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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2522 \(2020\)](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since my previous report of 6 May 2020 ([S/2020/363](#)) and the briefing to the Council by my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI on 12 May 2020.

II. Summary of key political developments

A. Political situation

2. In the early hours of 7 May, the Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, who had been designated to form a Government on 9 April, received a vote of confidence and the confirmation of 15 of his 22 ministers from the Council of Representatives. The government programme was also approved during that legislative session.

3. The government formation process was completed on 6 June, when the Council of Representatives confirmed the Prime Minister's nominees for the remaining seven ministerial posts. The resulting Government included two women ministers, one of whom, a Christian, is the sole Cabinet member from a minority community. The Council of Representatives also authorized the Prime Minister to create a new Ministry of State, to be headed by a Turkmen representative, to support governance and State-building. On 7 July, the Prime Minister requested a parliamentary session to vote on a candidate. However, the appointment has remained pending.

4. Upon assuming office, the Prime Minister highlighted that key priorities for his Administration included: combating the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and addressing the economic crisis; holding free, fair and credible early elections after the finalization of the electoral law; protecting protesters and their right to peaceful assembly and expression, as well as promoting accountability and justice for past violations; restoring State authority by safeguarding sovereignty, promoting foreign relations, bringing arms under State control, countering terrorism and enforcing the rule of law; and enhancing relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government.



5. As part of efforts to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq, the Prime Minister assumed the chairmanship of the ministerial-level High Committee for Health and National Safety, which directs and coordinates the Government's response to the health crisis. The Committee extended previously adopted preventative measures and adjusted others. From 21 April to 27 May, the curfew first imposed on 17 March was partially lifted to facilitate the observance of Ramadan. However, a complete curfew was reintroduced from 28 May to 13 June, after which the Committee reimposed a partial curfew. The measures limited some government operations. With the exception of the Ministry of Health and security and service agencies, ministries operated at 25 per cent staff capacity during the partial curfew. In addition, the curfew delayed the full disbursement of an allowance of 600 billion Iraqi dinars (\$500 million) granted by the Committee on 7 April to mitigate the economic impact of the curfew on lower-income citizens.

6. In response to the deteriorating economic situation, exacerbated by low oil prices and the impact of COVID-19, on 12 May, the Council of Ministers established an emergency financial reform cell, to be chaired by the Prime Minister. It was mandated to promote financial liquidity and to adopt measures to rationalize public spending, diversify resources and propose financial mechanisms for reconstruction and investment projects outside of governmental funding streams. The next day, an adviser to the Prime Minister announced that the Government had submitted a draft domestic and foreign borrowing law to the Council of Representatives to bridge the current budget deficit and enhance financial liquidity. During a meeting of the financial reform cell held on 30 May, the Prime Minister ordered a reduction in the salaries of high-ranking State employees and called for reforms to address double State salaries and pension issues. On 9 June, the measures were approved by the Council of Ministers.

7. The Council of Representatives also considered measures to address the economic crisis. During an extended recess, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the parliamentary committee for the economy and investments formed a crisis cell to address the current economic crisis alongside a separate COVID-19 crisis cell. On 3 June, parliamentarians voted to request that the Council of Ministers submit the draft 2020 federal budget law to the Council of Representatives before 30 June. The Minister for Finance explained in response that the Government intended to set aside the budget for 2020 and instead proceed directly to the preparation of the 2021 budget.

8. On 6 June, parliamentarians concluded the second reading of the draft domestic and external borrowing law to finance the fiscal deficit for 2020. However, a vote to adopt the law was postponed owing to opposition to key provisions. Parliamentarians cautioned against financing the budget deficit through external borrowing, recommending instead that revenues be raised through anti-corruption measures. In addition, they rejected cuts to civil service salaries and pensions (and the imposition of taxes on them), except in the case of parliamentarians and high-level public servants. Nevertheless, the Council of Representatives voted to pass the domestic and external borrowing law on 24 June, and it was ratified by the President the next day. Elements of the law include a limit on the amount that can be borrowed and a requirement to finance the salaries of all civil servants hired in 2019, thousands of whom were added to the public payroll by the previous caretaker Government following popular protests. The law also states that the Council of Ministers will submit an economic reform programme within 60 days of the law coming into force.

9. In his inaugural address and subsequent statements, the Prime Minister pledged to protect the right to demonstrate and to punish unlawful aggression against protesters. On 9 May, the Council of Ministers agreed to form a high-level fact-finding committee to investigate events since 1 October 2019, to provide accountability and to establish a list of those killed and wounded to allow for

compensation for the families of the victims. On the same day, at a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, the National Security Council decided to release the majority of detained protesters in coordination with the judiciary; to bring abductors to justice and not show leniency for their crimes; and to protect peaceful protesters. Accordingly, on 10 May, the Supreme Judicial Council directed the release of protesters who had been arrested but had not been charged with criminal offences. At a meeting held on 4 June with families who had lost relatives during the protests, the Prime Minister stressed that perpetrators would be brought to justice.

