghdad, 08 December 2021** - Interrupted access to treatment and substantial damage to public health infrastructure caused by years of conflict mean that international support is crucial to reducing tuberculosis (TB) in Iraq.

Maher Fawwaz from Anbar Governorate: "I'd had symptoms of TB but did not expect it to be that, as I'd recovered from a TB infection before. However, my health continued to get worse until I was visited by IOM Iraq's health team, which conducted an initial screening and transferred me to a chest and respiratory infection center to proceed with necessary tests. It turned out to be multidrug-resistant TB.

I got frustrated and depressed that my life would change and that I would lose my job, which did happen. My mental health went down to hell, but I thank God and the IOM staff who were my primary supports and who have had a big impact on me leaving this distress. The staff provided me psychological and counselling support and encouraged me to continue taking the medication on time and not skip it until

my full recovery – which took almost a year and a half – in consultation with a specialist because that is the only way to get rid of this disease. I'd also like to thank the National TB center for their unlimited support.

I am grateful to IOM staff for their continuous follow-up and visits, for providing me transportation to undergo tests, and also for delivering my medication. These efforts resulted in my complete recovery and return to normal life, which I had lost at the beginning of my infection."

In Iraq, refugees and internally displaced persons are especially vulnerable to tuberculosis (TB), the world's number 1 infectious killer.

Azad Abdeljabbar Maho, 23, is a Syrian refugee living in Domiz Camp, Duhok Governorate. When IOM Iraq's TB team conducted a field screening in the camp, it found that Azad showed signs and symptoms of a TB infection.

On 25 January 2021, the team transferred him to a TB centre in Duhok, where he was examined by Dr. Abdelrahman Rikani. Dr. Rikani conducted all necessary tests and x-rays, confirming that Azad was indeed positive for TB.

His treatment began on 15 February 2021. Throughout Azad's journey to recovery, IOM Iraq's medical team in Duhok provided follow-up visits and regularly transported him to the TB centre to undergo screenings and bi-weekly tests and treatments.

Azad's last visit to the centre was on 15 August 2021 where, after half a year of

continuous treatment, the doctor confirmed his full recovery.

Assistance is needed to detect, diagnose and treat Tuberculosis (TB) cases in Iraq.

As part of its support to Iraq's National Tuberculosis Program (NTP), IOM recently provided 4 X-ray machines to the National Institute for Tuberculosis and Respiratory Disease in Baghdad and Basra. IOM Iraq works in coordination with the Ministry of Health to support the NTP by providing technical and operational support to implement its anti-TB strategy across the country, bolstering the NTP's ability to detect and follow-up confirmed TB cases among internally displaced persons and host communities.

IOM Iraq also provides the NTP with laboratory consumable items and medicines for treatment, as well as monitoring, evaluation and reporting capacity to better understand the impact of its programming and inform decision-making.

IOM's efforts toward the elimination of TB in Iraq are made possible with support from the Global Fund.



## WHO and Ministry of Health discuss the Universal Health and Preparedness Review in Iraq

**Baghdad, 09 December 2021** - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, met with Dr. Hani Mousa Al-Eqabi, acting Minister of Health of Iraq, to discuss the Universal Health and Preparedness Review in Iraq. Reviewing the response to COVID-19 is the first step to ensure preparedness for all health hazards in Iraq.



## Role of media in saving lives through providing the right information workshop

Baghdad, 19 December 2021 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO representative in Iraq, launched the first training workshop for the media professionals in Iraq that explored the role of media in saving lives through providing the right information. Right information in public health is almost as important as the precious work of doctors and nurses.



## Family Planning

### National Population Policy reviewed by an expert group

Baghdad, 31 October 2021 - The Ministry of Planning of Iraq with support from UNFPA held an expert group meeting for reviewing the National Population Policy.

The Minister of Planning, Dr Khalid Batal, Deputy Minister of Planning, Dr Maher Jouhan, and 15 national experts discussed the emerging demographic

trends and their impact on economic and social development, and ensure that the human rights and multi-sectorial approach are implemented while updating the policy.

The new Population Policy will provide strong foundation for achieving SDGs and the ICPD Programme of Action.



## Mental Health

### UNDP and WHO support the Iraqi Ministry of Health and National Security Advisory to provide mental health and psychosocial support training toward reintegration

Baghdad, 30 November 2021 – Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services for IDPs and returnees will be reinforced thanks to a new training workshop organized by the United Nations Development Programme in Iraq (UNDP), the World Health Organization in Iraq (WHO), the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the National Security Advisory.

Experts from the World Health Organization and Ministry of Health developed and delivered the specialized training at a workshop in Baghdad from 14-16 November for 25 members of Iraqi government ministries. Sessions focused on the context of mental health in Iraq, understanding psychological first aid, mental health in the face of crises, understanding adversity and stress, and effective communication skills.

Trained representatives will provide Mental Health and Psychosocial Support to returnees to support their smooth reintegration back into their communities, building on UNDP Iraq's community-based reconciliation and reintegration programming that aims to ensure the safe and dignified return and reintegration of Iraqis displaced by the conflict with the Islamic State and the Levant (ISIL).



“UNDP is committed to ensuring no one is left behind in Iraq. Supporting the mental health of both returnees and members of communities of return is a vital part of our programming to implement durable solutions for return and reintegration towards peace and social cohesion in Iraq,” says UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad.

WHO representative Dr. Ahmed Zouiten states that, “Mental health is an integral part of health, and surely Universal Health Coverage will never be achieved without special attention to mental health issues. In Iraq, the demand for mental health services is on the rise amid the COVID-19 pandemic and due to the displacement crises and the subsequent humanitarian situations impacting some areas of the country. This joined training

is a step in the right direction to scale up mental health and psychosocial support where it is most needed.”

Saeed Al Jayashi, Strategic Advisor, Office of the National Security Advisor, emphasizes, “This training targets the team that is formed from different government entities, based on the direction of the prime minister. We are optimistic that this training will increase the skills and understanding of team members and build their capacities to offer MHPSS to both returnees and displaced families.”

Dr. Emad Abdulrazzaq, National Advisor for Mental Health, Iraqi Ministry of Health, states, “This training is important to capacitate this team and provide quality assurance for mental health and psychosocial support services for those who will return to their communities. Government ministries need to provide support to this stigmatized population so they can return to their places of origin and regain well-being.”

In 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a dedicated five-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq, supported by the governments of Denmark, Germany, Japan, and the Netherlands.

## An event celebrating Women in Mine Action held in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** - The United Nations Mine Action Service, the Directorate for Mine Action, and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq organized today in Baghdad an event celebrating Women in Mine Action.

“The greatest challenge about becoming a female deminer in Iraq, was telling my family about it...” It is powerful women like Samaa that courageously work for an Iraq free of mines and unexploded ordnance.

The attendees were greeted by Ambassador Michel Rentenaar, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Iraq, and Pehr Lodhammar, Chief Mine Action Programme, UNMAS in Iraq.

Following a screening of a short movie “Recovering from Da’esh: Women at the



Front Lines” a discussion with female mine action field staff on the socio-

economic empowerment of women through mine action was held.

## UNMAS Iraq continues clearance operations across Iraq

**Baghdad, 15 December 2021** - All over the retaken areas, a significant number of residential units are still contaminated with explosive ordnance, inhibiting the safe return of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs). After completing its work in the Saray market, UNMAS Iraq began clearance operations in the Adnaniyah residential complex, located nearly 15 km south of Mount Sinjar.

“My house is uninhabitable. The furniture of my house is scattered under the rubble, and are perhaps contaminated with explosive ordnance,” said Jassim, one of the original residents of Adnaniyah.

UNMAS Iraq also recently commenced its clearance of the Al Jinan Housing Complex in Hay Al-Ameen, Fallujah. Clearance of the area will support the

local government to continue its work on the site, thus providing affordable housing to hundreds of locals.

The work on the complex initially started in 2012 as part of the Fallujah Civil Development Plan, which was halted and destructed by the Islamic

State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014.

Clearance of the area has provided economic and livelihood opportunities to more than 500 locally-recruited employees in addition to hundreds of small business suppliers.



