Commemorations of the 15th anniversary of the terrorist attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad held across Iraq

Baghdad, 19 August 2018 - Staff members of the United Nations in Iraq today commemorated the 15th anniversary of the terrorist attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

Amid ‘volatile’ environment, UN mission chief urges Iraqi leaders to ‘listen to the voice of the people’

New York, 8 August 2018 - Despite a myriad of “long-neglected social, economic and development needs”, the Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on Wednesday said progress had been made towards recovery and stability in the battle-scarred country, and called for Iraqi political leaders to continue to “work for national reconciliation” through “inclusive” solutions.

Briefing the Security Council, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, started by updating Members on the manual ballot recount completed on Monday, in response to “complaints and allegations of electoral fraud and mismanagement” following parliamentary elections on 12 May.

Mr. Kubiš noted the monitoring and support role played by UNAMI, as well as the oversight and advice provided by the UN throughout the process.

“I welcome the orderly, transparent, credible and well-organised conduct of the recount,” he noted, applauding “the dedication and professionalism of all recount staff,” which, he said, “increased public confidence in the electoral process.”

As for the ongoing civil unrest that has broken out across Basra and various southern Governorates, and which resulted in the death of at least 18 persons with 519 injured in recent months, he commended the “major efforts to provide swift and tailored responses to legitimate popular demands, bringing a temporary relief to people living under strenuous conditions”.

Mr. Kubiš urged the Members of the Security Council to continue to support Iraq in its path to stability and prosperity.

By UN News
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Baghdad, 17 July 2018 - Following the demonstrations over the lack of services, job opportunities and to demand improved living conditions, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, urges the government to fully respect and address the people’s legitimate concerns. He calls on the political actors to ensure that the next administration prioritizes good governance, reforms and the fight against corruption that will enable economic development and progress, job creation and delivery of critical public services...

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In the UNAMI Herald articles are sorted according to the topic and in a chronological order.
Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq

New York, 8 August 2018 – The United Nations Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq at its 8324th meeting. Here is the text (as prepared) of the briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš:

Madam President,

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

I have the honour to present the first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2421 (2018), as well as the nineteenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013) on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and property.

Madam President,

Following the parliamentary elections on 12 May 2018, complaints and allegations of electoral fraud and mismanagement resulted in the decision to conduct a partial manual ballot recount, thereby delaying establishment of a new government. The situation was further complicated by public demonstrations that started on 8 July 2018, in Basra Governorate. They subsequently escalated and by 13 July, spread to other southern governorates including Missan, Muthanna, Qadisiya, Dhi Qar, Najaf, Karbala, Babil, Wasit and Baghdad. The protesters were mainly young people with long-standing complaints over the lack of delivery of basic services, shortages of electricity, lack of jobs and pervasive corruption. Their messages, however, swiftly became more politicised, criticising national leaders and successive governments for ignoring the needs of the people and social justice, expressing their deep and growing frustration with the political system, including a sectarian quota system they deemed corrupt, dysfunctional and stagnant, and deplored foreign interference in the internal matters of Iraq. They requested radical action and change instead of promises and slogans. In some cases, these demonstrations turned violent, targeting government and political party offices as well as critical public infrastructure. According to the government, it was infiltrators and political opportunists, exploiting the genuine protests, who were behind these acts of vandalism and violence.

It is to be noted that many of their demands echo requests from previous demonstrations in the pre-Da’esh period that engulfed Anbar, Ninawa, Diyala and Salah-ad-Din provinces. Many political leaders that have been in power throughout the past periods expressed their support for the demands of the protesters and for their criticism of the authorities. The leader of the Conquest Alliance (Fatah), Hadi al-Ameri, publicly acknowledged that politicians had failed the people and sought forgiveness, reconfirming the need to reform the political process and to establish a government of services and not of privileges for political parties. The head of the Sa’irom Alliance, cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who himself led massive public protests in Baghdad as recently as 2016, with similar demands as today’s demonstrations condemned the crackdown on the protesters. He urged suspension of government formation talks until the legitimate demands of protesters were met. It is worth recalling that the historic low voter turnout witnessed in southern and other governorates during the 12 May parliamentary elections (some 60% of eligible voters did not participate) had already delivered a strong message of dissatisfaction with the current state of management of public affairs.

The National Security Council, chaired by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, reaffirmed citizens’ right to peaceful demonstration while simultaneously emphasising the importance of respecting the law, preserving public property and refraining from the use of violence. The Council underscored that the security forces were making every effort to protect protesters and prevent sabotage by intruders and opportunists. Meanwhile, the authorities intermittently blocked internet reception and some social media. Although the scale of protest has now decreased, demonstrations are far from over, including around major oil installations in Basra. As reported eighteen persons have been killed and at least 519 persons have been injured, including 261 members of the security forces. The Iraqi Independent High Commission for Human Rights reported on 23 July that a total of 757 persons had been arrested but that the large majority of these had subsequently been released.

Interior Minister Qassim al-Araji ordered the formation of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate security incidents, to hold those responsible legally accountable.

Madam President,

After meetings with representatives of protesting governorates, the Council of Ministers quickly endorsed a package of measures to address public concerns; this will require substantial budgetary and extrabudgetary resources. Prime Minister Abadi has noted that the Council is keen to fulfil as many demands as possible within existing resources and a tight timeframe. The Council accordingly established a ministerial-level Service and Security Crisis Cell, which first met on 18 July. Similar bodies have been established in each ministry and governorate. The Council of Ministers has also established a Committee for Reconstruction and Services for the Governorates. The Council of Ministers has also decided to hold ministry and local
government officials to account for under-performance and shortcomings in providing services, through a special committee chaired by the Board of Supreme Audit and with the membership of the Council of Ministers' General Secretariat, the Commission of Public Integrity, and the Supreme Commission for Provincial Coordination. On 29 July, Prime Minister Abadi suspended the Minister of Electricity and ordered an investigation into the causes of electricity shortages. The Minister welcomed such investigation and pledged full cooperation.

Iraq's Ministry of Electricity announced on 20 July that Kuwait would start providing Iraq with fuel for power-generating purposes. Negotiations have started with Saudi Arabia for similar support. Iran has resumed its supply of electricity to Iraq, previously interrupted due to lack of payment. I welcome such gestures of support and urge other countries to provide similar assistance to the people of Iraq.

Madam President,

In his Friday's sermon on 13 July, the Supreme Religious Authority Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's representative Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbala'i expressed solidarity with protesters and their demands, acknowledging that the demonstrations reflected a lack of public services, and calling on federal and local officials to address people's demands seriously, while urging protesters not to resort to violence. He further stated that the future government needed to run state institutions professionally and keep away from quotas and favouritism.

On 27 July, in a forward-looking statement, he outlined an approach on reforming and revitalising the system of government, to respond to the criticism, needs and demands of the people. He called for early formation of a future government comprising competent, honest members and a Prime Minister who should be decisive and courageous enough to fight the financial and administrative corruption that is the root cause of most of Iraq's problems. The new Prime Minister should have authority, take responsibility for his cabinet and launch a “merciless war” against corruption. The new Council of Representatives should abolish privileges or amend laws that do not achieve justice and equality for the people. If the new government failed to abide by its commitments and deliver on its reform programme or if the new Council of Representatives or the Judiciary did not act appropriately, the people supported by “all forces of good” of the country would have no other option but to develop other ways to impose their will on the officials.

Following the sermon, Prime Minister Abadi and other political leaders pledged their support for this appeal “that has charted the roadmap for the future of Iraq and its people” and welcomed the guidance of Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani. Following that, a number of political blocs including Sa'iroun and Fateh outlined their own visions and principles on which to build the new government and its programme. Prime Minister Abadi also underlined the prompt actions through which the Government responded to the legitimate demands of the Iraqi citizens and the numerous remedies that have been taken within available resources.

Madam President,

I note with appreciation that Prime Minister Abadi has made major efforts to provide swift and tailored responses to legitimate popular demands, bringing a temporary relief to people living under strenuous conditions. These measures, however, remain insufficient to address the depth of people's needs and concerns. I urge political leaders to listen to the voice of the people, seize the opportunity and accelerate the process of formation of a patriotic, inclusive and non-sectarian national government that will put all the rich resources of Iraq at the disposal and for the benefit of its people, that will prioritise political, economic and social reforms, justice, equality and accountability, reconciliation, good governance, including the fight against corruption and creation of jobs that would enable economic development, stability and prosperity, that will put all the armed formations under the strict control of the state and will resolutely act against insubordinate militias and criminal gangs, that will ensure full sovereignty and real independence of Iraq, free from foreign interference.

Madam President,

Three months since voters went to the polls to elect their representatives, the electoral process has yet to be concluded. Amidst complaints and allegations of fraud, irregularities, organisational and technical shortfalls political parties and candidates submitted appeals and made persistent demands for a manual recount of the ballots. On 5 June, the Council of Ministers endorsed the report of its own committee which recommended the manual sorting and counting of votes in no less than 5% of all polling centres, the cancellation of out-of-country and internally displaced voting, the prosecution of those involved in electoral violations, and a freeze on external travel by senior officials of the Independent High Electoral Commission.

On 6 June, the Council of Representatives adopted the Third Amendment to the Council of Representatives Elections Law No. 45/2013, which required the Independent High Electoral Commission to undertake a full manual ballot recount under supervision by judges appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council, and the annulment of the results of out-of-country voting and conditional voting for the internally displaced in camps, prisons, the results of voting by internally displaced persons in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Ninawa, and Diyala governorates, and the results of special voting in the Kurdistan region.

On 21 June, the Federal Supreme Court issued a ruling which upheld some decisions taken by the Council of Representatives but cancelled the provisions which annulled the results of out-of-country voting, voting by internally displaced persons, and special voting in Kurdistan region, citing that it failed to differentiate between those with proven irregularities and those with proven irregularities.

Following the court ruling, the Board of Security Council
Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

Judges took immediate steps to adopt modalities for the recount of ballots that were subject to complaints or allegations of fraud, in line with the Federal Supreme Court ruling of 21 June. The partial manual recount process began in Kirkuk governorate on 3 July. That decision continues to be contested by several political parties, notably in the Kurdistan Region, which rejected the recount’s limited scope as insufficient for addressing the alleged large-scale fraud.

On 6 August, the Board of Judges announced that the manual recount has been completed in all governorates, a month and a few days since the process started. Due to the fire that broke out on 10 June in the IHEC’s Baghdad-Rusafa warehouse, which damaged electoral materials necessary for the recount, the Board of Judges decided not to conduct anymore the recount of Baghdad-Rusafa polling stations. In addition, the Board of Judges has concluded the recount of out-of-country polling stations, notably in Jordan, Iran and Turkey. The process now moves on to results tabulation, another crucial stage to enter the results of the manual recount into the system, prior to generating the provisional election results. The Board of Judges requested further UN support relating to results data entry, considering the sensitivity of the data entry process and the judges limited familiarity with such process.

Throughout the recount process, an Electoral Monitoring Team from UNAMI, complemented by UNDP experts, provided oversight, advice and assistance. My Deputy for Political and Electoral Affairs visited several recount centres, including in Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyyah and Baghdad. I welcome the orderly, transparent, credible and well-organised conduct of the recount. I applaud the dedication and professionalism of all recount staff, both Independent High Electoral Commission and judiciary personnel, who under the supervision of the Board of Judges have been rigorously devoting their utmost time and energy to complete the task at hand. I also commend the Board of Judges for its hands-on impartial work. The manner in which they have managed the recount has increased public confidence in the electoral process, and the election results.

On 28 July, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) Spokesperson Judge Laith Hamzah announced that the IHEC Board of Judges would execute recommendations of the ministerial committee, endorsed by PM Abadi, to dismiss the Directors of IHEC offices in Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk and Anbar, as well as Jordan and Turkey, based on corruption allegations.

Following the completion of the recount process, the Board of Judges intends to submit a report outlining recommendations on the way forward including for future election and possible reforms at the Independent High Electoral Commission taking into account also the experiences from the current role of the judiciary.

Madam President,
The last session of the Council of Representatives was held on 30 June, under the chairmanship of Deputy Speaker Humam Hamoudi, following the last-minute failed efforts to extend its term. Speaker Salim al-Jubouri subsequently expressed his gratitude to the 328 Members of the Parliament who served during the last four challenging years and expressed hope that the new Council of Representatives would expedite the formation of the new government. President Fuad Masum also issued a statement thanking representatives and the Speaker for their services.

Madam President,
Preliminary consultations on forming the new government have been taking place within and across political forces and components. The discussions also cover the overarching vision and principles guiding the formation of the government and its programme, this will be necessary for achieving effectiveness and cohesion of the next government acting as one to deliver its reform programme in full. Prime Minister Abadi as well as President Masum held separate consultations with political blocs, on 16 and 18 July respectively, on accelerating inclusive government formation talks. The participants confirmed their full commitment to abiding by the Constitution and the decisions of the Federal Supreme Court, to adhering to the final results of the parliamentary elections as ratified by the Federal Supreme Court, and to upholding the constitutional timeframe of the political transition while rejecting ideas of an emergency or national salvation government, outside of the political process and Constitution.