10. Meanwhile, popular protests restarted in southern and central governorates despite the COVID-19 situation, although with limited numbers. In addition to long-standing protests, smaller, sporadic demonstrations related to local grievances also took place. Protesters included the unemployed, particularly young people, who demanded jobs and economic reforms; workers who demanded payment of salaries and a reversal of salary and pension cuts; those whose livelihoods were affected, opposing curfews; and others criticizing failures in service delivery. In some areas, calls were made for the dismissal of governors, local officials and security figures. Most demonstrations passed without incident, although there were some acts of violence: on 18 May, clashes at the Ahdab oilfield in Wasit Governorate between protesters, security forces, and oilfield workers led to the arrest of some protesters; on 7 June, protesters in Najaf clashed with security forces and set fire to the Governor's residence; on 16 June, security forces used live fire and tear gas to disperse protesters in Basrah.

11. As part of efforts to improve governance at the local level, on 6 June, the Prime Minister ordered the formation of a ministerial team to review the performance of governors and service departments in the governorates. A statement from the Office of the Prime Minister noted that the review team would coordinate with relevant parliamentary committees. However, on 12 June, the parliamentary services and reconstruction committee challenged the authority of the ministerial review team, asserting that only the parliamentary committee had the constitutional and legal responsibility for oversight of such issues.

12. In line with his key priorities, on 10 May, the Prime Minister announced the formation of an expert team to consult with the Independent High Electoral Commission on the establishment of conditions conducive to free, fair and credible early elections. Meanwhile, the Council of Representatives restarted discussions to finalize the electoral law. On 6 June, the First Deputy Speaker held a meeting of the parliamentary legal committee and political bloc leaders at which he called for the expedited completion of the law and for the political blocs to provide the legal committee with their observations on electoral districts. Discussions about the outstanding technical annexes continue.

13. The Kurdistan Regional Government also took steps to address the economic situation. On 7 May, the Kurdistan Region Council of Ministers approved measures related to the implementation of the law on civil service salaries and pension reform, which had been in force since 7 April, and the reduction in the salaries of civil servants at the level of Director General and above. Under the approved measures, salary payments would only be made to employees registered under the biometric registration system. Additional measures approved included a reduction in the operational budget of the Kurdistan Region, the strengthening of compliance with internal revenue procedures and financial relief for citizens. Subsequently, on 21 June, further cuts to all civil service salaries were announced by the Kurdistan Region Council of Ministers, except for those earning less than 300,000 Iraqi dinars (approximately \$250) per month.

14. In a speech on 22 May, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Masrour Barzani, emphasized that, without reforms, the Kurdistan Regional Government would be unable to navigate the economic downturn. He further stressed the need to reduce the debt that the Kurdistan Region had accrued in previous years.

15. On 27 May, the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Interior eased some measures put in place to counter the COVID-19 pandemic. However, after a marked increase in registered cases, the Ministry reimposed a lockdown from 1 to 6 June. Demonstrations against the renewed restrictions took place in Sulaymaniyah and the lockdown order was subsequently rescinded. Other demonstrations in the Kurdistan Region during the reporting period were directly related to unemployment, poor services and the non-disbursement of public salaries.

B. Relations between Baghdad and Erbil

16. During the reporting period, the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments resumed discussions on revenue- and resource-sharing. On 20 June, the President of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani, travelled to Baghdad and separately met the President and Prime Minister of Iraq and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives and other officials. In a statement on 21 June, he emphasized that the Kurdistan Region was willing to resolve all pending issues with the federal Government, based on the Constitution of Iraq.

17. On 23 June, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Qubad Talabani, led a delegation to Baghdad, the fourth since the resumption of talks on 19 April. The delegation met the Prime Minister, the President, the Minister for Finance and several counterparts to negotiate an agreement between Baghdad and Erbil on resource- and revenue-sharing. The delegation returned on 25 June with no agreement reached. After he met the delegation on 28 June, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region issued a statement that emphasized the need to expedite an agreement between the two sides.

18. Previously, a delegation of the Kurdistan Regional Government, led by the Deputy Prime Minister, had visited Baghdad from 5 to 8 May. The delegation met the President, the incumbent Ministers for Finance and Oil, and the head of the parliamentary finance committee. According to official statements, the parties discussed the federal budget allocation to the Kurdistan Region, as well as the transfer of oil proceeds from the Kurdistan Region to the State Oil Marketing Organization. The federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments also exchanged letters during the reporting period on the transfer of federal funds to the latter. In a letter dated 19 May addressed to the President and Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, the federal Minister for Finance confirmed the transfer of 400 billion Iraqi dinars (approximately \$335 million) to Erbil, but noted that further transfers would take place only after both sides had reached a final binding agreement.

