



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
22 November 2019

Original: English

---

## Implementation of resolution 2470 (2019)

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2470 (2019), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on the 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 5 August 2019 (S/2019/660) and the briefing to the Security Council by my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI on 28 August 2019.

#### II. Summary of key political developments

##### A. Political situation

2. The reporting period witnessed large-scale public protests in October that rapidly spread and escalated. On 1 October, demonstrators gathered in Tahrir Square, Baghdad, demanding economic reforms, employment opportunities, reliable public services, effective and impartial governance, governmental accountability and an end to corruption. The demonstration turned violent as protesters attempted to cross the Jumhuriyah Bridge over the Tigris River towards the former International Zone, and were met with a forceful response from Iraqi security forces, who used water cannons, tear gas and live rounds. Protests continued in Baghdad on subsequent days and spread to the southern governorates. A curfew was imposed in Baghdad from 5 a.m. on 3 October until the morning of 5 October. Curfews were also imposed across the south of Iraq. The curfew was accompanied by blanket restrictions on access to the Internet, in particular social media sites. On 6 October, the Ministry of the Interior announced that official casualty figures stood at 104 dead (of which eight were members of the security forces) and 6,107 wounded (including 1,241 members of the security forces). In addition, the Ministry reported that a total of 51 government and private buildings, 8 political party offices and 52 military and civilian vehicles had been set on fire across the protest areas. By 7 October, the situation had calmed down in most areas.

3. On 2 October, Prime Minister Adil Abd Al-Mahdi, President Barham Salih and Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi issued a statement in which they recognized the right to peaceful protest, called for restraint and announced the launch of an



investigation into the violence and loss of life. In a nationally televised speech early on 4 October, the Prime Minister emphasized the need for unity, dialogue and remedial action, and underlined that the protesters had been heard. A speech by the Speaker was also broadcast later that day, in which he stated that he would deal with the protesters' demands in a genuine manner. In a sermon delivered on 4 October, the representative of Grand Ayatollah, Ali al-Sistani, urged all parties to refrain from violence, reminded the leadership and the political parties of Iraq of their responsibilities to the people of Iraq and called on the Government to take concrete measures to improve the lives of all Iraqis. In statements, the leaders of political parties and blocs condemned the violence against the protesters and called for measures to be taken by the Government to address their demands.

4. On 5 October, the Prime Minister chaired an extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers in which an initial package of 17 measures were decided to address the protesters' demands, including steps to provide housing and employment opportunities.

5. On 7 October, the President also delivered a televised speech in which he called for dialogue and restraint. He urged the security forces to identify and hold to account those who had perpetrated violence during the protests and agreed with demonstrators' calls for social justice, freedom and security.

6. On 8 October, the Council of Ministers announced a further package of 13 measures, which the Prime Minister then outlined in a televised speech on 9 October. The package included the establishment of a high committee for the distribution of residential lands that would be chaired by the Prime Minister, as well as measures to encourage youth employment. In addition, on the same day, the Council of Representatives approved recommendations made by a committee that had been formed to consider the protesters' demands.

7. In a sermon delivered on 11 October, the representative of the Grand Ayatollah held the Government and security forces responsible for the use of excessive force against protesters, including "sniping" by "unlawful armed elements", and demanded a credible investigation into the events surrounding the protests, to be completed within two weeks. In addition, the Marja'iyah called on the Government to prioritize reforms and the fight against corruption.

8. On 12 October, the Prime Minister announced the formation of a High Investigative Committee to identify and bring to justice perpetrators of violence during the protests from 1 to 7 October. On 22 October, the Committee released its report, stating that 149 civilians and 8 security personnel had been killed, and 4,207 civilians and 1,287 security personnel injured. The Committee's key findings included excessive use of force by security forces, a lack of control over security forces, a lack of riot units, as well as violent behaviour by some demonstrators and attacks on government and public property conducted by infiltrators seeking to derail the demonstrations. The Committee recommended that its findings be referred to the judiciary and that several security personnel be dismissed. On 23 October, the National Security Council affirmed the right to peaceful demonstrations and instructed the Iraqi security forces to guarantee the protection of demonstrators and public and private property.

9. On 24 October, the Prime Minister delivered a national televised address in which he pledged to undertake further reforms, including: the appointment of new ministers based on competence, with a stronger presence of women and young people; the reduction of senior officials' salaries, including those of the Prime Minister, President and Speaker; the establishment of a social insurance fund for unemployed citizens; and the formation of a central court for combatting corruption.

10. On 25 October, a representative of the Grand Ayatollah expressed his support for the demands of the protesters and called for peaceful demonstrations. He strongly criticized the report of the High Investigative Committee and demanded that an independent judicial committee be established to conduct further investigations. The Marja'iyah stressed that the State should have sole control of the use of force and asked the security forces to protect the demonstrators.

11. Large-scale demonstrations resumed on 25 October in Baghdad, as well as in Babil, Basrah, Dhi Qar, Karbala', Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qadisiyah and Wasit governorates. Protesters expanded their earlier demands to include political accountability for the loss of life, the resignation of the Government and electoral and constitutional reforms. According to figures released by the Iraqi Human Rights Commission on 27 October, 74 people were killed and 3,654 were injured during the first three days.