Madam President,
If the situation of the population as regards political, social and economic rights and opportunities, justice and equality is difficult, the situation of women is twice as desperate, with layers of problems, marginalization and deprivation added due to the impact of the fight against Da’esh. The devastation suffered by the Iraqis, has seen an increase in the number of widows and female-headed households. The country, the society owes them a lot. Support must be provided, for families of the martyrs and survivors. Women must be given access to income-generating opportunities ensuring that they are not left behind in the recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Approach to women and girls should not be to treat them only as vulnerable victims, but as leaders and factors of positive change they are. Women must be in leadership positions in Iraq, must get a full chance to play key roles in shaping the post-Da’esh future of their country. Equality and empowerment of women must be central to all peace, justice, legislative, reconciliation and reform efforts. This will guarantee that the outcomes contain gender specific-provisions and that specific needs of women are not neglected, as so often happens in political negotiations that are usually the exclusive domain of
Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

My Deputy for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance and myself met with numerous political leaders and actors, including women, minorities and civil society. Among our priority objectives has been active engagement to promote meaningful participation of women in the formation of the next government, and its programme and their representation at the highest levels in political and decision-making structures including in the Government and Council of Representatives i.a. to reverse the trend of declining participation of women in the government since the first post-2003 governments. Here I would like to commend the recent decision of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament that one Deputy Speaker of the next regional parliament must be a woman. As part of our efforts to promote the effective participation and representation of women in political and decision-making processes, on 3 July in Babil my Deputy for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance launched the national shekohe advocate campaign for women, alongside the Chair of the Babil Provincial Council. In a related development, on 26 June, President Masum reviewed the draft report on the implementation the Iraqi National Action Plan (INAP) on UNSCR 1325 (2000) in Iraq in a meeting with the 5th Committee formed to review the report. On 31 July, I also met with members of the National Team to discuss progress on the implementation of the current NAP and preparations for the development of the 2nd NAP, as well as the challenges, including lack of a dedicated budget to support NAP activities.

Last week, UNAMI’s Gender Advisor facilitated a meeting with women leaders, civil society, activists and elected women that adopted a consolidated vision of women’s demands for the inclusion of gender perspectives and gender equality considerations in the government programme. The outcome and recommendations of this consultative meeting are attached to this report. Following this UNAMI will continue bilateral discussions with political blocs and forces on the inclusion of the priorities of resolution 1325 in their programme, including participation of women in committees formed to negotiate the government programme and national reconciliation agenda as well as consideration of a 30% quota representation of women in the next cabinet and other institutions. This week, DSRSG Walpole chaired a UN meeting with Iraqi women expected to sit in the next Council of Representatives. The Iraqi women politicians undertook to work across the party divide, for example in establishing a Women’s Parliamentary Caucus and women’s platforms, in the development of government policies and strategies on increasing women’s participation and representation in politics, as well as gender mainstreaming in all parliamentary processes.

Madam President,

I welcome the advancement of the Children and Armed Conflict agenda in Iraq, as part of our joint efforts to promote the application of the recently adopted resolution 2427. Following the listing of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), as a state actor in Iraq, for the use and recruitment of children, UNAMI Child Protection Advisor met with the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other partners to address their concerns, explain the listing process and the next steps in proceeding with the development of the Action Plan, the purpose of which is to ensure that there is no use or recruitment of children by the PMF. On 30 July Iraq’s Inter-Ministerial Committee on grave violations of child rights discussed prevention of and response to violations against children by all state actors including PMF, it was agreed that the Action Plan will prioritise prevention, reintegration, rehabilitation. I am encouraged by this development. I also welcome the agreement amongst a number of embassies to establish a Group of Friends of CAAC in Iraq.

Madam President,

On 30 July, Prime Minister Abadi hosted Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirwan Barzani at a meeting in Baghdad, where they discussed the political situation in Iraq, continued cooperation notably in the intelligence and security fields to prevent the re-emergence of terrorist groups, re-opening of Erbil-Kirkuk road, Duhok-Mosul road and Shingal-Duhok road and the resumption of exports of Kirkuk oil through the KRG pipelines to Turkey. Both sides also underlined the need to expedite formation of the next government to address economic and social needs of all Iraqis, including the Kurdistan Region, offering better services and job creations. They further reiterated the need to do their utmost to resolve all issues between Erbil and Baghdad based on the Iraqi constitution.

On 27 June, the Federal Supreme Court postponed until 14 August 2018 a ruling on the legality of the Kurdistan region Ministry of Natural Resources’ previous independent oil exports from the Kurdistan region and Kirkuk.

Preparations for the Kurdistan Parliamentary elections, scheduled for 30 September, have proceeded steadily. The Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission has registered three coalitions and 26 political parties, including 19 political party lists for
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marmors – 11 for Christians and eight for Turkmen. Four entities were disqualified for failure to meet relevant criteria. The Commission also announced that it has prepared the register containing more than 3 million voters eligible to participate in the elections.

Madam President,

On security, Da’esh remnants continue sporadically to conduct terrorist attacks against civilians, government premises, and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), in particular in Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa, and Salah al-Din governorates.

In response to kidnappings along the Baghdad-Kirkuk highway, the ISF on 4 July launched a security operation in northern Salah al-Din and Diyala governorates named “Revenge of the Martyrs.” The ISF also conducted clearing operations in Anbar, Ninawa, and Salah al-Din governorates. On 16 July, the Iraqi security forces including the Peshmerga conducted coordinated clearance operations in part of Makhmour district to remove remaining Da’esh fighters from their safe havens. Da’esh had been using the rough terrain to stage attacks, capitalising on coordination gaps between the Peshmerga and federal security forces. The operation was supported by extensive airstrikes by the International Coalition to counter Da’esh. A large-scale operation against Da’esh sleeper cells in the western deserts of Anbar governorate commenced on 22 July.

The Iraqi Security Forces have supported anti-Da’esh operations conducted by the Syrian Democratic Forces in eastern Syria with cross-border air and artillery strikes, including a successful airstrike near the town of Hajin which was estimated to have killed 45 Da’esh fighters. The security forces also prevented the escape of terrorists from Syria into Iraq by maintaining a strong border presence. The liberation of the Dashishara area along the Iraqi-Syrian border on 20 July has further weakened Da’esh ability to infiltrate Iraq. At the same time Prime Minister Abadi has reaffirmed that Iraq does not wish to interfere in Syria’s internal affairs.

Madam President,

Kirkuk governorate has witnessed significant violence. On 27 June, the ISF found the bodies of eight persons who had been abducted by Da’esh five days earlier on the Baghdad-Kirkuk highway. Earlier in the month, in the evening of 5 June, in Kirkuk city, an IED exploded killing one woman and wounding 19 civilians, including 6 who were in critical condition, in a commercial compound. Prime Minister Abadi ordered the immediate execution of 13 convicted Da’esh members on death row as a response to the incident. On 1 July, a suicide vehicle bomb attack exploded outside a Kirkuk warehouse storing ballot boxes, with one person killed and another 22 persons, including Iraqi Security Forces, wounded. In the late evening of 18 July, eleven explosions rocked three different neighbourhoods of Kirkuk City wounding 13 persons. On 20 July, an explosion occurred near a Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) base in Altun Kupri, Kirkuk governorate. The increased number of incidents may be linked to renewed activity by remnants of Da’esh, profiting from the redeployment of Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilisation Forces to Baghdad and southern Iraq due to the demonstrations.

On the early morning of 23 July, three gunmen believed to be Da’esh members forced their entry into the Erbil Governorate Office, injuring four members of the security forces and later killing one hostage. A counter-terrorism operation led by the Kurdistan Region security forces resulted in the death of all three gunmen.

Madam President,

During the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Summit held in Brussels on 11 and 12 July, NATO announced the launch of a non-combatant training and capacity-building mission in Iraq, at the request of the Iraqi Government. NATO will advise officials within the Ministry of Defence and the Office of the National Security Advisor to help Iraq develop its capacity to build more effective national security structures. The Organisation will also train and advise instructors at professional military education institutions. The training mission is complementary to ongoing International Coalition to Counter Da’esh efforts in Iraq.

Madam President,

During the months of June and July, the Turkish Armed Forces continued their anti-PKK air operations in northern Iraq as well as ground operations in areas along the Iraq-Turkish border entering dozens of kilometres into the Iraqi territory. During his weekly press conference on 5 June, Prime Minister Abadi confirmed the presence of Turkish military in northern Iraq while denying any military coordination with Turkey on this issue. He also called on Turkey to respect Iraq’s sovereignty and reiterated that no-one is allowed to use Iraq’s soil to attack any country, including Turkey. He confirmed the readiness of Iraq to cooperate with the neighbouring countries to protect and maintain security at the border territories.

On 13 and 17 July, representatives of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan claimed that several of its bases on the Iraqi side of the Iraqi-Iranian border had been shelled by the Iranian Armed Forces.

Madam President,

Turning to the developments in the area of human rights, I note with concern that although the level of violence in Iraq has decreased since last year, armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continued to take a toll on civilians. In June, at least 76 civilians were killed, and 129 were wounded, and in July at least 79 civilians were killed and 99 wounded. These figures represent a continuation of the overall trend of lower civilian casualties that started in October 2017 coinciding with the reduction in hostilities between the Iraqi security forces and Da’esh.

Despite the decrease in civilian casualties, Da’esh remains a threat. Da’esh tactics include the targeting of local mayors and their families, and the abduction and killing of other civilians, including at fake checkpoints. For
Briefing to the Security Council by SRS for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

example, on 6 July, in Ba’aj district of Ninawa governorate, Da’esh fighters set up a fake checkpoint where they killed two men, a woman and a 14-year-old child from one family and wounded one Iraqi soldier. Improvised explosive devices, including those planted by Da’esh, remain the single largest cause of civilian casualties. And, Iraqi courts continued to issue death sentences for terrorism-related crimes. So far in 2018, the Supreme Judicial Council has publicly announced the imposition of 76 death sentences for terrorism-related crimes, including against 24 women, 23 of whom were foreigners (17 Turks, 3 Kyrgyz, 2 Azerbaijanis and 1 German) and 47 men.

As a retaliation for the killing of members of Iraqi Security Forces, on 29 June, the Ministry of Justice announced on its website that 13 persons were executed for involvement in terrorism, the underlying offences included conducting armed operations, kidnappings, bombings and the killing of civilians. This brings the total number of executions to 26 announced in 2018 by the Ministry of Justice. My Mission reiterates its call for a moratorium on executions pending the review of the amendments to the Iraqi Criminal Code, and the location of graves to collect, secure and preserve evidence of crimes committed in Iraq. It is supporting a visit, from 6-14 August, by the Special Adviser to the independent investigative team, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to support Iraqi efforts to hold Da’esh accountable for the crimes committed in Iraq. My Mission stands ready to assist him in this regard.

On 1 August, the Department of Yazidi Affairs in the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs of the Kurdistan Region reported that, of the 6,417 Yazidis (5,548 female and 869 male) abducted by Da’esh since August 2014, just over half (3,315 or 51.70%) have been freed or escaped. On the same date, my Mission was informed that 3,102 Yazidis (1,440 female and 1,662 male) remained in Da’esh captivity or were missing. This situation is unacceptable, especially considering that four years have passed since the start of the genocidal atrocities committed by Da’esh against Yazidis.

As of 31 July, the Civilian Defence Corps informed my Mission that a total of 4,345 bodies had been recovered in Mosul city, of which three were found in east Mosul.

Madam President,

On 1 July, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament voted in favour of reintroducing the Kurdistan region Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3 of 2006, despite our concerns that the law allows confessions extracted under duress to be used as evidence in court. On 4 and 9 July, my Human Rights Representative met with stakeholders in the Kurdistan Regional Parliament who expressed a willingness to review the law to bring it in line with Iraq’s human rights obligations. The law came into effect on 19 July 2018, and the review of the amendments to the law is ongoing.

Madam President,

On the efforts of United Nations Country Team, my Deputy for Humanitarian Affairs and Development continued to work with Government officials and diplomatic missions on stabilisation, humanitarian, and development issues. On 19 July, she convened a meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum in Baghdad, where more than 20 international partners were presented with 61 UNCT projects that are ready for funding through the $1 billion Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP) launched by the UN Secretary-General at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, held in Kuwait City in February 2018. I urge Member States to consider the importance of supporting Iraq to strengthen stability and prosperity by accelerating our commitments made in Kuwait in February and ensuring support to the Government’s Recovery and Development Framework through the bi-lateral and multi-lateral mechanisms agreed in Kuwait. In tandem with our collective humanitarian and stabilisation efforts, recovery and development efforts are critical to Iraq and Member States are requested to continue supporting them.

On 22 July, my Deputy for Humanitarian Affairs and Development participated in the first meeting of the inter-ministerial committee on the rehabilitation of Mosul’s old city, which will coordinate efforts of the government, World Bank, UNMAS, UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization, UN-Habitat, UNESCO, and others to remove rubble, clear explosive hazards, open markets, restore historic buildings, and reconstruct housing in this heavily damaged urban area. Also, during the reporting period, UNESCO, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates signed an agreement under which the latter donated US$50.4 million to restore the cultural heritage of Mosul including Al-Nouri Mosque.

Madam President,

Displaced Iraqis continue to return home but at a slower rate than at the beginning of the year. It is projected that this trend will continue, leading to a levelling off both returnee and IDP numbers. This, in turn, will contribute to a ‘protracted caseload’ of IDPs, for...
Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

whom additional assistance will be required to facilitate return. Since January, more than 684,000 displaced people have returned while just under two million Iraqis remain displaced as of 15 July 2018. At least 1.6 million of the 3.4 million people targeted have received some form of humanitarian assistance. Most of these recipients are located in Ninawa governorate.