C. Security situation

19. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continued to conduct asymmetric attacks. In response, the Iraqi security forces continued counter-terrorism operations against ISIL cells, primarily in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. The Iraqi Joint Operations Command announced the launch of Operation Desert Lion on 17 May against “terrorist elements” in adjoining areas of Anbar, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates, including those close to the border with the Syrian Arab Republic. On 2 June, the Prime Minister visited Kirkuk Governorate for the launch of the second phase of Operation Iraqi Heroes – Victory

of Sovereignty against ISIL in the south-west of the Governorate. To mark the sixth anniversary of its occupation by ISIL, the Prime Minister led a ministerial delegation to Mosul on 10 June, during which he pledged to continue reconstruction efforts. He also visited the predominantly Christian town of Bartalah, where he met with senior Christian leaders.

20. On 8, 16 and 22 June, the Security Media Cell of the Office of the Prime Minister reported that rockets had landed in the vicinity of Baghdad International Airport. The Security Media Cell reported further rocket attacks against locations in the former International Zone on 10 and 18 June. On 13 June, the Joint Operations Command reported in a statement that two rockets had been fired at Camp Taji, an Iraqi military camp in northern Baghdad that hosts international counter-ISIL coalition forces. The Joint Operations Command also announced the launch of an investigation to find and hold accountable those responsible for the attack against Camp Taji. No casualties were reported in official government statements after the attacks.

21. On 16 June, the Prime Minister chaired an extraordinary meeting of the National Security Council to discuss recent security events. In a statement on the same day, the Iraqi National Security Council affirmed its “full condemnation” of the repeated rocket attacks on the former International Zone and Baghdad International Airport, and stressed that “attacks” on airports, military locations, government sites and diplomatic missions were “unacceptable” and “undermined the country’s national security, interests and its international standing”. In its statement, the National Security Council announced that it had directed the security services to intensify their intelligence efforts, prosecute the perpetrators of such actions and take actions to prevent further attacks.

22. In the early hours of 18 June, four Katyusha rockets landed within the former International Zone in Baghdad without causing any casualties or damage, according to the Security Media Cell. On the same day, the Prime Minister publicly condemned the incident on social media, noting that the rockets had landed close to the Monument to the Unknown Soldier. In his statement, the Prime Minister described the rocket attacks as “unacceptable” and a “threat to Iraq’s stability and future”. He also pledged to protect the Iraqi people and stressed that he would not “allow outlaws to hold Iraq hostage”.

23. During the night of 25 June, according to a statement by the Joint Operations Command released on 26 June, the Counter-Terrorism Service conducted an operation to apprehend individuals suspected of targeting the former International Zone and Baghdad International Airport with “indirect fire”. On 30 June, the spokesperson of the Prime Minister stated that, during the operation, 1 individual had been arrested under warrant and remained in judicial custody, while 13 others detained at the same time had been released. The Joint Operations Command also reported that, soon after the arrest, “armed parties” had approached a facility of the Counter-Terrorism Service within the former International Zone and attempted “to provoke” those inside. The Joint Operations Command stressed “the seriousness of this behaviour and its threat to the security of the State and its democratic political system”.

24. The Ministry of National Defence of Turkey has continued to report military activity against Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) positions in northern Iraq. On 15 June, the Ministry announced on Twitter that Turkish armed forces had begun Operation Claw-Eagle, a series of air strikes in the Sinjar area of Ninawa Governorate and in the Avasin-Basyan, Hakurk, Karacak, Qandil and Zap areas of the Kurdistan Region. The Ministry stated on its Twitter account that the operations were conducted to “ensure the security of our people and borders by neutralizing the PKK and other

terrorist elements”. On 15 June, the Iraqi Joint Operations Command issued a statement in which it reported that “18 Turkish aircraft had entered Iraqi airspace”.

25. On 16 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq issued a statement noting that the Ambassador of Turkey to Iraq had been summoned to the Ministry regarding ongoing Turkish military operations in northern Iraq, and a letter of protest had been delivered to him. According to the statement, the letter stated the “condemnation” by the Government of Iraq of “violations of the sanctity and sovereignty of Iraq and the Iraqi airspace and considered that it contravened conventions, relevant rules of international law, friendly relations, principles of good neighbourliness and mutual respect”. In the statement, the Ministry also called on Turkey “to stop unilateral military operations and expressed the ... readiness [of the Government of Iraq] for joint cooperation in controlling border security in a manner that secures the interests of both sides”.

26. In identical letters dated 16 June, addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (S/2020/553), the Government of Iraq highlighted incidents that took place from 1 August 2017 to 4 December 2019 and described Turkish military operations in Iraq as “violations of the sovereignty of Iraq ... and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law”. The letters reaffirmed the willingness of the Government of Iraq to “find common ground and peaceful solutions that will bring an end to these repeated violations”.

27. On 18 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq issued a statement in which “Iraq condemns in the strongest terms and denounces the return of Turkish forces on June 17” and called on the Government of Turkey to cease aerial operations and withdraw its forces from the Iraqi territory. In the same statement, the Ministry reported that it had summoned the Ambassador of Turkey and delivered a “strongly worded letter of protest”. On the same day, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey stated that operations targeted the PKK elements, which “threaten the national security of our country, as well as the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq”.