12. During a special session on 28 October, the Council of Representatives adopted measures to address protesters' demands, including the cancellation of State officials' financial privileges. The Council dissolved all provincial, district and subdistrict councils outside the Kurdistan Region and assumed the administrative and financial supervision of the Governors until the provincial council elections. A special measure was adopted for Kirkuk whereby the members of parliament from the Governorate would supervise the Governor and his deputies. In addition, the Council of Representatives voted to form a constitutional review committee of 18 members, from all political blocs, tasked with providing recommendations for constitutional amendments within four months.

13. On 31 October, in a televised address, President Salih stated that the Prime Minister had agreed to submit his resignation provided that there was no constitutional vacuum and that all political blocs agreed on an "acceptable alternative". He announced that the Presidency had initiated the drafting of a new comprehensive electoral framework that would aim to increase the participation of young people in political life and replace the current Independent High Electoral Commission. Following the adoption of the new law, he would approve the holding of early elections.

14. Prior to the outbreak of protests, political actors had been focusing on the current round of government appointments, the implementation of the government programme and enactment of key legislation. On 3 August, the Council of Representatives concluded the second legislative term of its first parliamentary year and entered recess until 14 September. The Government had yet to reach consensus on several positions essential to State functions, including the Minister for Education, the Central Bank Governor, the President of the Audit Commission, the Deputy Minister for Oil and the Deputy Minister for Industry. Furthermore, citing corruption and neglect of the health-care sector, the Minister for Health and the Environment, Alaa al-Alwan, submitted his resignation to the Prime Minister on 12 September. The Council of Ministers rejected his resignation, placing the Minister on extended leave until such a time as the matter could be resolved.

15. Progress was made in the election of chairs, deputy chairs and rapporteurs of parliamentary committees, though the chairs of 3 of the 23 parliamentary committees remained vacant. To date, three chair positions were held by female members of parliament, including the Committee for Higher Education, the Committee for Women, the Family and Childhood and the Committee for Culture, Tourism and Archaeology.

16. On 8 August, the parliamentary Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the Government Programme announced the completion of its evaluation for the period up to April 2019. In its report, published on 1 July, the Committee disputed

aspects of the Government's own reporting, claiming, inter alia, that the Government had overstated the rate of project implementation and recommending the use of stronger indicators to measure results.

17. On 17 September, as part of the Government's efforts to address social, reconstruction and economic needs, the Council of Ministers approved a draft law on the establishment of a reconstruction council that was sent to the Council of Representatives for endorsement. The draft law aimed to establish oversight of infrastructure and other major projects throughout the country, to promote investment and to tackle youth unemployment. Various experts called for the inclusion in the draft law of financial accountability mechanisms for the Council board members.

18. Meanwhile, the Government maintained its focus on countering corruption. The Supreme Council for Combating Corruption continued to meet on a monthly basis, chaired by the Prime Minister. On 11 October, the Council referred to judicial authorities the cases of nine senior officials – including former ministers, deputy ministers and governors – for investigation into their alleged corruption.

19. The Council of Representatives reconvened on 14 September. During the opening session, an agreement was reached to continue work on nine sets of legislation, including amendments to the Commission of Integrity Law. The Council called on the Government to submit further draft laws for its consideration, including the draft 2020 federal budget law and the long-stalled draft hydrocarbon law. Members also voted to form temporary committees to monitor government efforts to preserve the sovereignty of Iraq and to discuss the issue of missing persons and enforced disappearances.

20. On 8 October, the Council of Representatives abolished the offices of Inspectors-General by voting to annul the laws that had been used to establish them. The work of the Inspectors-General would be transferred to existing oversight institutions, including the Integrity Commission and the Federal Board of Supreme Audit. In the same session, the Council voted to proceed with legislative measures that would allow the immediate suspension of all provincial councils, all of which had exceeded their legal term, rather than wait until March 2020, the period stipulated in the existing Governorate Council Electoral Law of 2018.

21. On 10 October, the Council of Representatives voted to accept the resignation of the Minister for Health and endorsed the Prime Minister's proposed replacement, Jaafar Allawi. In addition, the Prime Minister's candidate for Minister for Education and the Cabinet's first female member, Suha Ali Bek, was endorsed and sworn in. Both endorsements were prompted by the Prime Minister's proposal to reshuffle his cabinet in response to the popular unrest.

22. In response to a string of explosions at facilities used by popular mobilization forces and an attack on a convoy of those forces close to the Syrian border in August, the Prime Minister, President and Speaker conducted extensive consultations with the forces' leaders as well as senior politicians to seek a common response. All parties publicly emphasized the need to await the results of official investigations, noting that the State bore primary responsibility for protecting the Iraqi people.

23. Meanwhile, progress was made on completing government formation in the Kurdistan Region. On 8 September, the President of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani, issued a presidential decree appointing two Vice Presidents: Jafaar Mustafa Ali, from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan; and Mustafa Sayyid Qadir, from the Movement for Change/Gorran. The positions of Minister for Natural Resources and Kurdistan Region Security Chancellor, both assigned to the Kurdistan Democratic Party, had yet to be filled.