The security and protection environment remain volatile, posing serious protection risks to Iraqi civilians, including displaced persons and returnees. Abductions, detention, increased risks of sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) and grave violations of child rights continue in an environment of increasing impunity, which must be addressed as a priority. For many, a combination of these factors has led to secondary or repeated displacement. A considerable number of adults and even children formerly associated or perceived to be associated with extremist groups face stigma, discrimination and security risks. My Senior Women’s Protection Advisor in cooperation with other UN partners is actively engaged on these and other issues.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) continued with surveys and clearance tasks during the reporting period. A highlight of their work is the state-owned Textile Factory of West Mosul. This 2,400m² factory employed 2,500 workers, mostly women, producing fabric, much of it for export, prior to its occupation by Da’esh. The factory sustained heavy damage during the Mosul liberation and was contaminated by a wide range of explosive hazards. The clearance and rehabilitation of the factory is an important contribution towards economic recovery in Mosul.

I note with appreciation that one year after the liberation of Mosul, UNMAS clearance teams have removed 43,700 explosive hazards in the city, including 1,000 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from which 450 were suicide belts and vests, many still attached to human remains. The operations have included roads, bridges, schools, universities, hospitals, clinics, water treatment plants and municipal buildings in Mosul city.

Madam President,

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Funding Facility for Stabilisation (FFS) continued to support 2,361 projects, with successful completion of more than 1,000 in five governorates. A concerted effort in Mosul is focused on the restoration of water, electricity and health services across the city, allowing many to return to their homes. In Mosul, both East and West, by 21 July, UNDP/FFS completed 320 projects with 216 under implementation and 195 in development. In early June, UNDP/FFS restored electricity for approximately 170,000 people in East Mosul. In Ramadi, on 07 June, UNDP contracted for the rehabilitation of 507 housing units. This adds to the more than 15,000 housing units in Anbar and the Ninawa Plains that either have been completed or are in the process of being rehabilitated by FFS.

The expansion of the maternity department of the General Hospital in West Mosul, supported by UNFPA, was finalized and opened on 8 July. On June 15, UNDP/FFS rehabilitated a primary healthcare centre in Bartala, Ninawa Plains, restoring health services for 1,500. This builds on the broader work of the UN in the health sector in the Ninawa Plains, such as the completion of Phase I of the rehabilitation of Hamdaniya Hospital. Once totally completed, the hospital will be able to service 500,000 people.

Madam President,

Access to education has been recognized as one of the primary drivers for people returning, and as such, the UN continued to scale up the rehabilitation of schools. In Anbar, four schools were rehabilitated during the reporting period as part of a larger expanded stabilisation project, which will see 56 schools across Anbar be rehabilitated with the support of UNDP.

Between 24 June and 5 July, the first in-country mission of the joint Child Protection and GBV sub-clusters’ Child Survivor Initiative, took place to improve the quality of and access to services for child and adolescent survivors of sexual abuse in emergencies. CSI coordinators met with both CP and GBV partners to understand the current practice. Based on the discussion/consultation with CP and GBV partners, a work plan is prepared for the Initiative, which will be implemented in the remaining period of 2018.

Madam President,

The ongoing demonstrations in the southern governorates brought to the fore their massive and long-neglected social, economic and development needs, that have been partly suspended due to the priority given to fighting Da’esh. It is all the more urgent to address these inequalities, since it was from the southern governorates and Baghdad that tens of thousands of young men were mobilized to fight against Da’esh. They are now returning back without jobs, and without adequate support for them and the families of the martyrs. Given all this, the UN, notably the UNCT in Iraq is developing an evidence-based strategy and programmes to scale up assistance to the southern governorates, to provide both immediate and long-term support beyond the already ongoing activities.

Furthermore, in the five southern governorates, it is expected that the water scarcity will increase over the coming months, putting about 25% of this 2 million population at risk of experiencing water service outage, water borne/related diseases and possible displacement. UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR, in coordination with the Ministry of Municipalities, Construction, and Housing and local governmental bodies, have begun to take stock of the Government of Iraq’s
mitigation activities to identify potential gaps in coverage as the situation worsens over the coming hot and dry months. UNDP, on its part, has provided support to the government to develop Iraq’s strategy on regional cooperation for transboundary water management. Madam President,

I urge the Iraqi political and state leaders to work for national reconciliation. It is time to address the root causes of terrorism by engaging in constructive and genuine national dialogue. Regarding community reconciliation efforts, which are critical for sustainable returns in the liberated areas, UNDP continued to focus on capacity development related to conflict management and social cohesion for Local Peace Committees (LPCs), with the Government of Iraq, Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation, and the Council of Ministers Secretariat. Three-day intensive trainings have been delivered for LPCs members and local tribes, minorities, academics, social and community leaders for Ninawa Plains, Sinjar, and Tal Afar (152 men and women). These were in addition to supporting an awareness raising campaign on reconciliation with a focus on representatives of minorities. A digital campaign on awareness launched in June has already reached over 5000 people. From 8 to 18 July, a Conflict Transformation Simulation exercise was undertaken involving 71 youths who represented IDPs, refugees and host communities in the Dohuk governorate. The simulation supported participants’ dialogue and advocacy skills as well as their capacity to engage in multi-generational and inclusive peacebuilding.

Through its Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP), UNDP is providing technical support to the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to establish government institutions mandated for crisis response coordination. As such, between 25 and 27 June, UNDP facilitated 13 staff from the Government of Iraq’s Joint Coordination and Monitoring Centre and KRG’s Joint Crisis Coordination Centre to engage in a study tour to the Singapore Civil Defence Force to deepen their knowledge on civil defence training systems and early warning and disaster preparedness. An additional 20 local level officials from the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Centre (JCMC) were trained on emergency coordination and local preparedness plans. The trained officials are now engaged in supporting preparation of emergency preparedness plans for the three high-risk governorates – Baghdad, Salah al-Din, and Ninawa.

UNDP continued supporting the Government’s implementation of Security Sector Reform (SSR), a significant long-term process in post-conflict Iraq. The Ministry of Interior endorsed the ‘Local Police Service Road Map’, allowing the implementation phase of a transition to service-oriented Iraqi police. UNDP assisted with capacity development of 60 mid-ranking police trainers in July. Citizen participation has been promoted with small grants awarded to five Iraqi civil society organisations to initiate quick impact projects that strengthen public-police partnerships and improve local security in three governorates.

Madam President,

On Climate change, UNDP conducted a capacity building event from 10 to 12 June for 25 high-ranking officials from climate relevant ministries in Iraq. The objective was to strengthen national capacities to access, manage, track and guide climate financing with particular attention to the requirements of Green Climate Fund (GCF). Also, on capacity building, FAO provided training of trainers for Ministry of Agriculture staff on the artificial insemination of buffalo herds to improve the productivity of the livestock population across the country. In addition, FAO, trained the Ministry of Agriculture staff in Iraq, Iran, and Kuwait on the elimination of Red Palm Weevil that is devastating the date palm industry.

Madam President,

As regards refugees, seven years after the start of the conflict in Syria, Iraq continues to register the arrival of new Syrian refugees on a regular basis. In the last few months, the Syrian refugee population in Iraq has increased on average by more than 850 new individuals per month, bringing the total Syrian refugee population to over 251,000 individuals, 97 per cent of whom live in the Kurdistan region. The living situation for the majority of Syrian refugees remains challenging, with many families still lacking the necessary resources to meet their basic needs. Despite the generosity of Kurdistan Region’s authorities and local communities, the protracted nature of their displacement means that it is increasingly difficult for communities, infrastructure and services to continue providing the same level of support. In July, UNHCR and WFP began a Joint Vulnerability Assessment (JVA) in order to assess food vulnerability for Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan region in order to better target food assistance for the most vulnerable. Despite the successes being registered through the humanitarian and development efforts of the UN Country Team, the Government of Iraq and partners, funding remains a critical issue. As of 24 July, donors have contributed $324 million towards the Humanitarian Response Plan which is 57 percent of the plan’s requirement. In order to ensure that critical assistance to vulnerable communities is available, I appeal to the donor community to continue their generous funding as well as to support activities in the humanitarian-development-peace sector.

Madam President,

Regionally, I am pleased to note that the Government of Iraq is working to
Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

resolve differences of views over the management of water resources through dialogue. I also note with appreciation that the Government of Iraq emphasised the need to strengthen dialogue with its neighbours to commonly share water resources and requested the Government of Turkey to delay the filling of the Ilısú Dam. In return, I am pleased that the Government of Turkey also aims to resolve all differences pertaining to the construction of the Ilısú Dam through dialogue. Similarly, I would like to praise the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for expressing that it is open to dialogue on the water management issues.

I note that the Government of Iraq has been making tangible steps to ensure development and sustainable management of water resources and electricity, at domestic and regional levels. On 27 June, Prime Minister Abadi chaired a meeting of the Supreme National Water Committee to discuss the procedures of the Ministry of Water Resources and mitigating measures for the water shortage this summer. The meeting also agreed on the way forward to engage bilaterally with Turkey and Iran on the sharing of transboundary water resources. On 11 July, Minister of Water Resources Hassan al-Janabi delivered a speech in the Security Council session following an official invitation to give a presentation on dangers of climate changes vis-à-vis international peace and security in the Middle East. During his speech, Minister Janabi reported on the destruction of civil and water facilities in Iraq and underlined that Iraq strongly calls to respect its water rights.

As water is a shared resource between the people of Iraq, Turkey and Iran, its efficient management can have a significant impact on the livelihoods of the region.

Madam President,

From 1 to 5 July, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) undertook a mission to Baghdad and Basra to understand the illicit trafficking and organised crime situation in Iraq and to discuss possible partnership with the national authorities. The production, trafficking and consumption of drugs in Iraq is of great concern, and it is a significant threat to the country’s stability after terrorism. The authorities are conscious of the threat but would require extensive support to adequately address it. Follow-up missions and a detailed partnership proposal will be sent by UNODC to the Iraqi authorities in the coming months.

Madam President,

Allow me to now turn to the nineteenth report of the Secretary-General on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

Although tangible results in the search of missing persons have yet to be achieved, the work of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence continues in a commendable manner despite the many political, security and economic difficulties the country endures. The Ministry continues with the same determination to carry out excavation and exploration missions as well as efforts to identify new witnesses, collecting information to complement the search.

In 25 July, the 104th session of the Tripartite mechanism took place in Kuwait and discussions held among the Tripartite members were constructive and forward-looking. There have been strong indicators that the efforts to find missing Kuwaitis might soon lead to some positive results. More importantly, I am pleased to see that our repeated calls to the international community for their assistance have yield results, and relevant Member States in possession of satellite imagery from 1990-1991 came forward with information that could assist in identification of burial locations. I am pleased to report that UNAMI is also working in acquiring relevant material from the UN’s archives that could potentially assist in the search for relevant information.

Following my meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim al-Ja’afarī last week I am also pleased to report that the two sides are close in to setting a date for the official transfer of a significant consignment of Kuwaiti property. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed its readiness to already submit the Kuwaiti property to UNAMI for safeguarding till the date of the transfer is agreed. UNAMI has already undertaken the necessary logistic preparations for such prospect, should both sides agree.

Madam President,

These are some positive developments that demonstrate the commitment of the Government of Iraq to provide the families of the missing with answers about the fate of their loved ones and reach an end to this humanitarian file despite the challenges and the accumulated frustration from lack of results. Nevertheless, procurement of field equipment, provision of forensic, DNA, and anthropological trainings, capacity-building for Iraqi and Kuwaiti technical teams remain a major challenge and requirement for moving this file forward. The support and assistance of the international community in those areas are of a paramount importance.

On the missing property, while I commend both Iraq and Kuwait on moving forward in setting the date for official handover, I would like to once again call on the Government of Iraq to exert more efforts in trying to locate the invaluable national archives.

Thank you.
Sexual and gender-based violence continues at “alarming rates” in Iraq

New York, 8 August 2018 – Ms. Suzan Aref, the coordinator of Iraq Cross Sector Task Force, told the UN Security Council today that sexual and gender-based violence continues at “alarming rates” in Iraq.

Participating at the 8324th meeting of the UNSC that was dealing with the situation in Iraq, she said that “women and girls who have been living in areas under ISIS control have been exposed to the most extreme forms of violence as a way to subjugate the whole community.”

The Coordinator also highlighted that women’s security and rights are tightly linked to their participation and role in decision-making. She said that “in spite of a 25 per cent quota in the parliament and public institutions, women remain under-represented or absent in decision-making, including political parties, as there is a general lack of acceptance of the importance of women’s role in decision-making.”

On urgent security priorities that require Security Council’s attention, Ms. Aref reiterated that “women, including those that are refugees, IDPs and in host communities, must have access to empowerment programs and work opportunities, such as vocational trainings, and literacy programs to erase illiteracy, keeping in mind the double burden and social stigma they carry.”

Elections

DSRSG Alice Walpole at Baghdad manual vote recount center

Baghdad, 9 July 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Alice Walpole, visited the recount centre in Baghdad to assess progress made in conducting the partial manual recount of votes from the 12 May national elections.

Welcomed by the judges assigned to oversee the centre, DSRSG Walpole observed some of the recount process for Iraq’s six southernmost governorates and met recount staff, political party agents and observers. She also spoke with the United Nations electoral experts who are watching the entire process.