28. In a statement issued by the spokesperson of the President on 26 June, the Presidency of Iraq called for the “cessation of the violations of national sovereignty as a result of the repeated Turkish military actions and its violation of Iraqi airspace that have claimed a number of civilian lives”. In the statement, the Presidency “emphasizes the need to resolve the border problems and security issues between Iraq and Turkey through cooperation and coordination”. On 20 June, the spokesperson of the Kurdistan Regional Government issued a statement, in which it “condemns the killing of civilians”. In the statement, the spokesperson “called on PKK to leave these areas immediately in order to prevent tension on the borders of the Kurdistan Region and further loss of life”. In response, on 26 June, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey refuted allegations of civilian casualties and underlined that the utmost attention was paid to the safety of civilians in the planning and conduct of operations. The Ministry called for Iraqi cooperation in the fight of Turkey against PKK.

29. On 18 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq issued a press statement noting that it had “summoned the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Iraq” and had “delivered a letter of protest” against the shelling of “border villages” in Erbil Governorate by Iranian forces on 16 June. In the statement, the Ministry affirmed its “condemnation of these actions” and “the importance” of the respect of the Islamic Republic of Iran for “the sovereignty of Iraq” and called for “joint bilateral cooperation in controlling security and achieving stability on the shared border”.

30. On 8 July, the Government of Turkey submitted a letter to the President of the Security Council in response to the allegations made by Iraq to the Council on 16 June

2020 (S/2020/677). In the letter, Turkey noted that “any criticism towards Turkey for exercising its inherent right of self-defence, as outlined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and acting within the context of the responsibility attributed by relevant Security Council resolutions to States Members of the United Nations in the fight against terrorism is unacceptable”.

D. Regional and international developments

31. The confirmation of the new Government was widely welcomed and drew expressions of support from the region and internationally. The Prime Minister received phone calls of congratulations from Member States, including the Presidents of France, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United States of America, and the Chancellor of Germany. All stressed their commitment to support Iraq and strengthen bilateral ties.

32. Shortly after his confirmation, on 7 May, the Prime Minister received a call from the Secretary of State of the United States, Michael Pompeo. Afterwards, the Secretary of State announced in a press release that the United States had extended its electricity waiver to Iraq by 120 days “as a display of its desire to help provide Iraq the right conditions for success”.

33. On 22 and 23 May, respectively, the Minister for Finance conducted official visits to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In Saudi Arabia, discussions focused on bilateral economic and investment cooperation, developments in the global oil market and the importance of adhering to the agreement made between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other major oil-producing countries. In Kuwait, meetings focused on the implementation of pledges made at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, held in February 2018, and on linking the electricity grids of the two countries. The two sides also discussed ways to encourage Kuwaiti investments in Iraq. On 14 June, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Ahmad Nasser al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, visited Iraq, where he met separately with the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and other political leaders. During their meetings, the Iraqi leaders affirmed an eagerness to develop bilateral relations, address border issues and follow up on pledges and commitments made at the Kuwait reconstruction conference. Iraqi officials thanked Kuwait for its financial assistance to their efforts to combat COVID-19, including through a \$10 million contribution to the World Health Organization (WHO).

34. On 3 June, the President and Prime Minister met separately with the visiting Minister for Energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Reza Ardakanian. They discussed bilateral cooperation, in particular in the fields of electricity and water, and the regional situation. The two sides signed a contract for the export of electricity to Iraq in 2020 and 2021. The Prime Minister also received the President of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 17 June.

35. On 3 July, an Iraqi delegation led by the Minister for Oil, Ihsan Abdul Jabbar, visited Lebanon. The delegation met with the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Hassan Diab, as well as the Ministers for Energy, Water and Agriculture. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Oil of Iraq, meetings focused on strengthening economic cooperation and bilateral agreements in the areas of oil, health, industry and agriculture.

36. A strategic dialogue between Iraq and the United States was launched on 11 June. The next day, the Department of State of the United States and the Government of Iraq issued a joint statement noting that “discussions covered security and counterterrorism, economics and energy, political issues, and cultural relations”.

In the statement, the United States “reaffirmed its respect for Iraq’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and relevant decisions of the Iraqi legislative and executive authorities”. Both parties also reiterated the importance of support to Iraq in implementing its governmental programme and reforms. On security issues, the United States noted that “it does not seek nor request permanent bases or a permanent military presence in Iraq” and that “in light of significant progress towards eliminating the [ISIL] threat”, “over the coming months the [United States] would continue reducing forces from Iraq.” In addition, the Government of Iraq committed to protecting “the military personnel of the International Coalition and the Iraqi facilities hosting them”. In the statement, it was noted that in-depth discussions would take place at a meeting of the Strategic Dialogue Higher Coordination Committee, expected to be held in Washington, D.C., in July.