24. Political parties in the Kurdistan Region had begun planning their national congresses, to take place before the end of the year. On 14 September, Gorran held a congress in Sulaymaniyah and re-elected Omar Said Ali as its General Coordinator. On 5 October, the New Generation Movement held its first congress after its formation in January 2018 and re-elected Shaswar Abdulwahid as President.

25. During the inaugural parliamentary session on 1 September, following consultations with all major political parties, the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region, Rewaz Faiq, set out a programme to help deliver the Kurdistan Regional Government's reform and services agenda. Discussions were ongoing on the reform programme, budget arrangements, the drafting of a Kurdistan Region constitution and relations between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

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

26. The federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government continued their dialogue to resolve outstanding issues over oil, revenue-sharing and security arrangements, through a series of bilateral ministerial-level visits to discuss and clarify positions. In early September, the Council of Representatives leadership met with members of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament to review diplomatic representation, legal and administrative issues and ways to strengthen ties between the federal Parliament and the Kurdistan Regional Parliament.

27. On 17 and 18 September, President Salih and the Finance Minister, Fuad Hussein, met with the Prime Minister, President and Speaker of the Kurdistan Region in Erbil to discuss the draft 2020 federal budget law, the implementation of article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution on disputed internal boundaries, as well as funding for the Peshmerga forces and civil servants' salaries. On 19 September, the Speaker of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives discussed the draft law, the strengthening of relations between Baghdad and Erbil and the need for regular consultations.

28. On 30 July, the Federal Supreme Court issued a ruling on article 140 of the Constitution, which sets out a process for normalization, census and referendum in the disputed areas of Iraq. The ruling proclaimed the continued validity of article 140. On 7 August, the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government announced that a committee would be formed to follow up on the implementation of article 140 with the federal Government. In early September, representatives from the Kurdistan Region Statistics Board and the Federal Directorate General of Statistics began discussions on the implementation of the 2020 census in areas subject to article 140.

## **C. Security situation**

29. Remnants of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continued to launch frequent asymmetrical attacks against the Iraqi people and security forces, particularly in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. In response, the Iraqi security forces continued to pursue ISIL cells throughout the country. Between 5 and 7 August, the security forces conducted the third phase of Operation Will of Victory, clearing areas in western Ninawa and northern Diyala Governorates. Phase four of the operation took place between 24 and 27 August, during which the security forces cleared large parts of the Anbar desert. Between 16 and 20 September, the Iraqi security forces conducted phase five, clearing parts of the Anbar desert towards the border with Saudi Arabia. Phase six, launched

on 6 October, aimed to clear areas of northern Anbar, south-west Salah al-Din and Ninawa Governorates while also reinforcing the border with the Syrian Arab Republic against possible ISIL incursion.

30. On 12 August, a large explosion destroyed an ammunition depot of the popular mobilization forces on the southern outskirts of Baghdad, with shrapnel from heavy munitions damaging civilian housing in the vicinity. On 14 August, the National Security Council decided to launch an investigation into the explosion, compensate the victims and develop comprehensive plans for relocating ammunition depots and military camps outside built-up areas. The Council also decided to cancel all existing flight approvals and subject the future use of Iraqi airspace to the exclusive approval of the Prime Minister or those duly authorized to act on his behalf.

31. On 20 August, explosions occurred at an ammunition depot of the popular mobilization forces in Salah al-Din Governorate. The following day, the Deputy Chairman of the Popular Mobilization Commission, Jamal al-Ibrahimi, issued a statement accusing external actors of repeated attacks on its bases. A subsequent statement by the National Security Adviser and Chairman of the Popular Mobilization Commission, Faleh al-Fayyad, clarified that his deputy's statement did not represent the official position of the Commission or the Government. He did state, however, that ongoing investigations suggested that the attacks had indeed been launched by external actors.

32. On 25 August, an attack on a convoy of the popular mobilization forces in western Anbar Governorate, close to the border with the Syrian Arab Republic, resulted in the death of the convoy commander.

33. The Iraqi authorities continued to investigate the three incidents, as well as earlier similar explosions at bases used by the popular mobilization forces. The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on 26 August rejecting interference by external actors in the internal affairs of Iraq, noting that Iraq would take the diplomatic and legal measures necessary, including through the Security Council, to address any action that violated its sovereignty.

34. On 23 September, three consecutive mortar rounds landed in the former International Zone in Baghdad. During the night of 2 October, a rocket landed in the vicinity of Jadriyah Bridge, south-west of the former International Zone, and on 3 October at approximately 3 a.m. local time, two Katyusha rockets landed within the former International Zone, one in the vicinity of the Turkish embassy and the other near the "crossed swords" monument.

35. According to the Ministry of National Defence of Turkey, the Turkish air force continued to launch airstrikes against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) positions in Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. On 23 August, the Turkish armed forces launched phase III of Operation Claw, a combination of ground operations and airstrikes focused on the Sinat-Haftanin area of northern Dahuk Governorate. On 18 September, a spokesperson of the Turkish Ministry of National Defence stated that a total of 417 PKK elements had been killed or captured since Operation Claw had begun on 27 May 2019.