## UNMAS Iraq, with generous support from donors, is clearing the agricultural lands and is providing awareness to the citizens of villages

**Baghdad, 17 December 2021** - The farmers of Kani Shirin, a small village in Tal Kaif, located north of Mosul, are suffering from severe contamination in their agricultural lands. The uncertainty and fear of explosive ordnance contamination is affecting them both psychologically and in their day-to-day activities.

UNMAS Iraq, with generous support from donors, is clearing the agricultural lands and providing awareness to the citizens of these villages. Kani Shirin is one of the many areas UNMAS Iraq is providing clearance and explosive ordnance risk education support.



## A grant agreement allocated for financing the improved resilience to transboundary sand and dust storms in Kuwait and Iraq project signed



**Kuwait City, Kuwait, 27 October 2021** - A Grant Agreement was signed today between the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UNHabitat) and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (the Fund) by which the Fund will contribute the sum of Kuwaiti Dinars 4 million (equivalent to U.S.\$ 13.2 million) to finance the Improved Resilience to Transboundary Sand and Dust storms in Kuwait and Iraq Project, which will be administered by UNHabitat. The grant is expected to cover the entire cost of the project.

The Grant Agreement was signed by United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Program Excellency Maimunah Mohd Sharif, and by Mr. Marwan A. Th. AlGhanem, Director-General of Kuwait Fund.

The Project aims to identify the main

causes that lead to the formation of sand and dust storms in terms of climatic, geological, and chemical factors, and provide solutions in the areas suffering from these storms. This will be achieved through analysis of information using specialized programs to obtain results that help to carry out fieldwork to mitigate the negative effects of these storms. The main components of the project are:

- Prepare Technical, Economical and Health indicators, and procurement documents for goods and services
- Physical intervention and fieldworks
- Monitoring and analysis of results
- Securing project sustainability

The Fund's contribution is an expression of its developmental and humanitarian commitment to address the devastating effects of environmental imbalances, including

the increased phenomenon of sand and dust storms and their negative impacts on public health and the economy of the affected areas, specifically on the State of Kuwait. This project is also considered the culmination of the continued joint efforts and bilateral cooperation between the UNHabitat and the State of Kuwait.

The project will help reduce the amount and number of occurrences of sand and dust storms in two specific areas, Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces in the Republic of Iraq, which are located about 250 kilometers north of the Kuwaiti border, and contribute to about 40% of the total amount of sand and dust falling on the state of Kuwait. The Positive results that are expected from the project will establish a proven methodology that can be utilized to mitigate the sand and dust storms in this region and similar phenomena in other parts of the world. Moreover, the project will directly contribute to maximizing regional efforts in achieving a set of sustainable development goals, most notably the eleventh goal on creating sustainable cities and local communities, the thirteenth goal on expanding the scope of measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and the seventeenth goal on strengthening global partnerships and cooperation in achieving development goals.

## COP 26 in Glasgow: Iraq's preparations underway

**Baghdad, 28 October 2021** - Urgent climate action is at the top of the Government of Iraq's agenda, and UNDP is supporting the country to prepare for upcoming climate negotiations at this year's COP26.

From rising temperatures and intense droughts to declining rainfall, desertification and salinization, Iraq faces many challenges as a result of climate change, making the country's presence at COP26 most critical.

To prepare the Iraqi delegation for the conference, UNDP held a series of workshops for 40 representatives from several government ministries in Iraq including Environment, Agriculture, Oil, Industry, Treasury and Foreign Affairs, as well as representatives from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The workshop covered topics like the COP26 agenda and areas of negotiation for Iraq.

UNDP has supported delegations to COP since COP21 in 2015 where 196 parties adopted the Paris Agreement, which Iraq signed in 2016 and ratified this year. Since then, UNDP has supported the Government in fulfilling its commitments under this landmark Agreement, including the development of Iraq's Nationally Determined Contributions – national climate plans that highlight climate actions, including targets, policies and activities to respond to climate change.

What the participants say  
 "Iraq is one of the five most fragile countries in the world affected by climate change. As a result, we play an important role in climate action, not only nationally, but also regionally and internationally. We are working to uphold our commitments under the Paris Agreement and I believe that Iraq's climate change initiatives and

the increase in ambitions will enhance Iraq's negotiation for delegates, leading to levels we haven't reached before." - Dr. Jassem Alfalahi, Acting Environment Minister

"Our presence at COP is critical. Iraq is negatively impacted by climate change – we must take certain measures that limit greenhouse gas emissions, and we can do this by working together across various government ministries to reach Iraq's ambitious climate goals and targets." - Ms. Bushra Abdul Majeed Ahmad, Director General, Ministry of Industry.

"This workshop is important for the Kurdistan Region, we rely on technology and international expertise to help achieve climate action in all sectors, such as agriculture. This training will help us implement more initiatives aimed to combat climate change alongside the United Nations

## COP 26 in Glasgow: Iraq's preparations underway *(continued)*

and in line with international standards.” - Mr. Azad Nuri Awla, Director of Technical Affairs, Environmental Protection Authority in Kurdistan Regional Government.

What is COP 26?

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international environmental treaty addressing climate change and the Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention.

All signatories to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments adopted by the COP and take decisions necessary to effectively implement the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements. The COP meets every



year, unless the Parties decide otherwise.

Why is it important?

The COP is an opportunity for world leaders to come together to discuss the global response to the climate crisis, holding world leaders accountable to the commitments they made under the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 2C (ideally 1.5C).

Why is urgent climate action necessary

in Iraq?

The impact of climate change in Iraq – a country that has suffered decades of conflict – create barriers to the country's development, hampering efforts to decrease poverty, boost livelihoods and reduce conflict over natural resources. Productive sectors like agriculture – which is the major source of income for many farmers in Iraq – are severely affected.

## UNICEF calls for urgent action to address water scarcity and its impact on children and young people's lives in Iraq ahead of COP26

**Baghdad, 1 November 2021** – Children and young people in Iraq are the most at risk of the impacts of climate change especially water scarcity, threatening their health, education, and protection, and exposing them to deadly diseases. Ahead of COP26, UNICEF calls for urgent action to address water scarcity and its impact on children's and young people's lives in Iraq.

According to UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index, released in August this year, Iraq ranks 42nd among the most water stressed countries globally. Projections for 2030 and 2040 in a Business as Usual Scenario suggest an extremely high-water stress index score worsening the situation of children in the country.

Children and young people are at medium-high climate risk in Iraq, with vulnerable groups and certain regions of the country at a higher risk. The climate crisis is a child rights crisis. It poses an unprecedented threat to the development, survival, and potential of all children and young people, everywhere in Iraq. It represents an absolute injustice to the next generation.

Ambitious, comprehensive, and urgent action is needed for every girl and boy in Iraq to have a chance at a better future unhindered by the violence of climate change.

UNICEF is encouraged that a high level delegation from the Government

of Iraq, including representatives from young people, will participate at COP26 and pledges support for action beyond this meeting to put in place tangible measures to address the multiple threats posed by climate change in Iraq.

UNICEF is therefore calling on the federal and regional governments, businesses and relevant duty bearers in Iraq to:

1. Increase investment in climate adaptation and resilience in key services for children and young people. To protect them, communities and the most vulnerable from the worst impacts of the already changing climate, critical services must be adapted, including water, sanitation and hygiene systems, health and education services.

2. Provide children and young people with climate education and skills, critical for their adaptation to

and preparation for the effects of climate change. Children and young people will face the full devastating consequences of the climate crisis and water insecurity, yet they are the least responsible. We have a duty to all young people and future generations.

3. Promote meaningful civic engagement of young people on climate change and include young girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable in all national, regional and international climate negotiations and decisions, including at COP26 future meetings. Children and young people must be included in all climate-related decision making and their voices must be heard and taken into account.

4. Ensure the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is green, low-carbon and inclusive, so that the capacity of future generations to address and respond to the climate crisis is not compromised.



## Iraq is the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change

**Glasgow, United Kingdom, 07 November 2021** - Iraq is the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, making Climate Action so important in order to protect biodiversity, crops and livelihoods.

Here at COP26 World Food Programme (WFP) delegates met with the Iraqi Environment Minister, Jassim Abdul Aziz al-Falahi, to discuss climate resilience and adaptation.