37. On 24 June, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, Ayman Safadi, visited Baghdad, where he met with the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, who underlined the need for joint efforts in the fight against COVID-19.

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

A. Political activities

38. My Special Representative continued to meet with the political leaders of Iraq to encourage the complete formation of the Cabinet, including the appointment of women, so that the new administration could swiftly address long-standing challenges, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and declining oil prices. In her meetings with the Prime Minister and others, she welcomed the Government’s call to improve the delivery of public services, combat corruption, organize credible, free and fair elections, and promote justice and accountability for human rights violations committed in relation to popular protests.

39. My Special Representative also reaffirmed the continued support of the United Nations to the people and Government of Iraq in their efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic. She commended the determination shown by national, regional and local authorities to contain COVID-19 through the adoption of early and sustained measures with strong community support. Following an increase in infections across many governorates, on 24 June, my Special Representative participated in a joint press conference with the Minister for Health and the WHO Representative in Iraq concerning public health directives to contain the spread of COVID-19.

40. My Special Representative also continued her efforts to assist in improving relations between Baghdad and Erbil. In her meetings, both in Baghdad and in Erbil, she stressed the urgent need to find a structural solution to critical pending issues, such as the federal budget and oil- and revenue-sharing. In addition, she called on both parties to reach agreement on stable security and governance frameworks for Sinjar and Kirkuk.

41. During her briefing to the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council on 29 April on COVID-19 responses, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance expressed concern that the restrictive measures had led to a substantial increase in incidents of domestic violence, at a time when support services, including access to shelters and the possibility of lodging complaints, had become inaccessible to victims. During a separate briefing to the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on 11 May, my Deputy Special Representative updated members on the child

protection work that UNAMI undertakes, including advocacy with the Government for the adoption of an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

B. Electoral assistance

42. UNAMI continued its electoral assistance activities through engagement with the Independent High Electoral Commission and other Iraqi electoral interlocutors.

43. Following the approval of its internal by-laws and structure, the Independent High Electoral Commission proceeded with the recruitment of directors for its headquarters and governorate offices to fill posts vacated pursuant to the Law on the Independent High Electoral Commission (2019). Some electoral stakeholders raised concerns with UNAMI about the recruitment process, including the need to adhere to agreed selection criteria and maintain transparency and inclusiveness in the process. On 7 June, the Independent High Electoral Commission assured UNAMI in writing that recruitment standards were followed and that all new appointees would be evaluated over a three-month period. However, recruitment for those positions has now been put on hold pending a review.

44. On 6 June, the Independent High Electoral Commission announced that the Council of Ministers had established a committee chaired by an electoral commissioner to identify a commercial company to audit election technologies to be used in the next elections. During the reporting period, UNAMI supported discussions within the Independent High Electoral Commission on election technologies and audit and is awaiting an invitation to participate in the technology committee. It also supported the Commission in designing and developing a website to enhance its communication and external relations strategies.

45. With the resumption of the legislative session, the Council of Representatives and its legal committee resumed discussions on the pending technical annexes of the electoral law concerning new boundary delimitation and seat allocation. Political blocs submitted to UNAMI their proposals for the determination of electoral boundaries and the allocation of seats, including those reserved for women, and sought the technical analysis of the Mission. On that basis, UNAMI shared its analysis with the Commission, along with a mathematical simulation for defining constituencies and electoral seats under the new single non-transferable voting system. In its interaction with electoral stakeholders, UNAMI continued to advise on the importance of involving relevant technical institutions, including the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Ministries of Planning, Trade, Interior, and Displacement and Migration as a technical group to work with the parliamentary legal committee on the more technical aspects of constituency delineation.

C. Human rights and rule of law developments and activities

46. Ongoing concerns over the lack of accountability for demonstration-related human rights violations were highlighted in a UNAMI special human rights report on demonstrations, which was issued on 23 May. In the report, UNAMI presented findings on patterns of the abduction, torture and disappearance of protesters and activists by unidentified armed groups referred to as “militia” from 1 October 2019 to 21 March 2020 and called on the Government of Iraq to locate those who remained missing and to investigate and prosecute those responsible. In response, the Government publicly reaffirmed its commitment to uphold its international human rights obligations and to undertake an independent investigation into the concerns raised in the report.

47. During the reporting period, the Government announced its intention to establish a fact-finding committee to ensure justice and accountability for violations and abuses carried out during the demonstrations that began in October 2019. The Government also established a “list committee”, which would compile the names of those killed or injured during the demonstrations and provide compensation to the families of victims. UNAMI continues to engage with the Government in support of efforts to promote accountability. After the killing on 6 July of Hisham Al-Hashemi, a prominent security analyst and adviser to senior officials, the Supreme Judicial Council established a judiciary body to investigate the killing in coordination with the Ministry of the Interior.