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

36. Iraq continued its efforts to establish stronger relations with its neighbours and to diversify its regional economic partnerships. During the reporting period, Iraq consolidated and expanded its cooperation with Arab and Gulf partners in particular, culminating in a number of bilateral political, security and economic agreements.

37. The impact of regional tensions on Iraq remained high on the domestic political agenda. During the reporting period, the country's leadership continued actively to promote Iraq as a venue for promoting stability in the region, rather than for proxy conflict, while calling for regional dialogue based on non-interference in domestic affairs as well as respect for sovereignty.

38. On 2 September, during a visit to the Russian Federation, Mr. al-Fayyad held meetings with the Secretary of the National Security Council of the Russian Federation, Nikolai Patrushev, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and the Special Presidential Envoy for the Middle East and African Countries, Mikhail Bogdanov. All parties agreed on the need to consolidate efforts to promote security and stability in the region.

39. On 6 September, according to a statement of the Prime Minister's office, the Prime Minister received a telephone call from Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, during which they discussed collaboration efforts between the two countries and parties within and outside the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. On 25 September, the Prime Minister visited Saudi Arabia and met with King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss regional political and security developments, including the 14 September attacks on oil installations in Saudi Arabia. On 15 September, the office of the Prime Minister released a statement denying reports that the attacks had been launched from Iraqi territory.

40. On 10 September, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Alhakim visited Cairo to chair the 152nd Ordinary Session of the Arab League Council. In his opening speech, he reiterated the commitment of Iraq to promoting peace and stability in the region, with full respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The following day, Mr. Alhakim travelled to Tunis, where he co-chaired, with the Foreign Minister of Tunisia, Khemais Jhinaoui, the 15th meeting of the Iraqi-Tunisian Joint Committee. The Ministers signed memorandums of understanding on security cooperation, tourism, transportation and visa facilitation.

41. From 18 to 24 September, the Prime Minister visited China with an accompanying delegation of ministers and provincial governors. He attended the Global Industrialization Conference and met with the President of China, Xi Jinping, and the Premier of the State Council, Li Keqiang. During the visit, eight cooperation agreements were signed between China and Iraq on finance, trade, security, construction, communications, culture, education and foreign affairs.

42. On 25 September, the President participated in the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, where he held a number of bilateral meetings with other international representatives, including a conversation with Mr. Pompeo; a tripartite meeting with the King of Jordan, Abdullah II, and the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah Al Sisi; and meetings with the President of the United States, Donald Trump, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Boris Johnson.

43. On 12 October, the Foreign Minister chaired an emergency session of the Council of Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs at the headquarters of the League of Arab States to discuss developments in the north-east region of the Syrian Arab Republic.

44. During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq also welcomed several high-level visitors, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Jean-Yves Le Drian; the Minister of Defence of Germany, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer; the Foreign Minister of Egypt, Sameh Shokry; the Foreign Minister of Jordan, Ayman

Safadi; the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov; the Russian Federation Special Presidential Envoy for the Middle East and African Countries, Mikhail Bogdanov; and the Minister for Energy and Natural Resources of Turkey, Fatih Donmez. The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, and the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Jens Stoltenberg, also visited Iraq.

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

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

45. Since the protests began on 1 October, my Special Representative continuously engaged with interlocutors across the political spectrum, calling on the Government to uphold its responsibility to protect the life of protestors and ensure accountability for human rights violations, to safeguard the rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and to implement swift measures that address the legitimate demands of the demonstrators, including through a national dialogue. She also held meetings with various groups of demonstrators and facilitated meetings between the demonstrators and senior government authorities and political leaders to explore options for defusing tensions and involving protesters in reform discussions.

46. Throughout the reporting period, my Special Representative met with government officials, representatives of political parties, parliamentarians and civil society and religious and community leaders to discuss a wide range of issues, including national reconciliation, the upcoming April 2020 Provincial Council elections and the fight against corruption. She also engaged with the senior leadership of Iraq to discuss the domestic impact of increasing tensions in the region as well as the return of Iraqi nationals, including alleged ISIL affiliates from the Syrian Arab Republic to Iraq.

47. From 1 to 4 August, my Special Representative participated in events in Baghdad and the Governorates of Ninawa and Dahuk to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the ISIL atrocities against the Yazidi community in Sinjar. She met with the newly-elected Yazidi Prince, spoke to survivors, visited a mass burial site and participated in the distribution of home occupancy certificates to Yazidi returnees. She also called on the governments in Baghdad and Erbil to bridge their differences and set aside partisan interests, emphasizing the need not only for a unified administration and stable security structures in Sinjar, but also for the unhindered flow of humanitarian assistance to enable safe and dignified returns. The Yazidi community requested support in bringing back their missing loved ones, many of whom were believed to be held in captivity in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in the exhumation of all identified mass graves.

48. On 9 September, at the invitation of President of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani, my Special Representative planted a tree in Erbil as part of a greening initiative throughout Iraq. She also met with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Masrour Barzani, to discuss Baghdad-Erbil relations, a topic frequently raised in conversations with the federal Government throughout the reporting period. She underlined the importance of translating good intentions between the two governments into concrete results, including agreements on oil and revenue-sharing.