Ms. Walpole reiterated UNAMI’s commitment to provide assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and its Board of Judges in completing an orderly, professional and transparent recount process.
DSRSG Alice Walpole visit to Sulaimaniyah RCC to assess progress on the manual recount of votes

Sulaimaniyah, 10 July 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq, Alice Walpole, visited the recount centre in Sulaimaniyah to assess progress on the manual recount of votes from the 12 May national elections. As during her recent visits to the electoral recount centres in Kirkuk and Baghdad, DSRSG Walpole observed the ongoing recount in Sulaymaniyah and met with recount staff and members of the Board of Judges overseeing the process. She also spoke with the United Nations team of electoral experts present, and reiterated how impressed she was with the professionalism of all those working hard to deliver the recount. DSRSG Walpole recalled that several political parties in Sulaimaniyah had been among those calling for a recount of ballots, and she encouraged political party agents and civil society observers to engage with the recount process.

SRSG Kubis visited Baghdad manual vote recount center

Baghdad, 25 July 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, visited today the Baghdad Recount Centre at Baghdad International Fair where he had a chance to meet with the Chief Judge Commissioner Jassim, members of the Board of Judges, with the staff doing the recount and also the representatives of the political parties. The SRSG was impressed with the efficiency and professionalism of both the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and additional staff, as well as with the transparency and credibility of the re-count process he witnessed. The Special Representative congratulated the Chief Judge Commissioner for managing such an efficient operation, in Baghdad and around Iraq.
DSRSG Walpole revisited Baghdad manual vote recount center

Baghdad, 01 August 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Alice Walpole, today revisited the Baghdad electoral recount centre at Baghdad International Fair to assess progress on the manual recount of votes from the 12 May national elections.

DSRSG Walpole, who has previously observed the recount in Kirkuk, Sulaimaniya and Baghdad (Basra and Wasit votes), met with Judge Jassim, chairman of the Board of Judges overseeing the recount, and with recount staff and representatives of political parties.

The DSRSG welcomed the transparency of the recount process she was witnessing. She also commended the efficiency and professionalism of the Independent High Electoral Commission staff and others who were working hard to finish the recount.

Statement by DSRSG Walpole at IHEC following announcement of the end of the vote recount process

Baghdad, 6 August 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms Alice Walpole, gave the following statement at IHEC following announcement of the end of the vote recount process:

“The United Nations is pleased to confirm, having observed this recount process from beginning to the end, that we believe it was conducted in a manner that is credible, professional and transparent.

We are very pleased that it’s been concluded and we look forward to the next steps in this process towards formation of the new government.

Thank you.

SRSG Kubiš congratulates the IHEC Board of Judges on completion of the electoral recount and looks forward to a timely conclusion of the remaining stages of the electoral process

Baghdad, 6 August 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, welcomes today’s announcement by the Board of Judges of the Independent High Electoral Commission of the completion of the electoral recount in all 18 Iraqi governorates and also out-of-country voting.

“I congratulate the Board of Judges on this important milestone towards the conclusion of Iraq’s 2018 electoral process. The timely, transparent, well-organised, credible conduct of the recount was made possible by the hands-on impartial work of the Board of Judges, and the dedication and professionalism of all recount staff, including Independent High Electoral Commission staff and judiciary personnel. The manner in which they have handled the recount has increased public confidence in the electoral process, and election results,” SRSG Kubiš said.

“I now encourage the Board of Judges and relevant state institutions to devote their attention to the timely announcement of provisional results and the speedy resolution of any outstanding appeals,” SRSG Kubiš added.

“Throughout the recount process, an experienced team of United Nations electoral experts has followed the process, providing advice and assistance. The United Nations remains available to provide further expert advice and assistance to the Board of Judges as they supervise the tabulation of recount results and all subsequent stages in certification of the results by the Federal Court,” SRSG Kubiš added.
Erbil, 14 August 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG), Alice Walpole, met today with the Board of Commissioners of the Kurdistan Region’s Independent High Electoral Commission (K-IHEC) in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, to discuss progress on preparations for the September Kurdistan regional parliamentary elections. The K-IHEC Commissioners requested United Nations specialist technical assistance and support for the elections. DSRSG Walpole confirmed that the United Nations would consider the request immediately. She welcomed efforts by K-IHEC to encourage the international community to deploy observers in locations across the Kurdistan Region on election day. While the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) does not formally observe elections in situations when it is already providing assistance and advice to electoral authorities, DSRSG Walpole noted that UNAMI teams were intending to visit polling stations on election day.

While in Erbil, the DSRSG met with a number of other interlocutors, including political party leaders, representatives of religious minorities and human rights activists.

UN’s Kubiš urges Government to address people’s concerns, avert violence and political actors to work towards long-term solutions

Baghdad, 17 July 2018 - Following the demonstrations over the lack of services, job opportunities and to demand improved living conditions, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, urges the government to fully respect and address the people’s legitimate concerns. He calls on the political actors to ensure that the next administration prioritizes good governance, reforms and the fight against corruption that will enable economic development and progress, job creation and delivery of critical public services.

At the same time, the Special Representative is deeply concerned about violence as well as acts of vandalism which accompanied some of the otherwise largely peaceful public protests. He regrets the loss of life and numerous injuries on the side of both protestors and security forces and the destruction of public and private property including offices of government institutions and political parties as well as oil and public infrastructure. Such developments, if continuing, would have a harmful impact on the security and economic situations throughout the country.

Mr. Kubiš underscores the inalienable right of the people to freedom of expression, including to partake in peaceful demonstrations without fear and intimidation or arbitrary detentions while abiding by the law, and to have unfettered access to information. It is the duty of the authorities to enable such lawful demonstrations and to protect their participants. While maintaining law and order the security forces must exercise restraint and avoid use of excessive disproportionate, lethal force. He also warns against allowing intruders and opportunists to exploit the otherwise legitimate demonstrations for their political purposes, to trigger disturbances.

Iraq has just started recovering from the destruction caused by the terrorist Daesh’s while still fighting its remnants and sleeper cells. The people of Iraq badly need sustainable, long-term stability that can only be achieved by all actors coming together to find solutions to some of the country’s persistent problems that i.a. repeatedly prompted the recent and previous protests. Following the 12 May general elections and after the early conclusion of the recount of fraudulent and suspicious ballots and official certification of the election results, it is imperative to expeditiously install a new inclusive and pro-reform patriotic government that will put the rich resources of the country at the disposal and for the benefit of its own people. Such a government will be able to deliver on the people’s demands and answer their aspirations of boosting economic performance, creating jobs, improving services, fighting corruption and instilling hope of decent and dignified life for the youth, for all Iraqis.
The Acting Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Alice Walpole, visited Kut

Kut, 4 July 2018 - The Acting Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Alice Walpole, visited Kut (Wassit Governorate) and met the Governor Mahmoud Abdul Rida Mula Talal, Provincial Council Chairman Mazin Kandouh al-Zamili and Faili Kurd representatives, including Haider Husham al-Fayli and incoming Faili Kurd MP Mazen Abd al-Munim. Discussions focused on political, electoral and security developments in Wassit, and the pressing issue of water scarcity. Ms. Walpole also took the opportunity to visit Kut’s Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, the final resting place of British and Indian soldiers who died during the Ottoman siege of Kut in 1916.

The Acting Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Alice Walpole, visited Arab villages in Multaqa sub-district, west of Kirkuk City

Kirkuk, 5 July 2018 - The Acting Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Alice Walpole, visited Arab villages in Multaqa sub-district, west of Kirkuk City, which were reportedly destroyed by the Peshmerga in early 2015 following the defeat of Da'esh in the area. Accompanied by the Mayor of Multaqa sub-district, Hasan Nasayif Al-Jubouri, Ms. Walpole toured the ruins of homes, and heard from villagers about their priorities for reconstruction, including electricity and water supply, medical clinics and schools. She underlined the need for appropriate security and local government assistance for affected rural areas to enable people to return and rebuild their lives in dignity. Ms. Walpole also took the opportunity while in Kirkuk city to visit the ballot recounting centre. She met with judges overseeing the recount, participating recount staff, and representatives of political parties. She confirmed that United Nations electoral experts will be watching the recount process from start to finish.
The leadership of the United Nations in Iraq continued intensive political consultations within Iraq and the region.

**Baghdad, 16 July 2018** - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with the Vice President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Osama Al-Nujaifi. The current political and security situation in the country was discussed. Photo courtesy of the Presidency of the Republic.

**Baghdad, 17 July 2018** - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Iraq National Security Advisor, Mr. Faleh al-Fayyadh. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation in the country. Photos by UNAMI archives.

**Baghdad, 17 July 2018** - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Sayed Ammar al-Hakeem, Head of “Wisdom Movement”. Discussions focused on the current political situation in the country. Photo courtesy of the Wisdom Movement.

**Baghdad, 19 July 2018** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, was received today by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency Dr. Haider Al-Abadi. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation in the country. The United Nations stands ready to provide any assistance according to its mandate. Photo: Courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Najaf, 19 July 2018** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met separately today in Najaf with His Eminence Sayed Muqtada al-Sadr and Sheikh Mohammed Al-Yacoubi. During the discussions, the SRSG stressed the importance for the central and local governments to meet the immediate legitimate demands of the people and take first reform steps on issues and measures that would require longer time.

Mr. Kubiš also called for acceleration of the democratic processes including the finalization of the manual recount, declaration of the final results of the elections, convening the new parliament and formation of the new government. The new government should prioritize meeting the demands of the people, reform agenda and fighting corruption. The United Nations is ready to provide any assistance according to its mandate. Photo courtesy of the respective offices.
Baghdad, 22 July 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met in Baghdad with the former Speaker of the Iraq Council of Representatives, Dr. Salim Al-Jabouri. They discussed the current political, security and economic situation in the country with the special emphasis on the post-electoral developments.

Photo courtesy of CoR.

Erbil, 23 July 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met in Erbil with Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani. They discussed the current political, security and economic situation in the country, Baghdad-Erbil relations, and focused on the post-electoral developments.

Photo courtesy of DFR KRG.

Baghdad, 26 July 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, chaired today a meeting attended by Iraq Prime Minister’s Chief of Cabinet, Dr. Naufel al-Hassan, as the Guest of Honour. In attendance were ambassadors and representatives of foreign missions operating in Baghdad. The meeting discussed the current situation in Iraq and efforts of the Government to respond to the needs and requirements of the people.

Photos courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister.

Amman, Jordan, 24 July 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with the Minister of Foreign and Expatriates Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Ayman Safadi. They discussed the UN mission’s efforts to help Iraq achieve political, economic and social stability, with special emphasis on the reconstruction following the country’s victory against terrorist Daesh.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign and Expatriates Affairs, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Baghdad, 26 July 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with Judge Faek Al-Zidane, Head of the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq. They discussed the post electoral situation in the country and the ongoing manual recount process.

Photo: Courtesy of Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq.

Baghdad, 26 July 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with the Chairman of the Council of church leaders of Iraq and the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Iraq Archbishop Avak Asadourian. Their discussion focused on topics related to the Christian minority in the context of the country’s political developments.

Photos courtesy of Iraqi Armenians Media Centre.
Baghdad, 29 July 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, was received today by H.E. Dr. Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq. They discussed the current political and economic situation in the country and paid special attention to the post electoral developments.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the President.

Baghdad, 29 July 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the Minister of the Interior of Iraq, Qasim al-Araji. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country.

Photo courtesy of MoI.

Baghdad, 01 August 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari. They discussed the United Nations efforts to support Iraq on the basis of renewed UNAMI mandate as well as recent developments in Iraq.

SRSG Kubiš reiterated that UNAMI is in the process of prioritizing the next phase of its engagement, which includes reconstruction, IDP return, and economic development. He also informed about the upcoming arrival of the Chief of the International Investigation Mission to document ISIL crimes in Iraq to consult with the Iraqi authorities on the Mission’s work and mechanisms.

Photo courtesy of MOFA.

Baghdad, 02 August 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with Khamis al-Khanjar, leader of the Arab Project Party. They discussed the current political situation as well as prospect for future government formation.

Photo courtesy of the Arab Project Party.

Baghdad, 13 August 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the leader of the Fatah bloc, Hadi al-Ameri. They discussed the current political situation in the country and in the region.

UNAMI File photo
Baghdad, 14 August 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met with the National Security Advisor, Falah al-Fayyad. They discussed the current political situation in the country and in the region.

UNAMI file photo.

Baghdad, 14 August 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with Ammar al-Hakim, the leader of the Hikma bloc. They discussed the current political situation as well as prospects for future government formation.

UNAMI file photo.

Baghdad, 15 August 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Iraq, Iraj Masjedi. They discussed current political developments in Iraq and in the region.

UNAMI file photo.

Baghdad, 15 August 2018 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, attended the Iraqi Economic Development Conference organised by the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Iraq. The Conference focused on investment opportunities and ways the government can facilitate economic development.

Photos: Courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Security**

**UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of July 2018**

Baghdad, 01 August 2018 – A total of 79 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 99 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in July 2018*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The figures include ordinary citizens and others considered civilian at the time of death or injury, such as police in non-combat functions, civil defence, personal security teams, facilities protection police and fire department personnel.

Of the overall figures recorded by UNAMI for the month of July, the number of civilians killed (not including police) was 71, while the number of injured (not including police) was 82.