48. On 11 May, at the request of the Prime Minister, Basrah police arrested five armed guards after one protester was killed and five were injured by live ammunition fired from a building housing the offices of a political party. On 9 June, the Dhi Qar Court of Appeal issued an arrest warrant for 11 police officers in connection with their alleged involvement in the unlawful killing of protesters in Nasiriyah in October 2019.

49. In addition to those in the southern and central governorates, protests also took place in the Kurdistan Region, during which the arbitrary arrest of journalists and protesters, including teachers, was reported. On 16 May, at least eight journalists and other protesters were arrested and briefly detained in Dahuk Governorate during a peaceful protest. On 2 June, two journalists were arrested during a protest in Sulaymaniyah and their USB data sticks were confiscated.

50. In June, in cooperation with the al-Namaa Centre for Human Rights, an Iraqi non-governmental organization, UNAMI launched an illustration-based nationwide campaign to raise awareness of the human rights impact of COVID-19. Using cartoons commissioned from Iraqi artists, the campaign addresses the human rights dimensions of COVID-19 through the dissemination of images and messages through social media, murals in urban areas and posters in areas with limited Internet access. The campaign seeks to counter the stigma surrounding COVID-19 that relates to women’s access to health care, raises awareness of the increased risk of domestic violence and highlights the need to ensure access to education for all Iraqi children during the pandemic, in particular those affected by poverty and displacement.

51. The United Nations Population Fund and gender-based violence subcluster partners conducted a COVID-19 assessment in April and May 2020 that revealed a sharp rise in incidents of gender-based violence. Some 94 per cent of total respondents reported an increase in acts of domestic violence perpetrated by a spouse or other family member(s) within the household.

52. In May, UNAMI and United Nations country team partners launched an information campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence through social media and text messaging. The campaign followed advocacy by UNAMI and United Nations country team partners, after which the President of the Supreme Judicial Council issued a directive on 22 April that instructed the competent courts to act against perpetrators of domestic violence and to enable support to victims.

53. In May, as part of additional measures to reduce detainee overcrowding in response to COVID-19, the Ministry of Justice released 72 prisoners following a presidential special pardon. On 15 April and 12 May, the Ministry of Justice submitted lists to the Council of Ministers with a total of 1,527 prisoners (adults and children) eligible for release under planned presidential pardons. Unconfirmed reports of COVID-19 cases among inmates and custodial staff have increased, but numbers have not been published by the Ministry of Justice.

54. From 1 May to 9 July, UNAMI documented 103 civilian casualties (49 deaths, including 1 woman, and 54 injured, including 5 children and 5 women). A total of 40 deaths and 45 injuries were attributed to ISIL and resulted from small arms attacks, the use of improvised explosive devices and rocket or mortar attacks; 7 deaths and 6 injuries were attributed to Turkish military air strikes in the north of Iraq; and the remaining 2 persons killed and 3 injured were attributed to unidentified armed groups. In its statement of 26 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey denied that its operations in Iraq had caused any civilian casualties.

55. The country task force on monitoring and reporting continued to document the impact of conflict-related violence on children. In my report on children and armed conflict issued on 9 June ([A/74/845-S/2020/525](#)), I commended the Government for its engagement on child protection while expressing concern over the situation of children detained on national security-related charges and the ongoing killing and maiming of children caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war.

56. During the reporting period, UNAMI facilitated ongoing engagement between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations mechanisms dealing with enforced disappearances, including the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Some outstanding cases of enforced disappearances, including from Iraq, were reviewed by the Working Group in an online dialogue on enforced disappearances during its 121st session, held from 11 to 16 May. On 13 June, the Minister of the Interior and his Kurdistan Region counterpart formed a joint committee to intensify the search for Yazidis still missing after their abduction by ISIL.

57. On 19 June, UNAMI and United Nations country team partners marked the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict with the release of a short video on conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq. UNAMI commended the efforts of the Government to address the concerns of survivors of conflict-related violence perpetrated by ISIL, including through the draft Yazidi survivors law, and urged that the law be expanded to include all survivors of all forms of conflict-related sexual violence and ensure legal provisions for the registration and legal recognition of children born of rape, as well as acceptance by their mother's community.

D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

58. The COVID-19 pandemic has been both a focus of efforts and a challenge for humanitarian actors in Iraq. On 6 May, 2,480 cases of COVID-19 had been reported. That figure had risen to 69,612 cases by 9 July, including 2,882 reported deaths. WHO attributes the rise to a combination of increased laboratory testing capacity and non-compliance with imposed restrictions. WHO and Iraqi health authorities have coordinated the supply of testing kits and personal protective equipment. However, there is a shortfall that is exacerbated by global shortages. WHO continued to provide technical support at borders and to airport authorities; risk communication and health messaging; and case management and testing. WHO has also focused efforts on the 1.4 million displaced persons in Iraq and worked to ensure that camp health services are maintained, alongside COVID-19 detection and mitigation efforts. At the time of writing, only one infected patient had been identified in a camp for Syrian refugees. The entire camp was quarantined, and the case was managed according to established protocols, with no further spread reported at the time of writing.