49. The issue of internally displaced persons remained high on my Special Representative's agenda. On 15 September, she travelled with Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi to Anbar Governorate, where she visited a camp for internally displaced



persons, met with tribal leaders and assessed obstacles for the return of the displaced to their areas of origin. On 30 September, she visited Arab and Kaka'i villages in Kirkuk with the acting Governor, Rakan al-Jabouri, and listened to the concerns of local officials and community members about land rights and the destruction of their homes. On 2 October, she met the Minister for Migration and Displacement, Nawfal Moussa, to examine ways to foster reconstruction and social cohesion, underlining that these were minimum requirements for safe, dignified and voluntary returns. The two also discussed the need to put mechanisms in place to process the return of Iraqi nationals, including alleged ISIL affiliates from the al-Hawl camp in the Syrian Arab Republic.

50. In a meeting on 18 September, my Special Representative discussed with Deputy Speaker Bashir Al-Haddad possible ways to facilitate voting for internally displaced persons in the forthcoming Provincial Council elections. More generally, my Special Representative reiterated the strong commitment of the United Nations to continue to provide effective electoral assistance to the Government of Iraq, in accordance with the Mission's mandate.

51. On 19 September, in the presence of senior local government officials, my Special Representative inaugurated the new UNAMI field office in Mosul, which will enable the Mission to monitor closely the political and security situation in Ninawa Governorate and engage with a wide range of stakeholders, such as local authorities and minority communities, in support of post-conflict stabilization efforts in Iraq.

52. My Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance continued to lead regional workshops with young people in Iraq, organized by UNAMI in cooperation with the Committee for Coexistence and Societal Peace of the Prime Minister's Office and the al-Amal Association, an Iraqi non-governmental organization. Bringing together youth representatives and senior local political actors to discuss solutions, the workshops focused on the challenges faced by young people in Iraq, including unemployment, security, limited access to local decision-making and environmental concerns.

53. On 24 August, my Deputy Special Representative met with the General Coordinator of Gorran, Omar Said Ali, to discuss the political situation in the country, as well as the new Kurdistan Regional Government and its reform programme.

## **B. Electoral assistance**

54. The Independent High Electoral Commission commenced work on several areas of electoral preparations, following the passage of the amendment to the Governorate Council Electoral Law of 2018 and the setting of the election date for 1 April 2020. The Commission opened the process for the registration of political parties intending to participate in the elections. At the time of writing the present report, 219 political parties had already registered. At its request, UNAMI provided legal advice on the regulations governing the accreditation of coalitions and the registration of candidates.

55. The Independent High Electoral Commission also resumed voter registration updates in Ninawa and Kirkuk Governorates, and continued the biometric registration process for internally displaced voters. As at 26 October, some 97,000 internally displaced voters had opted for biometric registration, most of them currently located in Dahuk and Erbil.

56. In a meeting with UNAMI on 12 September, members of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament raised concerns regarding a provision in the amended electoral legislation requiring internally displaced voters to return to their home governorate to vote. That

provision was subject to constitutional challenge, awaiting a decision by the Federal Supreme Court. Pending further clarity on the matter, UNAMI was in discussion with the Independent High Electoral Commission and several other entities regarding measures that could be implemented during the elections to facilitate and safeguard the voting rights of internally displaced persons.

57. Following discussions between my Special Representative and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, UNAMI provided advice on options for enhancing parliamentary oversight of electoral processes.

58. UNAMI also advised the Independent High Electoral Commission on the importance of undertaking an independent audit of the information technology systems to be used for the elections, taking into consideration the letter dated 8 August from the Council of Ministers asking the Commission to consult with UNAMI in undertaking the audit process.

59. UNAMI continued to advise the Independent High Electoral Commission on mainstreaming gender throughout its programmes and activities. From 3 to 5 September, the Mission's Senior Gender Adviser and its Office of Electoral Assistance helped to organize a workshop for Commission staff on gender-responsive electoral processes.

60. At the request of the Kurdistan Region Independent High Electoral Commission, UNAMI provided expert support to several institutional capacity-building activities as prioritized in the Commission's strategic plan, including staff training in Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Dahuk. The Commission requested further UNAMI support in its information technology and management capacity.

61. In response to the demonstrators' demands for the comprehensive reform of Iraqi institutions, including the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Government requested that UNAMI provide technical support to the Presidential Electoral Reform Committee tasked with drafting a consolidated electoral law. The draft law was expected to be considered by the Council of Representatives in November 2019.

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

62. On 22 October, the UNAMI Human Rights Office released a special report on human rights in which it outlined key human rights concerns in the context of the demonstrations that had occurred in Iraq from 1 to 9 October 2019. UNAMI continued to monitor the resumption of demonstrations on 25 October. The Mission's findings indicated that serious human rights violations and abuse had been committed during the demonstrations.

63. During the reporting period, the UNAMI Human Rights Office documented 102 incidents that had resulted in 139 civilian casualties (49 deaths, including 3 children, and 90 injuries, including 15 children and 1 woman). The casualties had been caused mainly by improvised explosive devices and indirect attacks (mortars and rockets). In total, 53 per cent of the casualties had been attributed to ISIL. The trend of an overall decrease in civilian casualties had continued since the defeat of ISIL in December 2017. The casualties of the October demonstrations were not captured in this category.