Baghdad was the worst affected Governorate, with 63 civilian casualties (30 killed, 33 injured), followed by Kirkuk (08 killed, 34 injured) and Nineawa (13 killed and 05 injured). According to information obtained by UNAMI from the Health Directorate in Anbar, the Governorate suffered a total of 16 civilian casualties (7 killed, 9 injured). Figures are updated until 31 July 2018, inclusive.

*CAVEAT: UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in certain areas; in some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. Figures for casualties from Anbar Governorate are provided by the Health Directorate and might not fully reflect the number of casualties due to the increased volatility of the situation on the ground in Anbar and the disruption of services. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum.
UNAMI launches #WhyNot campaign in Babil Governorate, calling for stronger representation of women in the incoming Government and national institutions

Baghdad, 4 July 2018 – As part of its efforts to highlight the significance of women’s participation in electoral and political processes, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) launched the #WhyNot (#Shakobeha) campaign in Babil Governorate Tuesday. The event was attended by Dr. Raad Alwan Al-Jubouri, Chair of the Babil Provincial Council, members of the Provincial Council, religious and tribal leaders, civil society, women activists, academics and youth. Speaking at the event, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Alice Walpole commended all the women who won seats in the parliamentary elections on 12 May, both within and outside the women’s seat quota. “I hope that a substantial number of incoming female Members of Parliament will be appointed to key roles in parliamentary committees and to seats on the Council of Ministers,” said DSRSG Walpole.

The #WhyNot campaign originally started in April, in the run-up to the parliamentary elections. Its support for women candidates was partly aimed at countering the vicious negative social media campaigns at that time, targeted at many of the women candidates for parliamentary seats. “Now that the elections are over, the #WhyNot campaign will continue……there remains a great deal to do to ensure that Iraq benefits fully from the skills, experience and knowledge that women can bring to political life,” emphasised DSRSG Walpole, who spoke about her own mother’s role as a Member of Parliament in Britain.

She added that the United Nations’ mandate in Iraq, agreed with the government of Iraq and recently renewed on 14 June, clearly tasks the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq with promoting the participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels of society. “It also instructs UNAMI to promote women’s equal access to executive roles in key areas such as national reconciliation, security sector reform, elections and socio-economic development,” she said.

DSRSG Walpole noted that the United Nations stands ready to collaborate with the incoming government, notably the Council of Representatives, in developing, for example, legislation to broaden women’s political space and facilitate their appointment in leadership positions in government, the judiciary and other national institutions.

Seven centers for women and girls from refugee, internally displaced and local communities have been opened across Iraq as part of the EU MADAD programme

Duhok, 10 July 2018 - Seven centers offering psychosocial counselling, legal assistance and income-generating activities for women and girls from refugee, internally displaced and local communities have been opened across Iraq as part of the EU MADAD programme, implemented by UN Women and supported by EU Neighbourhood and Enlargement. Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) staff, UN Women implementing partner, held recently at WLC centers in Duhok Governorate, Seje and Will, awareness sessions for women and girls -survivors of violence. The sessions included many subjects, like self-confidence and freedom of expression with videos that reflected the subjects. The women and girls’ impressions were positive. They also had a chance to meet the UN Women Country Representative in Iraq, Ms. Dina Zorba, and discuss topics of common interest.
SRSG Kubiš met with the National Team on the implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325

Baghdad, 31 July 2018 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Jan Kubiš met today with eight members of the National Team on the implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, comprising the Directorate Empowering Women; Ministerial Follow-up Teams; the Coordination Committee and the Secretariat. The meeting discussed progress on the implementation of the National Action Plan, as well as the challenges, including lack of a dedicated budget which impacted coordination of NAP activities.

The SRSG commended the National Team for the finalisation of the report noting that UNAMI would provide consolidated comments as requested. He reiterated that UNAMI would continue to press on political leaders to include gender perspectives in the government programme as well as a 30% quota for women representation in the cabinet and leadership positions.

In meeting with activists, UN’s Kubiš voices support for women’s demands for greater participation in Iraqi political life

Baghdad, 2 August 2018 - Women activists seeking to boost the role of women in Iraqi politics presented their vision on the inclusion of the gender equality perspective in the new Government of Iraq's programme and advocated the support of the United Nations in achieving their meaningful and effective representation in political processes.

The group of 13 women activists from the Iraqi Women Network, 1325 Iraqi Network, 1325 Alliance and academics presented their demands at a meeting today with Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq Ján Kubiš, who commended the efforts of the activists and pledged increased UN support to achieve their goals.

The participants lamented the lack of political will and vision to include women in decision-making positions. They demanded to broaden space for women in the political and reconciliation processes that have not yet materialized regardless of pledges to do so as well as a multitude of government strategies, plans and national frameworks, often with support of the UN.

The women charted out the way forward on gender equality for the future government, Council of Representatives and leadership of political parties. Recommendations highlighted the need to include women in committees negotiating the Government formation, a 30-percent share in the upcoming Cabinet, independent commissions and institutions in the government’s legislative and executive branches. The participants also called for the establishment of a national mechanism with powers and authority to coordinate the implementation of national frameworks advancing the women, peace and security agenda, including the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

The participants requested United Nations’ active and effective support for their proposals and demands, also through UN work with the government and political leaders, heads of political...
In meeting with activists, UN’s Kubiš voices support for women’s demands for greater participation in Iraqi political life (continued)

Blocs. Special Representative Kubiš commended the efforts of the women, saying it came at an opportune time between elections and the government’s formation. He underscored that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) will urge political leaders and forces to reflect the gender perspectives in the government’s programme as well as a gender-responsive budget. Mr. Kubiš reiterated UN commitment to strengthening civil society’s efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and said UNAMI is ready, based on its reinforced mandate, to continue and enhance its work in this respect.

The participants also raised general concerns, which included the steady regress on women’s rights, the lack of meaningful steps to address women’s rights and lack of economic opportunities for women. They stressed developing special programmes to empower youth - with a focus on the role of females - as future leaders in all aspects.

The women explained that Da’esh created more problems for women than they already faced, notably women with no livelihoods and heading households, some of whom are suffering due to stigma and association with the terrorist group as well as lack of care for families of martyrs who fought Da’esh. They stressed the need to adopt transitional justice mechanisms to ensure political and community reconciliation, accountability and justice and reparations for survivors of Da’esh’s atrocities.

In the same context, the Special Representative met two days ago with the delegation of the National Team implementing the Iraqi National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. The delegation presented similar requests, in addition to discussing the progress on the implementation of the INAP as well as the challenges impeding its implementation, including lack of a dedicated budget to support INAP activities.

Mr. Kubiš commended the work of the National Team. He reiterated that UNAMI would continue to work with political leaders to include gender perspectives in the government programme as well as a 30 percent quota for women representation in the Cabinet and leadership positions.

International Gender Group met to discuss Iraqi women’s political, economic and social empowerment

Baghdad, 05 August 2018 - The Australian Embassy in Baghdad hosted today the International Gender Group meeting to discuss Iraqi women’s political, economic and social empowerment, which will be critical to Iraq’s future. UN Women and representatives of other UN agencies, funds and programmes participated at the meeting.

UN lends support as Iraqi women show united front in politics to push for a stronger role

Baghdad, 6 August 2018 – In a meeting facilitated by the United Nations, Iraqi women expected to sit in the next Council of Representatives discussed working collaboratively across the political spectrum, including the possible establishment of a women’s parliamentary caucus, to promote gender equality and the adoption of laws advancing women’s rights and to strengthen their role in governance.

The seventeen women, who ran in the 12 May general elections on different party lists and are expected to win parliamentary seats, and who include former members of parliament and provincial councils, agreed that some women MPs in the incoming parliament deserve senior roles in the new government, including the Council of Ministers. They expressed their determination to be part of
parliamentary committees across the spectrum of issues, not just those traditionally associated with women, and they voiced their keenness to build their skills and knowledge on all aspects of parliamentary work. The women pressed the UN to advocate for women’s representation in the government formation as a priority - a position that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has strongly supported on every occasion. The meeting was also attended by representatives of UNDP, UNFPA, UNMAS, UNOPS and UNWOMEN.

The Iraqi women politicians undertook to work across the party divide, for example in establishing a women’s parliamentary caucus and women’s platforms, in the development of government policies and strategies. And they committed to collaborate with civil society and male champions on increasing women’s participation and representation in politics, as well as gender mainstreaming in all parliamentary processes.

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Alice Walpole assured participants of the UN’s readiness to continue encouraging political leaders and heads of blocs to include women in committees negotiating government formation, as well as the inclusion of women’s demands in the government programme and their representation in the Council of Ministers, Judiciary, state institutions and other high-level public positions.

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UN Women visited the Women Center at Baserma Camp

Baghdad, 11 August 2018 – UN Women Country Representative in Iraq, Dina Zorba, along with the chair of the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO), Suzan Aref, accompanied by the program team in Baghdad and Erbil visited the women center at Baserma Camp for Syrian refugees where she met with women beneficiaries and the center’s staff.

The visit aimed at following up on the European Union (EU) supported MADAD activities implemented by WEO, to support Syrian women and girls affected by the conflict. The delegation also met with the Camp Manager, Mr. Ibrahim Rawanduzi and Mr. Hogr Qader, UNHCR camp manager where they discussed the joint coordination between UNWOMEN and the camp management.

UN Women Iraq is implementing two-year (2018-2019) MADAD funded program Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey, as part of an integrated regional program that seeks to support displaced Iraqi women, displaced Syrian women and girls and host-country nationals across affected by conflict.
Baghdad, 12 August 2018 - The representative of the UN Women in Iraq, Ms. Dina Zorba met today with Mohammed al-Karbouli, Secretary General of the al-Hal Party. They reviewed the efforts of the Iraqi political forces to form the new government and ways for empowering Iraqi women in that process and ensuring their participation and representations at the highest levels.

Baghdad, 13 August 2018 - Mr. Hadi Al-Amiry, leader of the Fatah Alliance, received today the representative of the UN Women in Iraq, Ms. Dina Zorba. They discussed the important role of women in reconstruction and stability of the country.

Baghdad, 19 August 2018 - Twenty young Iraqi men and women led the work to increase public awareness on the role of women and their achievements in history and daily life. The youth edited articles to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the launch event for the WikiGap at the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad where UN Women organized the event in partnership with the Embassy of Sweden in Iraq and the HerStory networks. Celebrating the World Humanitarian Day, the participants edited articles to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment choosing 40 articles related to humanitarian personnel and those who have lost their lives working for humanitarian causes.

"WikiGap raises awareness about gender through innovation in advocacy and technology" Laila Hatahet, Programme Specialist, UN Women Iraq. This youth-led initiative, known as #HerStory, aims to increase the number of articles on Wikipedia that relate the stories and experiences of women, UN Women has been working with youth networks across the Arab States region to address this imbalance, with an ambitious target of doubling the number of articles on Wikipedia that address gender and empowerment of women and girls between 2018 and 2020.

Baghdad, 13 August 2018 - The Vice-President of the Republic, Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki, received today the representative of the UN Women in Iraq, Ms. Dina Zorba. Mr. Al-Maliki confirmed the importance of women participation and roles in decision making at all government and non-governmental levels. Ms. Zorba highlighted the important role played by the UN Women in empowering women through capacity-building and strategic support for women’s organizations in order to enhance women’s political participation and leadership, as well as women’s economic empowerment and prevention of all forms of violence against women.

Dohuk, 17 August 2018 - UN Women Iraq and the High Council for Women Affairs of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq organized today a training on the role of gender balance to develop capabilities for senior civil servants of the Dohuk governorate.

Young Iraqi women and men closing the gender WikiGap with UN Women and the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad
People with disabilities always have hope – life’s challenges push them towards being creative.

Baghdad, 25 June 2018 - The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) concluded today a two-day workshop for 60 representatives of civil society organizations and activists working on the rights of persons with disabilities, Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, Person with Disabilities Body?? and representatives of Iraqi ministries. The sessions focused on issues related to the rights of person with disabilities such as; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Protocol on CRPD and Law 38 on the rights of Persons with Disabilities. Interactive sessions focused on the Government of Iraq’s implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the Iraqi Law No. 38 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. While participants, many of whom had various forms of disabilities including the physically challenged, hearing impaired and their caregivers, highlighted the achievements of the government, they nonetheless noted the challenges they faced as they promoted the rights of persons with disabilities.

Openly speaking, young Baha’ah Ahmed Abd, with a sense of pride, said that he and his four disabled brothers managed to open their own business and take care of the family. “Life was not easy on us, especially that the facilities provided for disadvantaged people in the country were few. But that did not stop me, nor my brothers, to live a normal life. My brothers are married now, and I will get engaged in the next few days, hopefully,” smiling with optimism Baha’ah concluded.

Self-taught, 38-year-old Lamya’a Al-Qaisi, who had difficulties going to school, is now a writer. “I learned to read and write at the age of 8, curious enough to ask my sisters about every letter and word that came across my sight. Now I’m a field researcher at the British Cultural Center in Baghdad. In addition to my passion for writing, I also know how to cook,” said Lamya’a.

“Disability is the obstruction of thought rather than the obstruction of body. We are distinguished people; it’s all about human diversity,” Lamya’a added.

Seated on a wheel chair, 42-year-old Haider Hameed speaks of his artistic interest in playing the guitar, despite the difficulty he experiences in moving his hands. He was enthusiastic to tell his story, and says that when he was growing up, he knew that he was different. “Although I wouldn’t be able to accomplish all I had dreamt of, another dream still wandered my mind,” he said.