Iraq has presented its so-called "Nationally Determined Contributions" to the United Nations — the goals that nations set voluntarily to reduce the effects of climate change, including carbon emission reduction targets. Iraq has proposed a reduction of up to 15 percent in carbon emissions by 2030,

dependent on support from the international community.

Iraq also ratified the Paris Climate Agreement this year. This is "an important step," he said, saying that the Cabinet has supported moves

towards carbon reductions and use of green technologies to reduce the impact of climate change on Iraq. Nevertheless, he acknowledges a lack of interest in the urgency of the climate crisis among many other Iraqi officials.



## As COP26 negotiations conclude, call for urgent climate action in Iraq is louder than ever



**Baghdad, 14 November 2021** – The United Nations in Iraq has welcomed commitments made at COP26 in Glasgow but stresses the need for urgent action on these promises to limit climate change's adverse impacts on human rights and sustainable development in Iraq.

Commitments made at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference – attended by a Government of Iraq high-level delegation from representatives of the ministries of Environment, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Higher Education, Industry and Oil, as well as representatives from the private sector – include:

- The announcement of an additional \$US356 million to the Adaptation fund which will increase the resilience of vulnerable communities on the frontline of climate change. This stronger commitment paves the way for greater resources to avert, minimise and address loss and damage in Iraq.

- The Breakthrough Agenda, an international strategy to deliver clean and affordable technology everywhere by 2030, signed by more than 40 world leaders. This commitment is critical to

helping Iraq's gradual energy transition and accelerating low carbon solutions.

- The Global Forest Finance Pledge, a commitment to end deforestation by 2030 will help Iraq scale up its forest conservation efforts, facilitate trade to promote sustainable development and increase rural employment opportunities.

- A commitment to improving transparency and environmental integrity through the implementation of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on international emissions trading. Iraq fully supports an independent mechanism to redress potential harms and support the creation of new markets for carbon unit trading by both public and private sectors.

Additionally, the Glasgow Climate Pact cites several areas of cooperation relevant to Iraq, including the need to boost funding for diverse climate technologies and a stronger commitment to capacity building.

"Iraq is a country vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change – one of the most vulnerable in the region and indeed the world. We are grateful to the United Nations Development Programme

in Iraq for its ongoing support to climate action in Iraq, and for supporting the delegation to this important conference," says Iraq's Acting Minister for Environment, Dr Jassem Al-Falahi.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Iraq and Resident Coordinator Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano emphasises the UN in Iraq's commitment to urgent action on climate change.

"Climate Change in Iraq is a severe threat to fundamental human rights and creates barriers to sustainable development. Across the UN system in Iraq, we are working on the key components of climate action – from awareness-raising and adapting to climate change, to mitigating its risks. With COP26 now done and dusted, we urge world leaders to make good on their promises, many which are critical to supporting a cleaner, safer and greener Iraq," she says.

Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad acknowledged UNDP's role in supporting the COP26 delegation and Iraq's formal submission of its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) – the country's central policy for driving climate action.

"UNDP Iraq was proud to support the Government of Iraq's formal submission of its NDCs, as well as assisting the delegation to COP26 to ensure Iraq's needs were firmly placed on the global agenda. Our support to the country's fight against climate change does not end with COP26, and we look forward to continuing our work with the Government, UN partners, the international community and others to implement Iraq's NDCs and turn the conference outcomes into tangible actions," she says.

## As Iraq joins Paris Agreement, UN calls for further support to help the country adapt

**Baghdad, 1 December 2021** - As Iraq becomes a Party to the Paris Agreement, the United Nations in Iraq is calling for solidarity with and support to people in Iraq in their efforts to confront climate change.

Traditionally known as “the land between two rivers” or Mesopotamia, lush and fertile, Iraq is increasingly experiencing extreme climate events, compounding environmental fragility and water scarcity. The river basin has seen the second lowest rainfall in 40 years, with effects being felt across the region. With dams being built in neighbouring countries, the water flow in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Iraq has dropped by 29% and 73% respectively. The harsh impact of climate change threatens food security, the loss of livelihoods and progress on gender equality. It poses a threat to the full enjoyment of human rights, in particular for groups and persons in the most vulnerable situations. The impact of climate change also contributes to driving internal displacement and precarious migration. Women, children and young people are bearing the brunt in this worsening situation.

Following COP26 and furthering its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Iraq is taking steps to shift towards a greener economy, including by bolstering investment in natural gases and allocating 12 gigawatts of renewable energy. The Government of Iraq, with UNDP support, finalised its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) report that addresses mitigation and climate change adaptation. Under the NDC – the umbrella policy for climate change work in the country – Iraq will voluntarily cut 1-2% CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent emissions from industry, and open a window for US\$100 billion investment in green economy, from both the private and public sectors over the next 10 years. At COP26, Iraq focused on the NDC to promote sustainable development and ensure environmental integrity and transparency.

Such developments are positive, but the world’s continued support is still needed. For the coming 2021-22 crop season, drier conditions are again foreseen for most of the region, consistent with the patterns of La Niña. The Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture estimated that wheat and barley production in northern parts of the country – which are mainly rainfall dependent – could be 70% lower. In October 2021, in line with these predictions, the Ministry of Agriculture decided to reduce the annual areas for planting by 50%, in consultation with the Ministry of Water Resources.

The destruction of households and livelihoods, and the loss of livestock and crops due to water scarcity, have become a reality for those communities that are the hardest hit by climate change. Limited access to markets due to intermittent movement restrictions imposed in relation to COVID-19, higher fodder and equipment



prices since the 18% devaluation of the Iraqi dinar, and low rainfall are also affecting livestock farmers due to reduced grazing areas and availability of fodder crops.

In the northern governorates of Ninewa and Salah al-Din, which are the worst-affected by lack of rainfall, WFP’s analysis identifies that the levels of insufficient food consumption and the use of negative coping strategies such as borrowing money or eating less food among households, are almost double the national average. The two governorates are home to 2.5 million people who returned home after years of displacement: constituting more than half the returnees in Iraq.

A recent study by IOM highlights the climate-induced migration of rural, agricultural populations to the southern city of Basra in search of other work opportunities. Further challenges are facing those migrating in the context of climate change and trying to settle into complex new environments with potentially limited financial and social capital, which may impact their ability to access services and claim their rights. The southern cities continue to struggle with economic security and governance and may not be well prepared to absorb influxes of migrants.

A population analysis report by UNFPA shows that ongoing migration has led to an imbalanced population distribution with nearly 70% of people living in urban areas, which negatively affects the agricultural development. Women and girls are expected to travel longer distances to collect water, exposing them to higher risks of gender-based violence. The loss of livelihoods can lead to increases in child marriage and teenage pregnancies, and disputes between communities. According to UNICEF’s Children’s Climate Risk Index, children and young people are at medium-high climate risk in Iraq, with groups in vulnerable situations and certain areas of the country at higher risk.

Iraq has the highest annual population growth rate in the region at 2.8% and a working-age population of 57%. Now is the time for the international community to support Iraq in harnessing its potential for

sustainable growth, advancing progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, tackling the climate crisis, upholding its human rights obligations to prevent the foreseeable adverse effects of climate change – and to adapt to those that are already happening - on all of Iraq’s diverse communities, and providing a decent life for its population.

Both before and following COP26, the UN is supporting Iraq in mitigating and adapting to climate change, through the design of sustainable projects that focus on livelihoods creation and medium and long-term development, that promote investments in efficient water and wastewater infrastructure, irrigation and the management of water consumption, as well as the use of renewable energy such as solar power. The UN is also working with the government on training, skills development and strengthening capacity to tackle climate change. Advocacy efforts are raising public awareness on the topics of water consumption and sustainable water management.

Yet the country’s economic situation remains unstable. For communities in vulnerable situations, a vast majority of whom rely on agriculture, fishing and livestock to subsist, climate change is one more layer of stress they cannot afford to bear alone.

Galvanized by the Paris Agreement, the government and humanitarian-development community need to respond now and in collaboration with public and private partners, civil society, women, youth, migrants, displaced people and affected communities, to invest in solutions and improve prospects for long-term food security, prevent the magnification of socioeconomic challenges, and by using a human rights-based approach, ensure that the impact of climate change on people in Iraq, particularly those in the most vulnerable situations, can be cushioned. We must support the country to continue to take action to manage its own natural resources, starting with water, investment in technological innovation such as the use of renewable energy and allocating sufficient resources to sustainable solutions.