64. UNAMI continued its engagement with the Government of Iraq on the issue of enforced disappearances, including the preparation of a draft law on the protection of persons from enforced disappearance. At an event organized on 29 August by the Prime Minister's Office and the International Committee for the Red Cross to mark the International Day of the Disappeared, my Deputy Special Representative gave an

address that underlined the right of families to hear the truth about the fate and whereabouts of victims of enforced disappearance. She recalled the provisions of Security Council resolution 2474 (2019), which covers the issue of missing persons in armed conflict, including the obligations incumbent on all parties to conflict in handling disappearances, detentions and deaths of civilian and armed actors.

65. UNAMI observed 144 trials and investigative hearings of criminal courts, with a focus on ISIL defendants. While the hearings were conducted in a professional manner, UNAMI continued to note concerns about the appointment of defence lawyers immediately prior to the hearing, resulting in a lack of preparation for the defence, as well as the reliance on confessions allegedly obtained under duress with limited judicial responses to these claims, and the prosecution of defendants for association with terrorist groups, without sufficiently distinguishing between those who had participated in acts of violence and those affiliated with ISIL for survival.

66. On 19 and 20 September, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights jointly facilitated a workshop to provide technical support to members of the State Council, the body that ensures compliance of laws with the Constitution of Iraq, in preparing draft anti-domestic violence legislation. The draft finalized by the State Council included provisions that would protect survivors as well as those at risk of domestic violence. Meanwhile, the Office of the President submitted a separate draft of the same bill to the Speaker of Council of Representatives. Both versions were to be referred to the parliamentary Legal Committee, for merging and alignment.

67. Between 28 July and 2 August, UNAMI organized 10 round-table discussions in the Kurdistan Region with representatives of minority communities, government authorities, members of the Kurdistan Region Commission for Human Rights and civil society, to identify human rights issues affecting minorities. Issues discussed included inadequate political representation, laws and policies that did not recognize the rights of religious minorities, the confiscation of property and security concerns in the disputed territories. The discussions centred around technical support and specific steps required to address these challenges, in accordance with the Government's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In addition, on 6 August, UNAMI established the first minority rights working group as a coordination mechanism to support the implementation of recommendations by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. At its first meeting, the working group identified priority areas, including the enactment of a law criminalizing racial discrimination, the preservation and promotion of minority languages and efforts to remove discriminatory civil documentation for minorities. The working group held two further meetings, on 28 August and 30 September, wherein it reviewed the anti-discrimination and protection of diversity bill and provided comments that would be submitted to the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee.

68. Regarding the right to freedom of expression, UNAMI documented a series of restrictive measures that had been applied during the October demonstrations, including attacks against media outlets, orders not to film or cover the demonstrations, the confiscation of equipment, the deletion of video footage or photographs and the blocking of the Internet and social media. UNAMI also received multiple, consistent accounts of media workers from various parts of Iraq being subjected to arbitrary arrest, threats, intimidation and harassment.

69. On 9 September, the Minister of Justice led the Iraq delegation at the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council. On 11 September, the Minister for Justice engaged with the Committee of Experts in Geneva to discuss the initial report of Iraq on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities. On 12 September, the Minister for Justice met with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva.

70. From 25 to 27 August, Iraq hosted for the first time a forum on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women in the Arab Region. The forum took place under the auspices of President Salih, in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and the High Council for Women's Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Participants included representatives from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Yemen and the State of Palestine, as well as regional and international organizations. My Deputy Special Representative addressed the opening session.

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

71. During the reporting period, humanitarian actors reached an additional 279,984 people with humanitarian assistance, bringing the total number of persons served in 2019 to 1,424,000 across more than 1,100 priority locations. Partners continued to implement the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan despite persistent funding shortfalls. As at 15 September 2019, funding for the Plan remained at 42 per cent (\$295 million of the \$701 million sought) although certain clusters, notably Child Protection and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All, had recently received financial boosts. An additional \$125 million in humanitarian funding provided bilaterally fell outside the Humanitarian Response Plan. The Humanitarian Coordinator therefore continued her engagement to underline the relevance of the Plan, instead of bilateral contributions to agencies.

72. In August and September 2019, authorities in Anbar and Ninawa Governorates undertook concrete actions to close and consolidate camps for internally displaced persons at an intensified pace not anticipated by humanitarian partners. In some instances, these actions were carried out without prior coordination with United Nations agencies and relevant non-governmental organizations. In Ninawa Governorate, with little advance preparation, several hundred internally displaced families were transported to their home governorates, despite their concerns for their personal safety upon return. Many of the returns were made at short notice and with limited inter-governorate coordination, resulting in inadequate support on arrival, including insufficient tents, water, food and health services available from humanitarian partners. In addition, host communities had not been informed of the imminent return of internally displaced persons and no preparation had been undertaken to mitigate tensions between these two groups.

73. Information provided by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations pointed towards humanitarian access constraints in 93 per cent of the districts in the central and northern governorates, with the majority occurring in Ninawa Governorate. Multiple governorates with severe humanitarian needs were deemed inaccessible for humanitarian staff, due to insecurity, a multiplicity of administrative requests and shifting compliance requirements.