59. Iraq is part of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 that I launched on 25 May. The humanitarian community has identified 54 activities related to the prevention and mitigation of and response to COVID-19, which will require \$263.3 million to implement in Iraq. As of 14 June, Iraq had received \$32.8 million

of the requested funding. A further \$122.4 million has already been requested through the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq. Under the response plan, a total of \$520 million has been requested to meet the needs of 1.77 million vulnerable people in Iraq, including internally displaced persons and returnees. As at 16 June, the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan had attracted \$148 million (22 per cent) of funding.

60. Humanitarian actors in Iraq have continued to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their operations. While the Government-imposed lockdown and curfew have been partially lifted, national and local authorities continue to enforce intermittent travel restrictions. Some inter-governorate travel has been prohibited, creating difficulties for humanitarian partners to move cargo and personnel between their transport hubs in Baghdad or Erbil and field locations. Humanitarian actors are exempted from the movement restrictions, but many continued to report access challenges, an issue brought to the attention of the Government in November 2019. Access challenges also extended to the delivery of materials related to the prevention and mitigation of and response to COVID-19. Movement restrictions have also led to income losses for internally displaced persons previously employed as day labourers.

61. The United Nations Office for Project Services continued to run the Iraq Information Centre, which provided critical information to beneficiaries to help address basic needs on behalf of the humanitarian country team. During the reporting period, the Centre received 4,459 calls (70 per cent male callers, 30 per cent female callers). The majority related to loss of income, food insecurity and emergency livelihood.

62. In response to increased humanitarian needs, the World Food Programme (WFP) and its partners provided food assistance to an additional 28,000 refugees and internally displaced persons during the reporting period. WFP now provides COVID-19-related assistance to a total of 280,000 internally displaced persons and 76,000 refugees. In addition, WFP, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Bank, conducted monthly assessments during the reporting period on the impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity in Iraq.

63. WHO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) scaled up their COVID-19-related support in partnership with the Ministry of Health and through generous contributions from international partners. The support included the rehabilitation of isolation rooms and the provision of medical equipment, test kits and personal protective equipment in 12 governorates. In addition, UNDP provided psychosocial support on gender-based violence in times of lockdown for 7,000 women and raised awareness of the issue on social media and through art.

64. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) developed online forms for its individual livelihoods assistance and Enterprise Development Fund in order to continue to provide services. Over 27,000 online applications were received, and the first round of financial assistance was provided in June. During the reporting period, IOM provided 23,239 primary health-care consultations, transported 1,914 patients to hospitals and reached 5,000 people through health promotion activities. IOM also supported 2,293 people with mental health and psychosocial services (through 2,976 consultations) and reached 888 beneficiaries in 90 awareness-raising or sensitization sessions on the mental health dimensions of COVID-19. The National Tuberculosis Programme screened 930 people, identified 181 cases and collected 50 samples for further analysis. IOM also registered 80 victims of trafficking who had lost their jobs owing to COVID-19.

65. On 20 May, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Iraq Returns Working Group published step-by-step guidance on how to file claims for housing and property damage under the Law on Compensation. During the

reporting period, UN-Habitat issued 175 occupancy certificates to Yazidi returnees. Previously, Yazidis were not permitted to register land under their own names and faced challenges because they could not prove prior ownership. Thus far, UN-Habitat has issued a total of 5,500 official occupancy certificates.

66. With field missions halted, the Mine Action Service delivered risk education remotely and piloted the use of smartphone applications to spread life-saving messages to at-risk populations. The Mine Action Service officially launched a new partnership initiative to build up the explosive hazard management capacity of Iraqi non-governmental organizations in the second quarter of 2020, so that future operations can be managed independently and sustainably.

67. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supported a television channel of the federal Ministry of Education that broadcasts lessons to students who are unable to physically attend school owing to COVID-19. A curriculum of 138 lessons for primary education and accelerated learning programmes has been produced. In the Kurdistan Region, UNESCO supported the regional Ministry of Education through the upgrading and installation of services in the Ministry to increase the capacity of a new online learning platform to enable students to catch up with lessons. UNESCO also conducted the first online training on safety for journalists and combating COVID-19 misinformation.

68. To enhance social cohesion and solidarity, UNDP supported 35 local peace structures during the reporting period, including women peace groups in four governorates, to reach 8,250 people from the most vulnerable groups and respond to their emergency food and hygiene needs. In addition, UNDP and IOM developed a joint United Nations initiative to address the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons who are perceived as being affiliated with ISIL and to support the Government of Iraq in tackling the issue. UNDP continues to support the critical stabilization efforts of the Government within the five governorates in Iraq that were previously under the control of ISIL. During the reporting period, UNDP completed nine infrastructure projects and, through its partners, provided cash assistance and food baskets to some of the most vulnerable individuals.