Playing the guitar since the age of 12, Haider recalls his instructor’s surprise at his unique eastern style, and fondly remembers the support he received, and all the events he performed at, whether at friends’ gathering or events hosted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Reflecting on the future, Haider says “I’m hoping for the best, maybe rules will change regarding people with disability in the future.”

While commending the government’s efforts on the issue, many of the participants who suffer various forms of disabilities still had plenty to say about the challenges they face, as they seek to spread awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities. And one thing that was evident, was their relentless determination to succeed.

Text and photos by Sana Kareem, UNAMI PIO
UNAMI Human Rights Office in Baghdad conducted a training on “Strengthening Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation Skills for the staff of the Secretariat of Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR)”

Baghdad, 28 June 2018 - UNAMI Human Rights Office in Baghdad conducted a training on “Strengthening Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation Skills for the staff of the Secretariat of Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR)”. From 27 to 28 June 2018, the UNAMI Human Rights Office in Baghdad conducted a specialized Training Programme on “Strengthening Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation Skills for the Secretariat of Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR)”. Thirty staff members of the Commission, including ten women in various departments of the Commission, including human rights, women, children, displaced persons and complaints from Baghdad, Najaf, Kirkuk, Karbala, Babel, Salah Aldin Diwaniya, and Samawa Governorates participated.

Pilot training on the “Accountability of ISIL/Da’esh Crimes in Iraq: Collection of Evidence, Prosecution, Trials and International Cooperation” held in The Hague


The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) perpetrated serious and systematic violations in Iraq that amount to “international crimes” since its capture of the city of Mosul in June 2014, including the nine-month battle for Mosul between the terrorist group and Iraqi Government forces. Evidence shows that ISIL committed mass atrocities against civilians and Mosul itself, a city they claimed as their capital, but for which they sought its ultimate deliberate destruction. Da’esh’s reign of terror has spared no one, inflicting untold suffering on unarmed residents whose only guilty is that they lived in the areas under ISIL’s control. However, after the defeat of ISIL, Iraq’s criminal justice response faced challenges regarding the big number of the terrorist group’s detainees as well as the difficulties related to investigating and prosecuting them. Numbers show that over 12000 ISIL fighters are captured and detained in Iraqi prisons. Iraqi specialized courts in Baghdad and Mosul are leading investigations, prosecutions and trials of ISIL detainees. To this end Iraq is better placed to try those responsible for committing atrocities in Iraq during the presence of ISIL in Mosul and other cities.
Pilot training on the “Accountability of ISIL/Dae’sh Crimes in Iraq: Collection of Evidence, Prosecution, Trials and International Cooperation” held in the Hague (continued)

In this regard, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed Mr. Karim Asad Khan as the Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to support domestic efforts to hold Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Dae’sh) accountable by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the terrorist group.

To this end, Iraqi courts will be well supported once the Investigative Team starts its work on the ground and it will contribute in building the cases against those involved in the atrocities. This training aimed to gather Iraqi judges responsible for ISIL-related cases in Iraq with practitioners from the international criminal tribunals to share experiences as well as presenting the international dimension of criminal trials taking place in The Hague. The complexity of the criminal procedures for foreign fighters in Iraq and the importance to apply international standards stem from the commitment that Iraq has expressed to comply with international humanitarian law and gross abuses and violations of human rights, including the abductions, forced marriage and sexual slavery of women and girls, committed by Dae’sh have left deep scars on Iraqi society. Women, men, girls and boys remain missing. Survivors of sexual violence and children borne of rape continue to face stigma and marginalization.

After the military victory achieved in 2017 by Iraqi forces with the support of the international community, it is time to also defeat Dae’sh through a justice and accountability process. Accountability for sexual violence crimes is also essential to preventing them.

In the context of Iraq, investigating sexual violence crimes is expected to be a complex process and to do so in compliance with international standards requires highly specialized training. We as the United Nations, are confident that the Special Advisor and Head of the Investigative team, Karim Khan and his team, with the support of the Government of Iraq will ensure the highest standards of investigations are met; and will be informed by a survivor-centred approach.

We stand ready to support the work of the Special Investigative team as requested and are willing to cooperate within the framework of the the United Nations and Iraq signed the Joint Communiqué in September 2016 which addresses six priority areas that include, inter alia: engaging in legislative and policy reform and ensuring accountability for sexual violence.

Before international criminal tribunals, the good practices and the challenges and it was a platform to present and discuss: Iraq’s criminal justice response to hold ISIL/Dae’sh accountable; UNODC’s support to Iraq to counter terrorism; investigation of international crimes and crime scene management; prosecution of international crimes and terrorist crimes; trials of international crimes; sentencing of international crimes; detention at the international criminal tribunals. At the training, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Jan Kubis delivered the following statement:

Distinguished guests,
Senior officials of the Government of Iraq,
UN Colleagues,
Thank you for extending an invitation to participate in the opening session of this pilot training on accountability for ISIL crimes.

The serious and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and gross abuses and violations of human rights, including the abductions, forced marriage and sexual slavery of women and girls, committed by Dae’sh have left deep scars on Iraqi society. Women, men, girls and boys remain missing. Survivors of sexual violence and children borne of rape continue to face stigma and marginalization.

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The two-hour training was aimed at increasing the understanding of the participants on the principles to be observed in the conduct of human rights investigations. The training is part of a series of HRO trainings planned for 2018 to benefit IIHCHR staff members, including women participants.

Statement on behalf of the Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team for Accountability of Dae’sh/ISIL crimes

Baghdad, 6 August 2018 - Today, the United Nations Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team for Accountability of Dae’sh / ISIL crimes, Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, will commence an eight-day visit to the Republic of Iraq. The Special Advisor was appointed pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2379 (2017). During his visit, Mr. Khan will avail himself of the opportunity to meet with the Office of the Prime Minister of Iraq and other senior State officials to commence the dialogue and cooperation that will be necessary to discharge the mandate of the Investigative Team, and the corresponding Terms of Reference. The Special Advisor will also engage with other relevant interlocutors to seek a detailed understanding of the context in which the Investigative Team will operate, and this will include meeting with victims’ groups and survivors from various communities.

Special Adviser Khan visits MoFA and SJC

Baghdad, 8 August 2018 - The United Nations Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team for Accountability of Dae’sh / ISIL crimes, Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, today met separately with Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari and President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Judge Faik Zaidan.

Discussions focused on commencing dialogue and cooperation that will be necessary to discharge the mandate of the Investigative Team, and the corresponding Terms of Reference. The Special Advisor, currently on an eight-day visit to the Republic of Iraq, was appointed pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2379 (2017).

Photos: Courtesy of Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq
A commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the 2014 Yazidi genocide held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 2 August 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Alice Walpole, attended today a commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the 2014 Yazidi genocide. The event was organized by Yazda Foundation and was addressed by Iraqi President Fuad Masum. In attendance were members of the Yazidi community, survivors of Da’esh crimes, and representatives of Iraqi political parties, civil society and diplomatic missions.

“While Da’esh targeted civilians from all ethnic and religious groups, it is clear that the Yazidi community was particularly persecuted. Many of you have had the courage to tell the United Nations and the world what happened. You testified to the terrible conditions you endured when you fled your homes and the horrors you witnessed trying to reach safety” said DSRSG Walpole.

“The United Nations, which carefully monitored Da’esh activities throughout this period, believes that the crimes committed by Da’esh may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide” added DSRSG Walpole. She promised that what had happened to Yazidis would not be forgotten. “The United Nations remains deeply concerned about your situation, the fate of your missing loved ones, and the safety of those who remain in Da’esh captivity and continue to suffer atrocities at the hands of the terrorist group. Returning the missing to their families in safety is the top priority for everyone and no effort should be spared in achieving that”.

The United Nations is committed to holding perpetrators of serious international crimes to account. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2379, adopted in consultation with the Government of Iraq, has established an independent Investigative Team to support Iraq’s own domestic efforts to hold Da’esh accountable for acts that may amount to international crimes. Last month, Mr. Karim Khan, QC, was appointed head of this Investigative Team, which is now starting its work. It will be fully supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

DSRSG Walpole urged the Government of Iraq to adopt reforms to national legislation to enable prosecution of these international crimes, and to consider establishing a specialised court to try perpetrators, in conformity with international criminal law principles.

Baghdad, 02 August 2018 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) participated at the panel entitled “Four Years after Genocide: Future of Yazidis, Christians and other Religious Minorities in Iraq” that was held within the conference that commemorated the 4th anniversary of the Yazidi genocide. Under its mandate established by the resolution of the United Nations Security Council, UNAMI is actively engaged in the promotion and protection of the rights of Iraq’s religious, ethnic and other minorities. At this panel UNAMI was represented by Ms. Emire Khidayer, Political Affairs Officer.

You testified to the terrible conditions you endured when you fled your homes and the horrors you witnessed trying to reach safety” said DSRSG Walpole. “The United Nations, which carefully monitored Da’esh activities throughout this period, believes that the crimes committed by Da’esh may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide” added DSRSG Walpole. She promised that what had happened to Yazidis would not be forgotten. “The United Nations remains deeply concerned about your situation, the fate of your missing loved ones, and the safety of those who remain in Da’esh captivity and continue to suffer atrocities at the hands of the terrorist group. Returning the missing to their families in safety is the top priority for everyone and no effort should be spared in achieving that”.

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DSRSG Walpole urged the Government of Iraq to adopt reforms to national legislation to enable prosecution of these international crimes, and to consider establishing a specialised court to try perpetrators, in conformity with international criminal law principles.

Baghdad, 02 August 2018 – On the invitation of Yazda NGO, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) attended the panel entitled “Role of Women in Leadership, Justice, Accountability and Social Cohesion” that was held within the conference that commemorated the 4th anniversary of the Yazidi genocide. Under its mandate established by the resolution of the United Nations Security Council, UNAMI urges political leaders and forces in Iraq to reflect the gender perspectives in the government’s programme as well as to adopt a gender responsive budget. UNAMI is committed to strengthening civil society’s efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.
Escaping from ISIL, a Yazidi sexual violence survivor rebuilds her life

Dohuk, 5 August 2018 - After the rise of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Da'esh in 2014, the Government and people of Iraq have suffered from the impact of one the decade’s worst conflicts, which involved the widespread commission of violations of international law by the terrorist group, including conflict-related sexual violence. Now that major combat operations against ISIL in Iraq are at an end and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory over ISIL in 2017, Iraq is now beginning the process of transition and reconstruction. Yet thousands of families are still living as internally displaced people (IDP) camps due to the destruction caused by ISIL and thousands of women, men and children are still missing. Women and girls who return from captivity also remain vulnerable to stigma or being treated as affiliates rather than victims of the terrorist group. Further, although numerous terrorism trials of suspected ISIL members have taken place in Iraq, there has yet to be a conviction of any ISIL member for the use of rape or sexual slavery anywhere in the world.

Nada is a young Yazidi survivor of ISIL's sexual slavery and captivity from the Sinjar region in northern Iraq. She managed to escape from ISIL with her daughter after a year of slavery. “I do not know where my husband is. I believe he is still in the hands of ISIL”, she says.

Like many other Yazidi women, she was held as a sex slave and was sold and re-sold several times, each time to a different ISIS fighter. She was raped, beaten, and forced into servitude.

Yazidi women find economic independence

Dohuk, 8 August 2018 - The Dost Bakery is a small cake business that opened in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in the autumn of 2015. Dost means “friend” in Kurdish, as the bakery is run by 10 friends. All of them are women who were displaced by ISIS and are now living in and around the Sharia Camp near the city of Dohuk.

After initial start-up help and training from UNDP, the women now run the bakery, serving cake to the displaced communities. The business has since grown, providing other displaced women with important skills and jobs. More than 126 families benefit directly from the project.

“Of course we would love to go back to Sinjar [their home city]. That’s where our life is. All we do here is temporary, we can’t build anything. We will not go back before the situation stabilizes though. It would cost our lives,” says Beyan,* one of the bakers.

In 2014 fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as Daesh, attacked the city of Sinjar. Most of the minority Yazidi community were forced to flee for their lives. Large numbers of displaced Yazidis arrived in Dohuk, moving into camps, informal settlements or unfinished buildings.

Projects like these help provide jobs and decent work, as well as a sense of dignity to those fleeing war and persecution. They also help alleviate the pressures on the local communities caused by the influx of displaced people.

In the KRI, the Yazidis are one of the groups most affected by the onslaught of ISIS. Men of the community face a choice between joining the fight or being killed. Even children are trained to fight, and women are often trafficked into sexual slavery, or forced to adhere to fundamentalist religious beliefs.

Many of the Dost bakers bear the physical and mental scars of life-threatening violence. For them, getting back on track means rebuilding their lives through work and a sense of purpose.

*Name changed for safety reasons

By Baudouin Nach, UNDP Iraq
United Nations is supporting the efforts of the Iraqi and KRG authorities to avoid impunity and bring to justice the perpetrators of such horrendous crimes

Erbil, 15 August 2018 - Statement by Ricardo Rodriguez, Head of UNAMI Regional Office Erbil, at the first international conference of the Yazidi genocide held in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, on 15 August 2018:

Distinguished participants in this conference.
Ladies and gentlemen,
It's a great honour for me to represent the United Nations at this important event marking the 4th anniversary of one of the darkest episodes of modern history: the massive killing and enslavement of thousands of Yazidis perpetrated by the terrorist organization ISIS.