## Iraqi Minister of Culture at UNESCO General Conference



**Paris, 17 November 2021** – During UNESCO General Conference, UNESCO Director-General, Ms. Audrey Azoulay met with the Iraqi Minister of Culture, Hassan Nadhem,



and Head of State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Dr. Laith Hussein, and the UAE Ambassador to UNESCO, Salem Al Qassim. The United Arab Emirates is a significant contributor

toward reviving the city of Mosul and continually ensures capacity building of Mosul's on ground.

As part of UNESCO ongoing support to Revive the Cultural Life in Mosul (funded by the European Union) at a panel discussion, Minister Nadhem and UNESCO ADG for Culture, Ernesto Ottone, spoke on the revival of cultural life at Mosul. UNESCO's implementing partners also participated -The Station on cultural and creative industries, Action for Hope on music and NTGent on film and theatre.

During the day Ernesto Ottone, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture Sector, met with the Iraqi Minister of Culture, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Head of State Board of Antiquities and Heritage.

## 9 heritage houses in the Old City of Basra selected for restoration

**Basra, 27 November 2021** - Local authorities in Basra, in consultation with UNESCO Iraq Office, identified heritage houses in the Old City, of which 9 are to be restored within the "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project, in partnership with the European Union.



## IOM Iraq presented the National Assessment of Cultural Industries in Iraq at the Cultural Museum in Basra

**Basra, 1 December 2021** - Iraq's economy continues to face many challenges created by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) conflict, COVID-19 and other factors. These challenges have made it more difficult for small and medium enterprises to access financial services and hire new workers. This is especially true in the

case of traditional and cultural industries.

Today, IOM Iraq presented the National Assessment of Cultural Industries in Iraq at the Cultural Museum in Basra. The assessment, which identified main industries with high potential for expansion and job creation, is a first step to rolling out a series of grants for

businesses in cultural industries. The workshop provided the opportunity for stakeholders to comment and provide recommendations on additional promising cultural and creative industries in and around Basra.

This activity was supported by European Commission - Development & Cooperation – EuropeAid.

## UNESCO's initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" presented at EXPO 2020

**Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 6 December 2021** – While in Dubai, to attend EXPO 2020 and World Conference on the Creative Economy, Ms. Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General, attended a film presenting UNESCO's Initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul", of which UAE has been UNESCO's main partner from day 1. UNESCO's mobilization for Mosul will continue.





## UNESCO Iraq to start renovation of the Charsteen Cave

**Dohuk, 8 December 2021** – UNESCO Iraq and a high-level European Union delegation visited the Charsteen Cave in Dohuk before the inception of the renovation works implemented by UNESCO within the “Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development” project, by EU Madad Fund.



## Latest developments in the work of the UAE-UNESCO project under the ‘Revive the Spirit of Mosul’ initiative discussed in Dubai

**Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 21 December 2021** – Ms. Noura Al Kaabi, UAE Minister of Culture and Youth, in a meeting with Mr. Nicolas Kassianides, the Director of the Cabinet of UNESCO Director-General, and Mr. Paolo Fontani, Director of UNESCO Office in Iraq, in the presence of H.E Hassan Nadhem, Iraqi Minister of Culture and Tourism, discussed the latest developments in the work of the UAE-UNESCO project under the ‘Revive the Spirit of Mosul’ initiative.

The meeting also shed light on the steps taken and upcoming milestones towards the reconstruction and



rehabilitation of historical and religious monuments in Mosul and which aims

to restore Mosul’s cultural and civilizational heritage.

## Traditional craft skills and arts of Al-Naoor

**Baghdad, 19 December 2021** - Traditional craft skills and arts of Al-Naoor were inscribed in 2021 (16.COM) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Al-naoor is a wooden wheel that rotates on its axis. It is used on the streams of the Euphrates River in Iraq, where water levels are lower than the adjacent fields. In order to raise the river water to the fields, the communities devised the al-naoor wheel. The wheel is made of twenty-four columns of wooden sticks and twenty-four clay jugs attached to

the outer circumference with palm leaf ropes. Ranging between eight and twelve metres in diameter, the wheel is installed vertically between two stone pedestals on the streams of the river. As the current causes the wheel to rotate, the jugs collect the water from the river, carry the water to the top of the wheel, and pour it into the waterways leading to the fields. The day of the al-naoor mounting is marked by celebrations, including traditional poetry performances, singing and dancing. More recently, the energy produced by the al-naoor wheel has also been used to



generate electricity and to operate the water mills used to grind grain for flour. Al-naoor is a source of livelihood for many, including the artisan carpenters, pottery makers and builders involved in its construction.

## Cultural industries are important in preserving and advancing the cultural heritage of Iraq

**Baghdad, 1 November 2021** - Cultural industries are important in preserving and advancing the cultural heritage of Iraq and contributing to economic development at large. The International Organization for Migration in Iraq (IOM) together with UNESCO conducted a study of business owners who partially or entirely focus on goods and services with cultural value. An event was held in Mosul to

launch this study and share the findings with the stakeholders.

The event brought together representatives from state agencies, international organizations, and industry leaders.

This project was made possible with support from the European Union.



## IOM Iraq helped repair 750 wooden school benches for several schools in Zakho



**Dohuk, 17 November 2021** - Years of conflict have destroyed and devastated many of Iraq's schools. When schools use old, broken or uncomfortable

furniture, it can impede students' ability to focus.

What did the beginning of the new school year look like for kids in Dohuk's

Zakho district?

IOM Iraq helped repair 750 wooden school benches for several schools in Zakho to replenish the schools' classrooms and support the education sector.

The activity provided job opportunities for 25 workers from the district, who used simple carpentry, welding and painting tools provided by IOM Iraq.

Children in Zakho returned to their schools to find brand new benches and an improved learning environment.

This activity was made possible with support from KFW, the German Development Bank.

## IOM Iraq organized a music course for young girls at its community centre in West Mosul

**Mosul, 09 December 2021** - During ISIL's occupation of Mosul, certain cultural activities – including music – were discouraged. Attitudes around young women and girls' participation in these activities are changing.

Access to recreational activities, where they can interact with others and build relationships, can also give them the space to eventually come forward and seek help from trusted confidantes.

IOM Iraq organized a music course for young girls at its community centre in West Mosul. They learned to play instruments in a welcoming environment and spend time with peers.

Mohammed Ahmed, teacher: "Women's presence is important in the field of music.

The [girls'] families were welcoming of the courses and were happy when they saw us playing. Music can have a positive effect and reach human feelings; this is good for everyone



because most people have suffered a lot. Girls can influence society through music."

Rahma, 17, student: "At first, my father did not welcome the course because he did not consider music a very useful thing for the future. My mother tried to persuade him to let me enroll in the course and when he first saw me playing, he was very happy with my performance. Music made a big positive change and I hope that more girls will

convince their families to let them participate in music courses."

In addition to supporting the well-being of participants, recreational activities help women, girls, their families and communities at large to feel more comfortable entering and using the space and makes it easier to ask for help.

This recreational activity was supported by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

## "Education in the Time of COVID 19" lecture held at AUIB

**Baghdad, 21 December 2021** – Mr. Santosh Khatri, UNESCO's Iraq Chief of Education, gave a presentation on lessons learnt from educational response to COVID 19. This presentation is part of the "Education in the Time of COVID 19" lectures series organized by the American University in Baghdad (AUIB).



## More than 72,000 young people raise their voice – U-Report is officially launched in Iraq



**Baghdad, 18 November 2021** –The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Iraq, jointly with UNICEF, launched today U-Report, a youth social messaging platform, following the regional launch with the Kurdistan Regional Government in 2019.

This platform is possible thanks to the support of the Governments of Germany, New Zealand and Czech Republic to the digital engagement of youth in Iraq.

In Iraq, approximately 50 per cent of the population is under 18 and 70 per cent under 24 years of age. However, following decades of conflict, the potential of young people has been largely overlooked and needs have been overly unmet, leading to high levels of frustration and resentment.

To date, over 72,000 young people have joined U-Report Iraq, taking part in polls and receiving life-saving and life-changing information. With this partnership, UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Iraq to increase the number of participants and youth engagement across the country and scale up the capacity of the platform to grow into a sustainable tool to address young people's needs.