IV. Security and operational issues

A. Update on security arrangements

69. The Department of Safety and Security in Iraq continuously monitored developments throughout the country and implemented risk management measures to enable United Nations operations. Regular security advisories and alerts, including broadcasts related to the outbreak of COVID-19, were issued to keep United Nations personnel informed of precautionary measures.

70. During the reporting period, the Department of Safety and Security supported an average of two field missions per day across the country, with assessed risk levels ranging from medium to high. Close coordination with the host Government has been paramount to ensure the proper flow of information and the necessary security support for United Nations operations, in particular considering the movement and access restrictions recently imposed to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

B. Mission facilities, logistics, aviation, financial and legal issues

71. The Mission has taken extensive steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. United Nations compounds in Iraq have, to date, remained free of infection. UNAMI

established a COVID-19 crisis management working group for the day-to-day management of the crisis. As the situation deteriorated further, a crisis management team chaired by the designated official was activated. Further medical infrastructure changes were made to create isolation units to handle potential COVID-19 cases in UNAMI clinics in Baghdad, Erbil and Kirkuk. Other additional measures included an awareness-raising campaign on the spread and mitigation of COVID-19; the creation of an online repository of all COVID-19-related instructions and guidelines; the limitation of access to United Nations compounds, with a strict entry and exit protocol; and protocols for attending external meetings.

72. UNAMI, with the support of the Government of Iraq, has developed partnerships with United Nations missions in the region, as well a regional airline to create travel options to and from the home countries of staff members and partners of the Mission. Travel was arranged for over 200 staff members to various countries despite the cessation of most commercial air operations.

73. UNAMI continued to provide logistical and administrative support to the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the delivery of its mandate.

V. Observations

74. I welcome the formation of the new Government of Iraq, led by the Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi. Combating the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing the economic challenges and delivering on the Government's other priorities are critical. To implement the necessary measures, strong and constructive cooperation is needed between the executive and legislative branches, with the support of all political leaders, with a view to delivering swift and tangible improvements to the daily lives of the people of Iraq.

75. The government programme aims to address long-standing challenges, such as private sector development; combating corruption and implementing administrative reforms; and empowering youth. Those actions are critical for Iraq to achieve progress and will require strong domestic and international support. UNAMI and its country team partners remain strongly committed to playing their part in that endeavour.

76. The Government's efforts to build balanced and mutually beneficial relations with regional countries and strategic partners are encouraging. Similarly, initiatives to seek support from international financial institutions and Member States are important for the development of programmes to reduce the impact of the health and economic crises. I reiterate my previous calls for all parties concerned to seize the opportunity to resolve all outstanding issues that escalate tensions in Iraq and the wider region through peaceful means, including dialogue and negotiation.

77. The government programme puts a priority on the holding of free, fair and credible early elections. As a first step, it is critical that the Council of Representatives finalize the technical annexes to the electoral law. In addition, efforts should continue to ensure the effective functioning of the Independent High Electoral Commission. UNAMI remains strongly committed to further advising, supporting and assisting the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission with efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned elections, in accordance with Security Council resolution [2522 \(2020\)](#).

78. Effective cooperation between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government remains essential to addressing the COVID-19 and economic crises, and to resolving other outstanding issues. I welcome the resumption of talks

between Baghdad and Erbil and encourage both parties to resolve differences in a timely and sustainable manner.

79. The recent efforts of the Government of Iraq to address human rights violations against peaceful protesters are commendable, including its intention to establish a fact-finding committee to investigate violence during the demonstrations and provide compensation for the families of the victims. I further encourage the Government to determine the whereabouts of all missing protesters and take steps towards identifying and holding accountable those responsible for all instances of abduction and disappearance, deliberate killings and excessive use of force.

80. I also call on the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to ensure that the freedom of expression for peaceful protesters, civil society activists, journalists, media workers and human rights defenders is fully protected and that all citizens are able to express legitimate concerns, in accordance with human rights standards and the rule of law.

81. The efforts of the Government of Iraq to address COVID-19, control the spread of the virus, save lives and provide financial respite to those affected by necessary restrictions deserve support. Regardless of those efforts, the impact of the pandemic will be broad and long-lasting. I repeat my call for international support for the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, including for the key activities identified in it for Iraq.

82. That support should not come at the expense of other vital humanitarian activities. The continuation of the current shortfall in the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq would have a negative impact on 1.77 million vulnerable people in Iraq, including internally displaced persons and returnees. I therefore call for further support for the Plan and for the Government's vision of ending internal displacement.

83. COVID-19-related movement restrictions have compounded existing humanitarian access constraints within Iraq. I urge the Government to expedite access for humanitarian operations throughout the country. Furthermore, the restrictions should not exacerbate existing inequalities or disproportionately affect the rights of certain vulnerable groups, including women, children, members of minority communities and persons deprived of their liberty.

84. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and the United Nations staff in Iraq, for their continued dedication to implementing the Organization's mandate during extraordinary times and under challenging circumstances.