In a matter of days, in August 2014, the life of the peaceful and ancestral Yazidi community turned into a hell. ISIS terrorists acting under a false interpretation of Islam and with unprecedented cruelty massacred thousands of them, enslaved girls and women, and forced them to displace to other parts of the country under extreme conditions.

ISIS indiscriminately destroyed Yazidi holy sites and invaluable pieces of the cultural heritage. Many thousands of Yazidis have fled to other countries and this has seriously affected the cohesion and future of this ancient and unique community. The barbaric treatment of women has left behind orphans and traumatized women. These events represented one of the darkest moments in the modern times.

We want to praise the generosity of the ordinary people and authorities of the Kurdistan Region for their support and protection of the Yazidis fleeing from that tragedy. The hosting of the Yazidi IDPs has been provided for 4 years despite the financial and security challenges faced by the Kurdistan Region. Thanks for that! This has shown the world the peaceful and humanitarian face of Kurdistan.

On its part, the United Nations is supporting the efforts of the Iraqi and KRG authorities to avoid impunity and bring to justice the perpetrators of such horrendous crimes and it is actively involved in the reconstruction of villages and infrastructure to facilitate the return of Yazidis to their places of origin.

In September 2017, the UN Security Council resolution 2379 approved the establishment of an investigative team to collect, preserve and store evidences that may amount for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. In May 2018, the United Nations Secretary General appointed Mr Karim Khan from the United Kingdom as the Special Advisor to head this investigative team. Mr Khan has more than 25 years of experience in international criminal and human rights law.

This investigative team visited Erbil and Dohuk a few days ago and met with victims of ISIS atrocities and with relevant authorities of the Kurdistan Region in order to assess the conditions for their deployment.

The team will work all victims affected by ISIS of all ethnic and religious backgrounds, however, given the magnitude of the Yazidi tragedy, their time and resources will be very much focused on gathering of evidences and investigating the crimes against Yazidis.

In addition to the trauma endured by the Yazidi people, we know that houses and towns have been devastated by the conflict. The United Nations is actively working with the Iraqi and KRG authorities to reconstruct the damaged infrastructure, reopen schools and clinics, reestablish the electricity and water networks, and rebuild government facilities. We know that without the restoration of the local government and services, there are little prospects for the Yazidis to return home and rebuild their community live.

UNDP is implementing 91 stabilization projects in Sinjar and Sinuni. They include the rehabilitation of schools, health clinics, a hospital, wells and water networks. One of the most important projects is the installation of a high-voltage power line that, for the first time, provides reliable electricity to approximately 100,000 Yazidis in Sinjar and Sinuni. This was possible by connecting the power line serving Sinjar and Sinuni with the Mosul dam.

Another example is the joint project of UNDP and UN-HABITAT to reconstruct 1,064 houses in Sinjar area before the end of the year. At this point 562 have already been completed.

Ladies and gentlemen, the suffering of the Yazidis continues today with thousands of them remaining in IDP camps, many others are still missing and kidnapped, mostly women and young girls. There are many requiring psychological assistance, financial support to start new businesses. There is much left to do. The United Nations, in coordination and cooperation with other partners and government institutions, is and will always be ready to support the Yazidis in their quest for justice, in their rights to a dignified life and their return to their ancestral places of origin.

Let's all work together to achieve those goals.

Thank you very much.
Baghdad, 19 August 2018 - Staff members of the United Nations in Iraq today commemorated the 15th anniversary of the terrorist attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad. At the event held in Baghdad, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG) Alice Walpole said that "survivors of the Canal Hotel bomb blast remain among us in Baghdad. Despite the horrors of that day, and the many, many catastrophes that have befallen Iraq since that date, they remain committed to playing their role in building a peaceful, long-term solution and future for their country". The DSRSG added, "I whole-heartedly commend them for their tenacity and for their courage".

Following laying of a wreath and observing a minute of silence in memory of our fallen colleagues, DSRSG Walpole and UN staff participated in a tree planting ceremony in honour of our 22 colleagues and friends, including the then UN representative in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, who were killed in the horrific attack on 19 August 2003.

The ceremony held this morning also marks the observance of World Humanitarian Day designated by the General Assembly in 2008 to coincide with the date of the bombing in Baghdad. World Humanitarian Day also honours humanitarian aid workers who have been killed or injured during the course of their work.

UN staff members also gathered in Erbil. They assembled around the UN flag for the commemoration ceremony where a flower wreath was laid to honour the ultimate sacrifice of the 22 colleagues who fell in the line of duty 15 years ago.

In Basra and Kirkuk, following brief statements by UN Iraq staff and wreath-laying, participants observed a minute of silence in memory of our fallen colleagues.
SG Guterres: “The blue flag of the United Nations flies high because of the brave women and men who carry it to the farthest corners of the world”

New York, 17 August 2018 – Fifteenth anniversary of the bombing of the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad was commemorated at the United Nations Secretariat with a wreath-laying ceremony. The Secretary-General, António Guterres, delivered the following remarks:

Dear Colleagues and Friends, survivors and families, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
I would ask you all please to observe a minute of silence in memory of our dear fallen colleagues.
We are here to honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the values and the Charter of the United Nations, and for the people of Iraq. Fifteen years ago this week, twenty-two of our colleagues died in a horrific terrorist attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad. I was personally close to some of those colleagues, including their leader, the incomparable Sergio Vieira de Mello. He has devoted a large part of his career to UNHCR, where I also worked years afterwards. But, I had the opportunity to be in close contact with him during his time in East Timor where he played an absolutely essential role in guaranteeing the freedom of the people of East Timor and a smooth transition for their sovereignty. I know that many of you also lost friends from across the United Nations family. This was a huge personal loss to so many of us. And an even greater blow to the families of those who were killed.

This was, as our head of the Staff Council has said, the first mass terror attack on the United Nations. It was traumatizing for the whole organization, and we learned some very difficult lessons. The mechanisms in place to look after survivors and the families of victims were inadequate, and it has taken too many years to improve them.
Before and since that day, United Nations staff have been targeted by those who would like to weaken us and make us afraid to do our jobs. From Algiers to Kabul to Mogadishu, Abuja and beyond, terrorists have attempted to silence and to banish us.
I am committed to improving security for all United Nations staff, but our work will never be free from risk. The blue flag of the United Nations flies high because of the brave women and men who carry it to the farthest corners of the world. The legacy of the humanitarian workers, the peacekeepers, they military and civilian staff who have given their lives is lasting and will be ever-present in our hearts.
The best tribute we can pay them is to continue our work; to go to dangerous places with the aim of making them safer; to [stand] with those who are suffering, and to bring them the relief they need.
Today, we remember our friends and colleagues who did just that. And we commit to continuing their mission.
Thank you very much.

Terror attacks strike people ‘from all walks of life, the UN included’

Geneva, 16 August 2018 - The terrorist attack on UN headquarters in Iraq in 2003 that claimed the lives of 22 people should serve as a reminder that the organization’s locally recruited staff often face the greatest dangers in the world’s most hostile places, amid increasing attacks on humanitarians, the head of the United Nations in Geneva said on Thursday.
Speaking just ahead of the 15th anniversary of the Baghdad atrocity, at the UN’s main World Humanitarian Day event in the Swiss city, Michael Møller said that for the fifth year in a row, more than 100 humanitarians have lost their lives while at work.
“That horrible afternoon in Iraq does not stand in isolation,” he noted. “It was followed by other attacks against the United Nations. At the end of 2007 we lost 17 colleagues in Algiers. Last year alone, 148 peacekeepers and 139 humanitarian workers were killed.”

Turning to the attack in Baghdad, which led to the UN General Assembly’s decision in 2008 to create an annual day of remembrance for humanitarian workers on 19 August, Mr. Møller recalled UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s description of those who were killed as “the best of the best, the most committed of the committed, the hope of the UN until their lives were cut short”. The victims of the attack were also the “hope and the future” of the organization, he said, adding that “our
Terror attacks strike people ‘from all walks of life, the UN included’ (continued)

blue flag only flies because committed people wave it.
The UN’s top official in Geneva also noted that while many of the victims were international staff, it is the organization’s local workers who “are always faced with more serious situations”.

“When international staff leave following violent incidents, local staff often remain to continue the UN’s work in the world’s most dangerous places,” Mr. Møller added.

His comments echoed a video message by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who paid tribute to those who died “in the service of peace, development and human rights” in the attack on the Canal Hotel attack in Baghdad 15 years ago.

Their loss was not in vain, the UN chief insisted. Among the dead was Sergio Vieira de Mello, who in addition to serving as the UN’s top official in Iraq, was UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

“I was always impressed by the way he embodied UN values and our spirit of service,” Mr Guterres said, sentiments shared by Master of Ceremonies on Thursday, Ahmad Fawzi, who was Mr. de Mello’s spokesperson in Iraq, and avoided the blast after being recalled temporarily to London shortly before the attack.

“We have been targeted again and again and again,” Fawzi said, noting that terror attacks had claimed thousands of lives all around the world “from all walks of life, the UN included”.

Among the other speakers at the event in Geneva was Khatan al-Orfali, whose son Omar was killed in the Baghdad attack while he was working for international aid organization Christian Children’s Fund of Canada.

In a moving speech in which Mr al-Orfali said that his only son’s wish had been to help others, and described the young man’s joy at finding a job, he appealed for fresh information about the circumstances surrounding the attack.

“Until today we do not know how this vicious crime was committed so quickly and so easily,” he said. “We still do not know who allowed the car bomb through.”

And although the Canal hotel that served as the UN’s headquarters was heavily protected, “we still don’t know who gave the perpetrators the intel”, Mr al-Orfali said, or “who financed them, what were the results of the investigation, results that we are entitled to know.”

Despite the pain of his loss, and in a message of hope to the organization, he made a final appeal to the UN, “to remind this great organization that the peoples of the world still believe in the UN’s humanitarian role. We expect a lot from the UN and hope it will not let us down.”

UN News Center

UN should never be a target, Baghdad bombing survivors stress, 15 years after deadly attack

On 19 August 2003, a suicide bomber drove a truck full of explosives to the United Nations headquarters in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, Iraq, and blew it up, killing 22 people – among them Sergio Vieira de Mello, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the head of the UN mission in Iraq.

The attack on the Canal Hotel building also wounded more than 150; most of them aid workers who had come to Iraq to help reconstruct the country following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

The attack was one of the most lethal in UN history, and marked a turning point in how the UN and aid groups operate in the field. It was the first time that a neutral international humanitarian organization, had been deliberately targeted in such a way.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres paid tribute this week ahead f
UN should never be a target, Baghdad bombing survivors stress, 15 years after deadly attack (continued)

he anniversary to the staff who lost their lives 15 years ago in what he has described as “one of the darkest days in our history.” Ahead of the anniversary, UN News spoke with some of the survivors. The conversations, which have been edited, provide insight into what happened that day, how it impacted them, and continues to impact the entire community that makes up the United Nations.

Since the 2003 Canal Hotel terrorist attack, which Secretary-General at the time, Kofi Annan, referred to as “the darkest day in our lives at the United Nations”, we have looked back on the day through the memories and recollections of UN staff who survived. Among those who told their story back in 2009, were Nada Al Nashif, a Jordanian national of Palestinian origin, who was sitting around a table with colleagues in UN Headquarters, when the explosives detonated, bursting her eardrum in the process. Her desk was swept away by the blast. Khaled Mansour, an Egyptian who arrived to witness a scene of carnage, offering help, remembers seeing the bloody palm prints of the wounded, as they tried to escape, and a ticking watch on the wrist of a dead colleague emerging from under a sheet, as their body was carried away on a makeshift stretcher.

“I could only really see the haze,” recalls Nada Al-Nashif. “I remember just a white shirt and blue shirt and blood, blood, blood,” she says, explaining that her glasses flew off and her eyes filled with blood. Nada was sitting with colleagues around a table at United Nations headquarters in Baghdad when a truck packed with a ton of explosives blew up on 19 August 2003, killing 22 people, and injuring many more. The incident, known as the Canal Hotel bombing, took the lives of UN staff, including the head of the UN Mission in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and went down as a dark day in UN history.

The UN is set to mark the first annual World Humanitarian Day on 19 August when the tragedy in Baghdad will be commemorated, with tribute being paid to more than 700 other humanitarian workers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in dangerous conflict zones around the world.

Khaled Mansour, another survivor of the Baghdad bombing, can still see the bloody palm prints of the wounded as they tried to escape the nightmare scene, the watch ticking away on a dead colleague’s wrist emerging from under a dirty sheet on a stretcher, the cars fused into huge mangled, metal balls.

From the harrowing experience Nada and Khaled – and many others like them – have drawn enhanced resolve to help those in need in some of the world’s most hostile environments.

Nada, a Jordanian national of Palestinian origin, was country director of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) at the time. Her eardrum burst and she felt “a terrible, terrible pain,” more painful than the rest of her wounds. But she counts herself doubly lucky. Not only were her injuries comparatively mild, her own office in the Canal Hotel was a fault line where the building cracked and her desk was swept away.

“I’m very lucky to be alive,” she says. “Had I been in my room, I don’t know what would have happened.” Nada lost a finger and the skin on the back of her scalp was peppered with broken glass and shrapnel; she underwent six plastic surgery operations over four years; and she survives to continue her work in the humanitarian field with renewed vigour.