The launch was opened by Mr. Adnan Derjal, Ministry of Youth and Sports. In his greeting remarks, addressing the more than 50 young people in the crowd, said: “young people are the leaders of the future and they will help Iraq to achieve SDGs. U-Report will help us to communicate better with young people and listen to their needs”.

Ms. Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq also expressed her views, “U-Report is an empowering

tool for young people. I would like to encourage the youth of Iraq to join the platform as the best way to amplify their voices and express their opinions”.

Young people can join the platform through a number of ways, including Telegram, Viber, Facebook Messenger and by soon by phone message, to ensure that regardless of the background or the situation of young people, they have ways to express their voice.

So far, the youth of Iraq has expressed their views in issues ranging from why young people migrate from one country to another topics focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, like which has been its influence in violence against children and gener based violence.

U-Report Iraq is managed by a Steering Committee with representation from young people. In addition to serving as U-Reporters, young people, along with other members of the steering committee, make sure that poll questions asked to U-Reporters are relevant, suitable and beneficial.

For 10 years, U-Report has allowed youths to amplify their voices and take part in decisions that matter to them, currently connecting over 18 million young people in more than 90 countries and growing.

### How it works

U-Report allows young people to speak out via SMS and other social media platforms such as Facebook, Viber, and Telegram through polls and guided feedback features – on what is happening in their communities. It provides a forum to amplify their voices through local and national media and

acts as a citizen-sourced, real-time data point for key stakeholders, service providers and decision-makers about the issues being faced in communities. The platform feeds back useful information to the U-Reporters (users that opt into U-Report), so that they are empowered to work for change and improvements in their localities themselves.

Managed and led by UNICEF, partnerships have been developed with NGOs and the Ministry of Youth and Sports to maximize the existing and potential reach for young people and adult community members in Iraq to access information, express their opinions on key social issues and have that information amplified up to service providers, government and other key stakeholders.

### Actioning the Data

U-Report Iraq is used as an office wide tool to support UNICEF Iraq programme interventions in real time to disseminate information, enhance engagement and monitor the implementation of activities. Integration to programmes, such as U-Report being used to support this year's winterization campaign, allows continued civic engagement and demand creation among young and community members to enhance accountability. Through the U-Report Working Group (consisting of focal points from each programme section), programme sections also utilise U-Report Iraq for programme insights and pulse checks on information they want to disseminate to or solicit from young people.

U-Report relies on volunteer U-Reporters to take an active role and provide critical information to decision makers on issues affecting their communities through polls. It is also a valuable tool for sharing information through message alerts.

To become a U-Reporter, young people only need to log into their Facebook accounts, look for the U-Report Iraq page, open the messenger app, and click “JOIN.” Upon joining, U-Reporters can start participating in polls and send reports.

Join U-Report from the links below:

- Telegram - [http://t.me/UreportBot\\_bot](http://t.me/UreportBot_bot)
- Viber - <http://www.viber.com/ureportiraq>
- Messenger - <https://www.facebook.com/UReportIraq/>
- Phone message – send a message with the word “Join” to 6990 (phone message service will be available very soon).

## Project development and vocational training provided to youth in Basra



**Basra, 24 November 2021** - Unemployment and community security issues are major concerns for youth in Basra as they continue to pick up the pieces following years of conflict. “I live a simple life here. My only problem is the clan conflicts that have impacted all of society, in addition to the rampant unemployment,” said 20-year-old Hussein Abdmahmood Abdalabass from Ezzedine Salim sub-district in Basra Governorate. A combination of poor economic conditions and a proliferation of weapons have left many in Basra fearing for their livelihoods and safety. “I believe the most important thing to be done is to raise people’s awareness and have a future plan to limit gun acquisition to the state only. I believe these two will contribute to a more

peaceful society in Iraq,” he continued. Hussein participated in IOM Iraq programming combining livelihood training and mental health and psychosocial support to address social and economic factors that may lead to violence. “Through the project development training, I learnt the necessary steps to manage my own project in the future and have confidence in myself [to overcome any] fears,” he said. “Most importantly, I learned how to deal in a thoughtful and professional manner with my projects, as well as how to deal with debts. With the skills I gained through this training, I want to open my own project in the near future. My plan is to try and secure funds, then I will lease a store and start my own business.”

For children and youth in Iraq, a deteriorating economy can mean the loss of their education and childhood.

“Due to my family’s economic situation, my life has become full of complexities and challenges,” said 19-year-old Mahmood Abd Ali Noor from Ezzedine Salim sub-district in Basra Governorate. “This has had a negative effect on my studies; I’ve had to work since a young age to support myself and my family.”

Sacrificing education for the sake of survival can trap people in a cycle of poverty and diminish long-term sustainable job opportunities – particularly jobs that first require an investment of time and money to acquire the appropriate skills and knowledge.

IOM Iraq offers free vocational trainings and other services to support Basra’s youth in accessing sufficient livelihoods in order to move the governorate toward economic recovery. A recent training taught participants barber skills.

“If this training from IOM wasn’t free, I would’ve had to spend a lot of time working just to collect enough money to register myself in a training,” Mahmood explained. “After this training, I want to open my own barber shop and develop it with new ideas. Once I have my own barber shop, I plan to introduce temporary tattoos for customers.”

These trainings were offered under an IOM Iraq project in Basra, supported by the European Union.

## UN-Habitat implemented vocational training for 100 unemployed returnees in Tal Banat village in Sinjar

**Sinjar, 20 December 2021** - UN-Habitat has successfully implemented vocational training for 100 unemployed returnees in Tal Banat village in Sinjar in partnership with the Japanese NGO Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) for the project titled “Emergency Support to Returnees in Iraq after the Outbreak of COVID-19” funded by the Government of Japan. The trainees acquired new skills including mason, electricity, and whitewash. This initiative aimed at enhancing livelihoods and self-reliance of young men and women in conflict-affected areas. Upon completion of their trainings they received certificates of the trainings.

The apprentices are expected to be



employed in the reconstruction and rehabilitation houses in Tal Banat village, another component of this

project, through cash for work modality which will allow them to practice their acquired skills.

## UNICEF launches globally a US\$9.4 billion emergency funding appeal for children affected by conflict, the climate crisis and COVID-19



**Baghdad, 7 December 2021** – UNICEF launched today a record US\$9.4 billion emergency funding appeal to reach more than 327 million people – including 177 million children – affected by humanitarian crises and the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide.

The appeal is 31 per cent larger than last year's as humanitarian needs continue to grow.

"Millions of children around the world are suffering from the impacts of conflict, extreme weather events and the climate crisis," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. "As the COVID-19 pandemic approaches its third year, the plight of these children is made even worse with faltering economies, growing poverty and rising inequality. As always, it is the children already living through crises who are the hardest hit. They need urgent help."

In Iraq, as part of the appeal, UNICEF is requesting US\$ 52.2 million in 2022 to meet the critical and acute humanitarian needs of vulnerable children and families affected by a combination of humanitarian situations, including protracted crisis due to conflict, political instability and the COVID-19 situation.

In addition, as part of the Syrian Refugees Appeal, UNICEF is requesting US\$11,664,429 for 2022 and the same amount for 2023 to respond to the most immediate needs of Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Iraq, while helping to mitigate the ongoing

negative effects of COVID-19. The appeal would serve to reach 115,113 Syrian refugees in Iraq, 72,669 of them children.

This year's funding appeal, UNICEF's largest ever, also comes as escalating conflicts have pushed millions more children and their communities to the brink. Attacks on children living in countries in conflict, including attacks on civilian infrastructure critical for children's survival, are continuing at an alarming rate. Close to 24,000 grave violations against children were confirmed last year, or 72 violations a day.

Climate change is worsening the scale and intensity of emergencies. The number of climate-related disasters has tripled in the last 30 years. Today, over 400 million children live in areas of high, or extremely high, water vulnerability.

As part of its Humanitarian Action for Children which sets out the agency's 2022 appeal, UNICEF plans to reach:

- 7.2 million children with treatment for severe acute malnutrition;

- 62.1 million children with measles vaccinations;

- 53.4 million people with access to safe water for drinking and domestic needs;

- 27.9 million children and caregivers with access to mental health and psychosocial support;

- 21.3 million children and women with access to gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention or response

interventions;

- 51.9 million people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers;

- 77.1 million children with formal or non-formal education, including early learning; and

- 23.6 million households with cash assistance.