74. Gender-based violence programming carried out by humanitarian partners in Iraq to deliver essential services, case management and psychosocial support, was underfunded. The gender-based violence subcluster reported that only 318,000 out of 739,000 targeted beneficiaries had been reached since the beginning of the year, owing to a funding shortfall of more than \$20 million. The lack of funding had resulted in the closure of vital services for internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities, and a complete absence of gender-based violence programming in certain camps. Major gaps had been identified in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Erbil and

Sulaymaniyah Governorates. Serious gender-based violence incidents perpetrated by armed actors were reported in both camps and informal settlements.

75. Meanwhile, the United Nations continued to support critical stabilization efforts in Iraq. During the reporting period, the Funding Facility for Stabilization completed 38 projects in the five liberated governorates. With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to date, 4.3 million internally displaced Iraqis had returned home. Completed projects included the rehabilitation of two major electricity substations in East Mosul, which would improve access to electricity for some 450,000 people. Meanwhile, the rehabilitation of a large concrete bridge in Fallujah had been completed, improving transport links for 350,000 people. The Facility had completed a total of 2,191 projects. Since the signing of the Financing Agreement with the Government of Iraq on 28 August 2019, under which the Government of Iraq had committed \$33 billion to stabilization activities across the country, UNDP had received much-needed funding from several contributing countries, decreasing the funding deficit to \$265 million out of a total requirement of \$1.38 billion. The Facility continued to urgently require funds for the priority areas of Mosul, Baiji, Hawija and the western parts of Anbar and Ninawa Governorates.

76. During the reporting period, the World Health Organization (WHO) procured and distributed essential medicines sufficient for more than 465,000 people and emergency health kits for 773,700 people for three months. WHO supported the establishment of primary health-care facilities in Ninawa Governorate, providing returnees with access to health services at any time during the day. It also supported quality monitoring to ensure that drinking water supplies in Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Sulaymaniyah Governorates met minimum standards.

77. In August, the World Food Programme (WFP) delivered food assistance to 400,782 people in nine governorates. In response to the relocation of internally displaced persons in Ninawa Governorate, WFP moved family food rations for its next distribution cycle to areas expected to receive the families. Over the course of August and September, a retail expert supported WFP efforts to transition its entire caseload to cash assistance by the end of the year.

78. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) continued to partner with the national mine action authorities with a view to fostering a nationally led and managed gender-mainstreamed explosive hazard response. The Regional Mine Action Centre North Mosul office was formally opened in August, providing a co-located space for the Directorate of Mine Action and UNMAS, allowing for more efficient collaboration in close proximity to operations and more closely tied to local community needs.

79. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) continued to provide essential humanitarian services in the sectors of camp coordination and management, shelter and non-food items, emergency health and communications with communities in camps and out of camp locations, targeting internally displaced persons and returnees in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Karbala', Kirkuk, Najaf, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. Over 3,000 families had benefitted from shelter services, over 4,450 families had benefitted from non-food items and eight camps had received camp coordination and management support.

80. On 16 September, the Central Statistical Organization and Kurdistan Regional Statistical Organization signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to establish a baseline of current labour market statistics to be used for policy development. ILO also collaborated with the Central Bank of Iraq to support small and medium-sized Iraqi enterprises under the "one trillion dinars" initiative to allow commercial banks in Iraq to benefit from ILO grants for subsidized

loans for onward lending to internally displaced persons and host communities in Dahuk and Ninawa Governorates.

81. On 8 August, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) completed primary school teacher training for 662 teachers from east and west Mosul (342 women and 318 men). Since the start of the new school year on 1 September, UNESCO had helped to enrol 10,823 out-of-school children (6,771 boys and 4,052 girls) in formal schooling (10,492) and accelerated learning programmes (331) in Baghdad, Dhi Qar, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates through enrolment promotion campaigns. UNESCO was also assisting the Government of Iraq to develop its National Education Strategy for the period 2020–2030.

82. The Government of Iraq released \$37 million from its 2019 budget to fund the 2020 population and housing census and had allocated \$95.4 million in the 2020 budget. In addition, the Government of Iraq proposed to allocate \$12 million from the stabilization fund to support implementation of the 2020 census. It was agreed to channel the funding through UNFPA as the lead of the census inter-agency working group.

83. The United Nations Environmental Programme was supporting the Ministry of the Environment in the preparation of the second national communications and the first biennial update report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The project supported assessments in the areas of national greenhouse gas inventories and mitigation, as well as vulnerability and adaptation to climate impacts. This was expected to lead to the development of relevant policy instruments that would inform and guide the formulation of cost-effective project proposals in the areas of greenhouse gas mitigation and climate change adaptation.

84. On 1 August, the Ministry of Planning signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations to establish the Iraq reconstruction and recovery trust fund, which supported both parties' engagement in the management of resources to support the Government's recovery and development framework. The fund also supported the implementation of policies and programmes in furtherance of the Government's Sustainable Development Goal targets and its Vision 2030, as defined by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

## **E. Security and operational issues**

85. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security in Iraq continuously monitored developments in Baghdad during the progressive lifting of security restrictions in the city, particularly in the former International Zone and at Baghdad International Airport, in order to adjust procedures and mitigation measures to adequately manage the risk to United Nations personnel and operations in country.