With support from partners, key results in 2021 included:

- 2.4 million children treated for severe acute malnutrition;

- 5 million children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support;

- 34 million people provided with enough safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene;

- 22.4 million children and women receiving essential health care services in UNICEF-supported facilities;

- 110.7 million children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning;

- More than 812.2 million people reached through behavioral messages on disease prevention and access to health services;
- 3.2 million people with access to safe channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse;

- 8.6 million women, girls and boys accessing GBV risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions; and

- 14.9 million households reached with humanitarian cash transfers.

This year's Humanitarian Action for Children Report is launched as part of CY21, a Global Forum for Children and Youth bringing together leaders, experts, change makers and influencers, along with children and youth. The forum aims to accelerate proven and new solutions, inspire commitments to create change, and mobilize knowledge and resources to advance child rights to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

## Vocational training high on WFP agenda

**Erbil, 6 December 2021** – Mr. Ally-Raza Qureshi, World Food Programme Representative for Iraq, met recently with Ms. Kwestan Mohammed, Kurdistan Region Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. They discussed WFP's work in Iraq to support youth through vocational training to strengthen skills and resilience for families in need.



## UNESCO conducted a workshop on curriculum development for TVET programmes in Iraq within “Reviving of Mosul and Basra Old Cities” project, funded by EU



**Erbil, 15 December 2021** - As part of UNESCO's ongoing efforts to support for creation of “Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities” project, with financial support from the European Union, a four-day training workshop on TVET Curriculum Development was organized in Erbil from 8 – 11 December 2021. The trainees were 20 technical staff (5 women) from Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and the Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) and Ministry of Education.

The workshop enhanced the capacities of the MoLSA, VTC and MoE technical staff to review and develop the TVET curriculum as per the requirements of the national Technical and Vocational

Qualification Framework (TVQF). The TVQF was approved by the Iraqi Council of Ministries in March 2021.

The training methodology included an interactive set of activities, enabling the participants to apply the new processes tools in a practical manner. Throughout the training participants were required to reflect on the current labor market needs which would result in improved employment outcomes for young people.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Bilal Al Hamaydah, the Project Officer, welcomed the participants, and said “UNESCO hopes, through this workshop, that the main output will be an expansion of this knowledge through

the dissemination of tools and the application of what the participants have learned within the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the vocational training centers in order to disseminate these tools, guiding notes and guidelines for the National Qualifications Framework regarding Technical and vocational education and training curriculum development in Iraq.”

Ms. Aseel Abdul Kareem, the Curriculum Officer at Basra Training Center, said, the workshop was wonderful, and she and her colleagues greatly benefited from the topics covered in increasing awareness and understanding of the National Qualifications Framework and its relationship to curriculum development and its compatibility with the labor market.

Melanie Relton, the Education Consultant, Assessor, Moderator and Verifier, said “workshops of these kinds play an essential role in supporting professionals and institutions implement the requirements of the TVQF. In a globally competitive market, adopting the standards and principles outlined in the TVQF will enhance the transparency, understanding, credibility and portability of Iraqi qualifications and assure employers that students graduating with the new qualifications genuinely possess the skills and experience needed to perform within the workplace.”

## Iraq's first National Youth Volunteering Platform is launched

**Baghdad, 8 December 2021**- The launch of the National Youth Volunteering Platform (NYVP), a new innovative tool that allows young people in Iraq to be matched to volunteer opportunities, was announced today by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Federal Iraq, the Ministry of Culture and Youth in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and UNICEF, in collaboration with United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, thanks to the support of the Government of Germany.

The National Youth Volunteering Platform will establish for the first time in Iraq a structured volunteering program and will give young people a chance to register, search and apply for volunteer activities in line with their

skills and interests. These opportunities will be provided by various partners and organizations, including private companies, non-governmental organizations, and institutions. UNICEF will manage the operationalization of the platform, with the support of the two ministries, and UNV will conduct capacity building and skills development program for youth volunteers.

“Volunteering is about giving, sharing, standing with others and supporting important issues in society in order to achieve building a better future for all. Volunteer work is one of the most vital mechanisms in achieving social, environmental, economic, sports transformation and institutional work, and young volunteers become active

agents of change and equal partners to achieve local, national and international progress towards sustainable human development and global peace”, said Adnan Darjal, Minister of Youth and Sports.

“This platform is a decisive step to ensure young people can engage with their communities in the most effective way possible to bring social change while also equipping them with skills that will improve their chances to access the labor market”, said Paula Bulancea, OiC UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

“The National Youth Volunteering Platform opens doors for young Iraqis to engage in serving their community, contribute to achieving lasting peace and localizing SDGs. Besides, this

## Iraq's first National Youth Volunteering Platform is launched *(continued)*



platform aims at building youth volunteers capacities to equip them with necessary soft skills for successful assignment and which also prepares them for the post assignment period”, said Ahmed Alsultan, UNV Country Coordinator.

Following the celebration on December 5 of the International Volunteering Day

2021, under the theme “Volunteer now for our common future”, the platform promotes volunteering, encourages governments to support volunteering efforts and recognizes these contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This platform will target mainly Iraqi youth, boys and girls, between the ages of 15 and 24 years, including UNICEF-supported youth groups, with a focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as youth who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), youth affected by conflict and violence, and youth with disabilities.

Furthermore, youth volunteerism largely contributes to the transition of societies by leading action that addresses challenges at the grassroots, providing an opportunity for youth to have a pivotal role to play in peacebuilding and social cohesion efforts.



UNICEF works in Iraq with the Government and other key national partners to accelerate a bold results-driven youth agenda in the country by creating an enabling environment, providing access to skills-building and engagement opportunities, as well as youth inclusion in decision-making processes.

## Once an ISIL prison, today a safe space for young people; MOYS, UNFPA inaugurate Ramadi Youth Centre

**Baghdad, 26 December 2021** - The Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Governorate of Anbar and UNFPA reopened the Ramadi Youth Safe Space on 25 December. The Youth Safe Space serves as a place for girls and boys to receive life and leadership skills, peacebuilding and edutainment activities.

Originally this building was a House of Youth under the Ministry of Youth and Sports management. It was a special place for young people of Anbar and the community to build friendships and learn new skills in music, arts, science. Back in 2014, the place was used as a prison by the Islamic States in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) during the war. The building was severely damaged.

After the liberation of the territories, young people in Anbar decided to bring the building back to its original purpose and make it a youth-friendly place. In 2018, UNFPA helped the youth rehabilitate two rooms for peacebuilding activities.

As the demand for youth services grew among communities and youth, UNFPA with support from Canada, the Governor of Anbar and UIMS, completed the rehabilitation of the Youth Safe Space. Young volunteers were the ones who led the process and made decisions about how to make the

place more accessible for all young people in the surrounding communities, including the most vulnerable.

Once a space that reminded people of sorrow and pain, today is a place of hope and strength.

Speaking at the event, the Governor of Anbar, Mr Ali Farhan Al-Dulaimi, thanked UNFPA for the continuous support and investment in the young people in Anbar.

Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative in Iraq, highlighted the importance of empowering young people and engaging them in community life. She said: “I am very proud of the young volunteers who had

a dream and made it a reality. Thanks to their determination and the support they received from UNFPA, Canada, the Anbar Directorate of Youth and Sports, the Governor of Anbar, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, this centre became a welcoming and truly youth-friendly space.”

The opening ceremony was attended by the Anbar Governor, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq, Salem Al-Zamanan, representatives of the Ministry of Youth & Sport, the Anbar Directorate of Youth and Sports, the UNFPA Representative, and representatives of the civil society and



## World Children’s Day celebrated at Dohuk University



**Dohuk, 19 November 2021 - Today,** led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the KRI in Dohuk, children from refugee and IDP camps

celebrated World Children’s Day at Dohuk University, praising the bright potential of every child. Investing in children is investing in the future.

Together we must create a future where every child feels safe and supported.

## World Children’s Day celebrated in Mosul

**Mosul, 20 November 2021 -** “It was the best day of my life” said one of the excited boys while relishing the open-air activities organized by UN-Habitat in Al Yarmouk Park in Mosul to mark International Children’s Day celebrated today, 20th November. Under the watchful eye of our field engineers, 20 boys and girls from the adjacent neighbourhood spent a lively day playing football and enjoying the newly established children playground area

as a part of the local area development programme funded by the European

Union and implemented in partnership with UNDP. Happy Children Day!



## B for Blue!



**Baghdad/Erbil, 21 November 2021 -** Baghdad goes blue for World Children’s Day. The iconic Kahramana, Saving Iraqi Culture, and the Shahrazad and King Shahriar statues all turned blue to commemorate a day for children by children.

The Citadel, a UNESCO-designated world heritage site in Erbil, Iraq and one of the oldest continuously occupied human settlements on Earth has turned blue for World Children’s Day. This historic moment is a reminder to all of us to build an Iraq where every

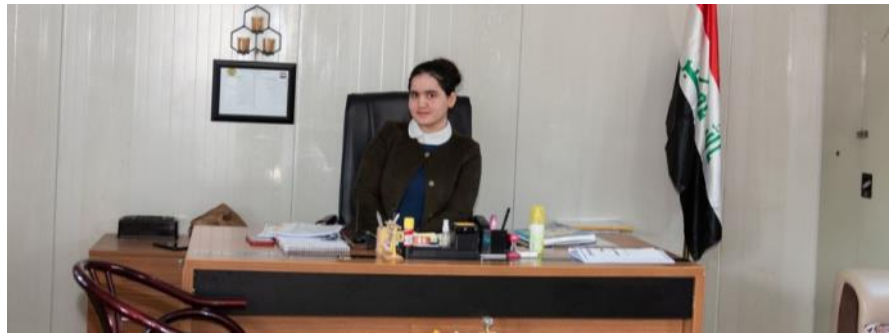
child is safe from harm and has opportunities for a brighter future. Zain Iraq has joined the #GoBlue campaign and committed to reimagine a better future for every child in Iraq.





## World Children's Day celebrated at Dijla Secondary School

**Dijla, 5 December 2021** - Meet Tiba, who took over the position of the school principal on World Children's Day! She is a 9th grader in Dijla Secondary IDPs school, supported by UNICEF. She took the lead in taking care of the students and making sure the school environment is safe and clean. Tiba enjoyed the experience of managing the school. "It is a leadership role. I felt the responsibility and the cooperation among the teachers".



## UNICEF and the College of Education for Women commemorate the International Children's Day and UNICEF's 75 anniversary – Research for investing in children - the future of Iraq

**Baghdad, 12 December 2021** – UNICEF and College of Education for Women (CoEduW) of the University of Baghdad (UoB) will be holding together their first joint scientific conference titled "Childhood and Sustainable Development: Investing in the Future of Iraq" on Sunday, 12 December 2021, at 9:30 am at Al-Mustafa Hall in CoEduW in Jadiriya campus to celebrate the International Children's day and 75th UNICEF anniversary, thanks to the support of the Government of Germany.

As part of the event, the UNICEF OIC Representative, Paula Bulancea, the President of University of Baghdad, Prof. Dr. Muneer Hameed Al-Sa'ady, and Dean of College of Education for Women, Prof. Dr. Isaac S. Al-Akaam, will be in attendance. The conference will aim to (1) shed light on the threatening effects of wars, crises, and the pandemic on children wellbeing and poverty; (2) present the nature of the relationship between poverty, multiple deprivations, marginalization and ensuring every child's rights to survive and thrive; (3) determine the impact of the demographic, health, environment, and educational background on the quality and sustainability of children's

life; (4) bridge the gap between research and institutions by providing decision makers with recommendations and proposals that will help to contribute to the alleviation of child poverty and improving their quality of life in the society.

This is the first event following the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on 28 September by both institutions, by which UNICEF partnered with the CoEduW to support the generation of evidence and research and to institutionalize capacity

development for the graduates and the workforce engaged in the social sectors focused on children.

UNICEF is offering technical expertise and logistical support to Iraqi scientific and educational institutions to build sustainable think tanks and training curriculum needed by decision makers and institutions to support national policies, future budgeting and programming for the country in key sectors relevant for children including social protection, health, child protection, and education.



## UNICEF is committed to supporting the national evaluation capacity development for Iraq

**Baghdad, 14 December 2021** - UNICEF and the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Planning discussed collaborating on evaluations conducted by UNICEF for effective public policymaking and achievement of results, to ensure child rights in Iraq. Evaluation is critical to help public

sector institutions have reliable information and make evidence-informed decisions to improve the design and implementation of policies and programmes.

UNICEF is committed to supporting the national evaluation capacity development for Iraq.



## What I Learned in Iraq



### About the author

*Brenden Varma is a Public Information Officer in the Outreach Division of the United Nations Department of Global Communications. He served as a Senior Communication Adviser for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) from July to October 2021.*

**New York/Baghdad, 21 December 2021** - At the United Nations, there are two worlds: Headquarters and the field. United Nations Headquarters in New York is our mothership. In iconic rooms such as the General Assembly Hall and the Security Council Chamber, our Member States make decisions that affect people across the globe. Meanwhile, the field is where those decisions are felt most acutely. It's where you find our peacekeeping missions, our vital humanitarian operations, our mediators engaging in shuttle diplomacy.

In the summer of 2021, I was deeply enmeshed in the world of Headquarters. As Director of Communications and Spokesperson for the President of the General Assembly, it was my job to tell the press and public what was going on in the Organization's most democratic body. My focus was on resolutions, declarations and high-level meetings. I was surrounded by words—but not seeing firsthand if or how those words were actually improving people's lives. Around that time, I happened to stumble across a movie about Sérgio Vieira de Mello, a United Nations hero who lost his life following a shocking attack in Iraq in 2003. I had joined the Organization shortly before that attack and never forgot the impact that it had on my colleagues and me. The United Nations was suddenly a target. The

field seemed like a much scarier place at the time.

But nearly two decades later, I didn't feel fear when I watched the film; I was inspired. Sérgio could have spent his United Nations career in glass skyscrapers and air-conditioned conference rooms. But he chose to go to the field—to be closer to the people the United Nations is meant to serve. It had been years since my last field posting, and I wanted to go back.

What I didn't know at the time (since my focus was on the General Assembly) was that the Security Council had just adopted a new resolution concerning Iraq. Resolution 2576 (2021) of 27 May 2021 welcomed the request of the Government of Iraq for support for its 10 October 2021 elections—and called for a United Nations strategic messaging campaign to educate and inform Iraqi voters on election preparations, as well as related United Nations activities.

With less than five months between the passage of that resolution and the elections, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) needed to get a communications team on the ground immediately. That's when I was asked to deploy to Baghdad.

Of course, it's one thing to feel inspired after watching a film and another to actually move to a place that the United Nations classifies as a dangerous hardship duty station. But it didn't take me long to decide. After discussing it with my family, I said yes to UNAMI.

From a professional standpoint, I felt ready, but I soon learned how hard it was to work on a country file without actually being on the ground. For example, while still in New York, one of my first tasks was to come up with a hashtag for our new electoral communications campaign. I chose #Vote4Iraq to encourage Iraqi voters to put their country above any other affiliation. But the Kurdish-speaking national staff in UNAMI advised me to consider other options as well. They told me that invoking the name of the country would alienate Kurds. It wasn't until I visited the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) three months later that I truly understood what they meant. In and around Erbil, the regional capital, I frequently saw the Kurdish flag flying—but not always the Iraqi flag. I realized that not all Iraqi citizens saw themselves as Iraqi, and our communications would need to take that into account.

At the United Nations, people often refer to “mission life”, as if all missions were pretty much the same. But that's not the case. When I worked in Jerusalem and Pristina, I had my own apartment in town. I could meet my new local friends in restaurants and parks. On the other hand, in Mogadishu in 2013, I was confined to the United Nations compound. I slept in a tiny, thin-walled container with no private bathroom. Food was only available in the bare-boned mess hall. Inadequate Wi-Fi service made it tough to keep in touch with family back home. It was normal to hear gunfire at night. And while we had access to a beach, swimming was discouraged due to



## What I Learned in Iraq *(continued)*

sharks, riptides and pirates.