86. During the reporting period, the Department of Safety and Security supported an average of 52 field missions per day across the country, with assessed risk levels ranging from medium to high. Close coordination with the Host Government had been paramount to ensure the proper flow of information and the necessary security support for United Nations operations.

87. As part of its mandate, UNAMI continued to support the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, particularly through the provision of logistical and administrative assistance.

## IV. Observations

88. More than two years after the conclusion of major combat operations against ISIL, the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people for a better future remain unfulfilled. The recent public protests and violence are stark reminders of this. I am deeply concerned by the high number of people who were killed or injured during the demonstrations, including by the use of live ammunition against demonstrators. I reiterate my call to all actors to refrain from violence, and to security forces to act with maximum restraint.

89. The only way forward towards a better future is through peaceful and inclusive dialogue resulting in concrete outcomes that meet the aspirations of all Iraqis for a better life and better services. At all times, the constitution of Iraq and fundamental human rights, including the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, must be respected. These rights are critical to allow people to make their voices heard and to bring key public interest issues to the attention of authorities for action. The Government's launch of an investigation into the violence and loss of life is an essential and important step towards accountability.

90. The Government's agreement on an initial package of measures and its commitment to dialogue are steps in the right direction, but swift implementation is essential to meeting the legitimate and longstanding grievances of the Iraqi people.

91. I reiterate my call for inclusive and effective governance, including further, immediate appointments of the many talented, qualified women of Iraq to senior decision-making positions. I welcome the appointment of Suha Ali Bek as Minister for Education, the first female member of the Cabinet, as an important first step in the right direction.

92. Efforts taken by the Council of Representatives to combat corruption and to fulfil its oversight function are commendable but have so far fallen short. Efforts to counter corruption should not be limited to historic acts but must address ongoing corruption and its corrosive effects. Parliamentarians and members of the Government must lead by example.

93. The continuing negotiations between Baghdad and Erbil are important, and I encourage both sides to reach a comprehensive agreement on outstanding issues, including oil, the budget, security and the disputed areas.

94. The collaborative process we have witnessed in the Kurdistan Region, with inter-party consultations on the reform programme and other legislative priorities, is encouraging. The upcoming period will be crucial in demonstrating the sincerity of the Kurdistan Regional Government's commitment and ability to implement genuine reform.

95. I welcome the Government of Iraq's attempts to maintain stability and unity within the country in the face of alleged violations of the country's sovereignty. Confirmed violations should be addressed through diplomatic and legal means.

96. Ongoing regional tensions remain a source of major concern. I commend the efforts of the leadership of Iraq to promote a balanced regional policy and act as a stabilizing force. At the same time, urgent domestic priorities and needs must be addressed by the Government. It is imperative that Iraq be allowed to pursue its national interests. The country's regional and international partners must support it in its efforts to promote stability, in accordance with the principles of respect for its sovereignty, territorial integrity and good neighbourly relations.

97. As an increasing budget deficit looms, a result of rising expenditures and oil price volatility, it is important that the Government accelerate its structural reform,

fostering macroeconomic and financial stability as well as promoting sustainable and inclusive growth.

98. Ongoing preparations for the Provincial Council elections are under way, and I encourage all relevant stakeholders to work collectively towards fair, free and credible elections.

99. The presence of ISIL remnants and other armed groups continues to pose serious challenges to the stability of Iraq. In this context, further security sector reform, including the implementation of the Prime Minister's Executive Order 237, remains a national strategic priority.

100. Accountability for human rights violations is of the greatest importance. Continued impunity will generate further discontent, which may have serious consequences for promoting reconciliation and social cohesion.

101. A key outstanding humanitarian issue remains the return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin. I underline the need for all returns to be informed, safe, dignified and voluntary. In this context, building mutual confidence and fostering reconciliation among communities is essential.

102. Amid unpredictable security developments, the return of ISIL affiliates from the Syrian Arab Republic remains a serious concern that needs to be addressed. The need for a managed, safe return of the more than 30,000 Iraqis from the al-Hawl camp, and to address the fate of third-country nationals and their families, require an integrated approach. Failure of the international community and the Government of Iraq to comprehensively address this matter is likely to have a far-reaching impact on Iraq, the region and beyond.

103. Humanitarian and stabilization efforts remain underfunded. Funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2019 remains at 42 per cent of the amount needed to provide essential humanitarian services to the country's internally displaced persons. The Funding Facility for Stabilization also remains seriously underfunded at \$265 million out of a total requirement of \$1.38 billion. The continued funding shortages will have a significant impact on the ability of displaced Iraqis to return to their homes, due to the lack of adequate basic services such as electricity, water, health and education. I call upon the international community to continue its support of United Nations humanitarian and stabilization efforts. With the recent establishment of the Iraq reconstruction and recovery trust fund, I also call upon the international community to support the Government's efforts to achieve its Vision 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goal targets.

104. 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 under challenging circumstances.

---