My Baghdad experience was somewhere between that of Jerusalem/Pristina and Mogadishu. All United Nations personnel—whether they worked for UNAMI or the agencies—had to live on the compound. Leaving the secured Green Zone wasn't possible without a security escort. While the collective accommodations were great for intra-United Nations camaraderie, the atmosphere could often feel claustrophobic. Time outdoors had to be limited due to the intense daily temperatures of 115 °F (46 °C). I understood why staff were entitled to one week of rest and recreation (R&R) after every four weeks of service.

But I couldn't complain about my living conditions in Baghdad. My apartment had a modern bathroom, kitchen and television, and the compound had a gym, pizzeria and barbershop. There were even facilities where staff could play tennis, football and ping-pong.

Before arriving in Baghdad, I had drafted a communications strategy focused on one of the priority areas of the Department of Global Communications (DGC): "human-centred storytelling". UNAMI leadership wanted our campaign to focus in part on convincing Iraqis to participate in the elections. So, with a team of videographers, I set out to amplify the voices of Iraqi citizens who planned to vote. Iraqis may or may not listen to the United Nations, I thought, but surely they would be inspired by each other. I imagined a video in which a woman walks past a rundown hospital in her neighbourhood and says, "I'm going to vote because I want better healthcare."

But again, my Headquarters assumptions were confronted by realities on the ground. First, there was fear. Given the security constraints, it was already tough to find ordinary Iraqis to talk to, and when we did, many were reluctant to have their faces shown on camera. They feared repercussions if the wrong people saw them speaking out on what could be perceived as a political topic. There was also a general distrust of the authorities. Many Iraqis felt that there was no point in voting because fraud and a flawed system would just return the same old politicians to power.

Our message was that, although these elections were Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led, the United Nations was standing with Iraq every step of the way.

In the end, we did manage to tell some Iraqis' stories, but the skepticism I



sensed among the people made me focus on another DGC priority area as well: sharing accurate information to combat fake news. We started producing videos and holding dialogues that took the rumours we were hearing and countered them with facts. We explained how the upcoming elections would be different from past ones—and how technical support from the United Nations would help ensure a credible process. For the first time, UNAMI started livestreaming press conferences by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq. We enlisted local artists to paint pro-voting murals throughout the country. We also worked with Iraqi social media influencers to reach the country's youth, since 60 per cent of the population was 25 years of age or younger.

As the elections drew nearer, additional United Nations personnel started arriving to monitor the polls, and our main goal became to increase their visibility. All United Nations monitors, many UNAMI staff and even the SRSG started regularly wearing United Nations caps and vests as we moved around the country so that Iraqis would see us and feel reassured that the United Nations was on the ground and assisting. Our message was that, although these elections were Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led, the United Nations was standing with Iraq every step of the way.

In the end, election day came and went. The voter turnout wasn't particularly high or low. But in a country where a significant number of voters I spoke to told me they would prefer having a monarch, it was crucial to remember that, as the United Nations, our role was a supporting one. Ultimately, it was for the Iraqi people to decide what kind of system they preferred and

whether they wanted to participate in it. On the bright side, we were happy to see that the elections had proceeded smoothly, had featured significant technical and procedural improvements, and could serve as an important stepping stone for the future. While in Iraq, aside from my work, I started a purely personal project. I decided to use my own Instagram account to show my followers what the country really looked like. Because most people could not go as tourists to many of the places I was visiting, their knowledge of Iraq was probably based on what they saw on the news, which was largely destruction and despair. The Iraq I was experiencing didn't match up with that perception. I saw bohemian cafés in Baghdad, trendy rooftop restaurants in Duhok and Erbil, and beautiful river views in Basra. I met young Iraqi artists, filmmakers, musicians and entrepreneurs. I bought streetwear from local designers and smiled when I saw Iraqi hipsters who looked like they had been plucked off the streets of Brooklyn.

The United Nations had sent me to Baghdad to advise on electoral communications, but it had also given me the chance to get to know a country that remains mysterious to much of the world. I knew that I was lucky. Lucky to grow and learn. Lucky to be a part of something bigger than myself. And lucky to serve in the field.

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## Bringing in international expertise in support of Iraq's parliamentary elections



**Baghdad/New York, 22 December 2021** - In October 2021, the people and Government of Iraq successfully concluded the country's latest parliamentary elections. The members of the United Nations Security Council commended Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) for "conducting a technically sound election." They further recognized the role of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in providing "technical assistance and international monitoring" in support of the electoral process. The international experts with UNAMI's Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA) included 15 dedicated UN Volunteers.

This group of UN Volunteers (six women and nine men) was part of a team comprising one thousand personnel during the peak period of the elections – described as "the biggest electoral assistance mission in the history of UN's practice worldwide," according to Dr Aamir Arain, Director of UNAMI Electoral Assistance and UN Principal Electoral Advisor. However, these volunteers "were a significant part of this undertaking, serving in both substantive, technical and administrative aspects of the complex electoral assistance programme," adds Dr Arain.

The UN Volunteers were distributed between Baghdad and five other regions of the country, supporting IHEC's nineteen Governorate Elections Offices (GEOs). Their much-valued contributions were part of a broader commitment to election transparency, upon which Iraq's nascent peacebuilding endeavours depend.

The elections process was also a unique experience – a long-awaited thread of hope for people with differences who found a common ground. UN Volunteers Lucie Mukarumashana and Zarina Isakova are esteemed for their

prior electoral experience in Afghanistan, civic education acumen and expertise in outreach and communications.

As women, their presence among international teams further promotes gender equality in the public sphere and dovetails new election laws requiring women to comprise 25 per cent of the elected members for the Council of Representatives (parliament).

Throughout the electoral process Lucie and Zarina engaged closely with their Iraqi counterparts at the International High Electoral Commission and Governorate Elections Office providing advisory support and injecting fresh ideas.

Lucie served as a Regional Electoral Officer in Nineveh – which Dr Arain describes as a very challenging duty station, politically, in terms of operations. There, she helped establish and maintain communication channels between IHEC offices, supported recruitment and training of polling teams and reviewed logistical and security preparations.

She also developed reports with lessons learned that ensured electoral actors could adapt, localize and improve electoral processes in real-time. These processes were further augmented by simulations, site visits and complaints mechanisms, which Lucie also followed up closely before the election was held. Her efforts helped ensure concerns and challenges were resolved with credibility and public trust in the elections process could flourish.

Back in Baghdad, Zarina contributed to communication flow between institutions and supported UNAMI's Office of Electoral Assistance. Her progress reports, including daily and weekly election updates, made data accessible to senior mission management, diplomatic community

and multinational teams, as electoral preparations and electoral assistance activities moved forward.

In addition, UN Volunteer Dinesh Pathak further supported communication efforts, with a particular focus on IHEC field offices. As a Field Coordination Officer, based in Baghdad, Dinesh worked within a team that managed and coordinated 19 field offices' activities. He conducted site visits, assessed the Governorate Election Office's logistical and security readiness, while also observing and documenting electoral activities and participation, including women's participation.

Like Lucie and Zarina, Dinesh had previously supported UN Missions in Afghanistan and other countries, bringing vital field experience contributing to the development of an electoral education and information center for all regional offices.

Together, these UN Volunteers helped the IHEC to complete electoral preparations in a timely manner and to increase the awareness of and participation in a credible parliamentary election.

Alongside the above-cited UN Volunteers, there were several others with legal, medical, COVID-19 mitigation and technology expertise, who supported the largest electoral assistance mission the United Nations has ever undertaken. That mission covered technical assistance, as well as election day monitoring, strategic communication, and coordination/support for third-party observers. Therefore, the value added to the work of UNAMI's Office of Electoral Assistance cannot be overstated.

"UN Volunteers performed key functions and have knowledge of elections processes acquired in several countries over many UN missions. They were eager to contribute and delivered their expertise and support to a challenging and complex undertaking by UNAMI OEA. They played a vital role to make these efforts a resounding success." --Dr Aamir Arain, Director of UN Integrated Electoral Assistance and UN Principal Electoral Advisor

Indeed, as Iraq sought to prepare, operate and monitor a new election, UN Volunteers arrived with solidarity and camaraderie. Their support for Iraq's election as part of international assistance helped the people of Iraq foster the hope of peace.

By UN Volunteers.