Nada feels fortunate, musing: “It missed my eye by a centimetre. It could have been my right hand, not my left. It could have been my neck, not my finger. So I’m eternally grateful.”

All the survivors had to see therapists, but she has had no nightmares or flashbacks. After a few sessions of psychological counseling, Nada went back to work part-time – but it took six months for her to get up to speed. Returning to work was “certainly, utterly” the best therapy, she says. “Sitting around and feeling low, you know, people trying to talk you into feeling like a victim of terrorism – that’s totally useless, a waste of time.”

Her experience has reinforced Nada’s commitment to humanitarian work, but it is tinged with regret at the continuing bloodshed in Iraq. “I had prayed that somehow our loss would be a catalyst for a kind of change, an understanding, a conclusion somehow,” she remarks.

“The Iraqi people haven’t stopped paying a price,” says Nada, who is now
UN should never be a target, Baghdad bombing survivors stress, 15 years after deadly attack (continued)

Regional Director of the UN International Labour Office (ILO) in Beirut, Lebanon.
For Khaled Mansour, an Egyptian who was spokesman at the time for the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the emotional road has been tougher, even though he wasn’t in the building at the time. He arrived shortly after to help in rescue operations while United States soldiers were guarding the building.
“I had almost to fight my way in, not a very wise thing to do with somebody holding a machine-gun,” he tells the UN News Centre. Once inside, Khaled went upstairs. “There were bloodstains everywhere in the corridors, amidst rubble and broken glass.”
Although shaken, he and a friend ferried home some of the less seriously injured from the hospitals. “That was more scary than the explosion itself. We had to stop in front of a couple of checkpoints where the soldiers were very jittery [with] hands on trigger,” he says.
But the state of shock did set in afterwards. “I took a long time off,” he says. “The first week after the explosion I continued to work, we were working 18 hours a day, running on adrenaline... But by the time I got to New York, I basically collapsed.”
Khaled had trouble sleeping, and had nightmares for the first few months. He went into therapy. So many years later, he feels anger at those who perpetrated the crime, and mourning and sadness for those who lost their lives.
The experience changed him dramatically – he no longer leads “a manic life” as before. “I take more care of my family, myself, my friends,” says Khaled, who subsequently did a stint in Lebanon and in Darfur but is now Director of Communications and Public Information for the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). “I stopped being a cowboy.”
“All of a sudden it became black and dark. The day turned into a night. Hot iron pieces fell from the sky. The time slowed down, just like in the movies,” says Esam Al-Khanchi.
“In the summer, power cuts were frequent in Baghdad, so I would have preferred to stay at the Canal Hotel until 5:30 or 6 pm. But on this day, August 19, I do not know why I left my job early. I was about 20 meters away from the explosion and I heard the sound of the iron gate through which we passed every day to the building flying in the air. My mind was in disbelief, and then I heard the screams of my colleagues, who were in the security office.”
Esam began his work with the United Nations in Iraq in 1999, first in the security sector, and then moved to the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq.

Humanitarian

A letter from Mosul by Angelina Jolie, Guest Writer

Mosul, 23 June 2018 - A year after its liberation, much of West Mosul still lies in ruins.
The largest and longest urban battle fought anywhere in the world since World War II was waged to retake Mosul from ISIS. Liberty came at a horrific price: Thousands of civilians were killed and large swathes of the Iraqi city were reduced to rubble.
Much of East Mosul was spared, but the West still lies in ruins a year after the end of the fighting. As I stood there, it felt as if the guns fell silent only yesterday.
If we’ve learned anything from the last decade in the Middle East and Afghanistan, it is that if a military “win” is not followed by effective help to ensure stability, then the cycle of violence only continues.
You’d think, therefore, that nothing could be more important in this situation than trying to make sure that violent extremism can never return to Mosul. You’d expect that rebuilding a city that was an icon of diversity, peaceful coexistence and cultural
A letter from Mosul (continued)

heritage would be a top priority. You’d imagine that the streets of West Mosul would be crammed with reconstruction equipment, de-miners, architects, planners, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations and world heritage experts providing technical assistance to Iraq on a master plan for the reconstruction of the city. But a year later, West Mosul lies abandoned, ruined and apocalyptic. Walls that remain standing are riddled with holes from mortar fire and bullets. The streets are eerily quiet: hundreds of thousands of former residents of the city are living in camps or nearby communities because there is nothing for them to go back to. Reeking corpses still litter the ruins, awaiting collection. Are we guilty of performing a form of collective moral triage, selectively choosing when and where we will defend human rights, for how long and to what degree?

In streets that look entirely uninhabitable, small numbers of shell-shocked families are clearing the rubble of their homes with their bare hands, braving the concealed explosives left behind. In the last week, there was an explosion in a house that killed and injured 27 people.

Even worse than the physical ruin of the city is the invisible damage to the emotional landscape of its people. Returning residents have lost homes their families lived in for generations, their possessions, their savings, even the documents that prove their identity. Communities of different faiths who used to live side by side have been thrust apart and are now divided.

A man who approached me described with tears in his eyes how he was lashed by militants. A child told me about seeing a man killed in front of her on the street. A mother and father described the morning when a mortar shell struck their teenage daughter, ripping away her legs, leaving shattered bones protruding. They carried her to a hospital and begged for medical treatment. They were turned away, and she bled to death in their arms.

I found myself asking whether, at another time in history, we would have reacted differently to what happened in Mosul. Would we have reacted as we did after the liberation of Europe after World War II, flooding it with assistance to rebuild and recover? I thought also of the survivors of the chemical weapons attacks, the hospital bombings, the organized rape and the deliberate starvation of civilians that are all features of contemporary conflicts, and asked myself, have we become numb to human suffering? Are we so doubtful of our ability to act effectively overseas, in light of recent history, that we have begun tolerating the intolerable? Are we guilty of performing a form of collective moral triage, selectively choosing when and where we will defend human rights, for how long and to what degree?

In Mosul, I felt I was standing at a ground zero of foreign policy failures over the last decade. But also in a place that represents the human capacity for survival and renewal, and the stubborn endurance of universal values in individual hearts. I think of a father I met, and his joy that his two young daughters are now able to go to school again. Penniless and without a roof over his family’s heads, he spoke as if he had no more treasured possession than their report cards. There would be no more profound symbol of victory than every girl in Mosul being able to go back to school and excel.

Not a single family I met in West Mosul asked me for anything. They are not counting on our assistance. Mosul can trace its history back 3,000 years — I am sure its people will overcome those three years of terror. But how much better it would be if we saw their recovery as our joint endeavor, in the same way that we regarded the defeat of ISIS as a collective responsibility.

Angelina Jolie is the special envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, co-founder of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative and a filmmaker.
Sewing a life

Erbil, June 2018 - Nour’s family fled Iraq in 1994 thinking they were leaving their home country for good. Nour did not know what country she would call their new home, nor could she predict the impact she would have on the lives of other women some 23 years later, back in Iraq.

The family spent seven years in Turkey waiting for their refugee application to be processed. During this time, Nour’s mother Insaf supported the family by sewing and selling passport bags, bible covers and handbags at local bazaars and churches in Istanbul. They were eventually resettled in Canada in 2001. IOM did the travel arrangements in cooperation with the Government of Canada.

Insaf used to frequently return to Iraq to visit family, friends and the community she had left behind. In 2009, a grown up and curious Nour asked her mother if she could go along on one of these trips; and that changed her life.

“When I visited Iraq for the first time after leaving, I fell in love,” Nour said. “It was all so much simpler and new to me. I loved seeing chickens running around in the streets, the smell of fuel from the kerosene heater at home, being able to heat bread on the heater in the morning, the fresh yoghurt. I loved all these little things.”

Nour also fell in love in Iraq when she met Malath. The two got married two years later and decided to stay.

She took on raising her children as a full-time job, but wanted to use her extra time productively to help her community in Ainkawa, Erbil Governorate – a predominantly Christian neighbourhood which sheltered a significant number of Syrian refugees. With the start of the ISIL conflict in 2014, Ainkawa sheltered even more internally displaced persons leaving the neighbouring Nineawa Governorate.

“There were so many refugees and displaced women here, sitting at home with no in come and nothing to do to get them out of their dark thoughts,” Nour explained. “So my mom came up with the idea of starting a sewing project. She had the skills to train the women and I had the time to run the project. A local church also supported us with a small space to set up the workshop.”

“It was always my dream to start a sewing factory where women work and take charge of the project. Women have always been my target: I know that when a woman is happy, it will reflect well on her family, work and behaviour,” Insaf added.

The “Hopeful Hands” sewing factory started thanks to the dedication of Nour and Insaf, the small space they were given in the church, and second-hand sewing machines. Insaf started training the women to measure, cut, sew, overlock, iron and package, while Nour ran the factory.

On the first day, two women signed up; by the end of the first two weeks there were 20 participants. The women are between the ages of 16 and 65. Some are married, others are single, and they come from different backgrounds – Christians, Muslims, Arabs, Kurds and Assyrians. But all of them have the same objective: to support their families.

Hopeful Hands has now moved out of the church and rented its own space. IOM, the UN Migration Agency, has equipped the workshop with eight new sewing machines, 60 pairs of scissors, a brand new cutting table, a generator, packaging bags, and 40 rolls of fabric.

“With all this new equipment, we are now able to produce 50 sheets per day instead of 15,” Nour revealed.

“I work as a volunteer here and I am putting all my heart into this project because I was a refugee myself and have lived this process. So for me it is important to see the project grow and expand,” she added.

Of the 29 women working at the factory, 17 are Syrian refugees. Flora is one of them.

“My husband is unemployed and I am the only one working,” Flora said. “I learned about this sewing factory through some friends and I was very interested. I quickly learned to sew after a two-week training and I’m really good at it. In the factory I feel that I am a human being who can work, be productive and make a difference in my family’s life.”

Hopeful Hands mainly produces bed sheets, but the women also make bags, covers and pillows, as well as custom-made items. The factory was named Hopeful Hands because these women all “work with their hands and are hoping for a better future, better life, better career and better country,” Nour explained.

“People tell me that I could get a good job because of my experience. But I tell them that if I leave the factory, 29 ladies would have to stay home.”

The women work at the factory five days a week that allows them to support their families. They are also sewing a life together, in which they feel like one big-family despite their diverse backgrounds. They work together as one, supporting each other at all times and sharing their joys as well as their sorrows.

By Raber Y. Aziz, IOM Iraq
European Union supports conflict-affected Iraqi families; Through FAO, the EU will provide cash-for-work to improve access to water

Baghdad, 2 July 2018 - Vulnerable farming families in post-conflict areas in Iraq's Ninewa plains, west of Mosul, will be able to better withstand shocks thanks to a European Union-funded UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) project that aims to increase household income while building, repairing and maintaining local infrastructure and creating communal and public productive assets.

The €6 million project funded by the Madad Fund - the European Union's Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis - is part of FAO's Recovery and Resilience Programme. The programme contributes to reducing chronic, or acute food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty, and associated risks and vulnerabilities in Iraq's agriculture sector.

"The European Union has responded promptly to the very urgent needs of the most vulnerable families that were affected by the conflict in northern parts of Iraq," said Fadel El-Zubi, FAO Representative in Iraq. "Thanks to the support from the European Union, households will enhance their resilience and ability to cope with shocks by increasing their net earnings," he said.

Cash-for-work to improve access to water

Through cash-for-work activities, 1 250 households will be able to earn an income, directly benefiting around 7 500 people. Critically, the results of this work will also enable farmers to access water for crop irrigation and livestock, through the rehabilitation and construction of water catchments, roads, river embankments and secondary canals.

"Once these important agricultural assets and irrigation infrastructure are restored, the project will provide water for 70 000 hectares of currently unproductive land that can be used for winter wheat crops, and the spring and autumn vegetable seasons," El-Zubi said. "This means 30 000 vulnerable farming households (180 000 people) will be able to produce food on their land again."

"The families participating in the cash-for-work component of the project have no other income. Participants include women and other marginalized groups, with the work benefiting the community as well as individuals and families."

FAO's humanitarian response

As the Government of Iraq moves towards a focus on rehabilitation and recovery, humanitarian needs remain. Under the Humanitarian Response Plan 2018, FAO requires $10.2 million to assist 116 100 people in the areas of livestock, plant pest outbreak control and food security coordination. Over the longer term, under the Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme 2018-2019, FAO requires $76 million to assist 1.6 million people by restoring agriculture and water systems and revitalizing communities.

FAO's focus remains on ensuring rural families have the resources to re-establish and secure their agricultural livelihoods and build their resilience into the future. FAO's work, in close coordination with the Iraqi government, supports families returning to retaken areas, internally displaced families, host communities and refugees from Syria.

Director of UNHCR MENA Bureau pledges support to displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees

Erbil, 05 July 2018 – Mr. Awad Amin, Director of UNHCR MENA Bureau, addressed media today in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, on concluding his visit to Iraq:

“The battle for Mosul ended one year ago this month, but the legacy of years of extremist control and the military campaign to remove them left a dramatic imprint. Despite promising signs of early recovery, the scars left during these years still lie heavily across the country.

For Iraq to move past this legacy, people must be able to return to their homes safely and sustainably. We must remember that return is not just going back to a house, it is going back to a community. Rebuilding communities goes far beyond bricks and mortar. Some 3.9 million Iraqis have already returned, often in difficult circumstances. UNHCR supports communities in the early stages of recovery with community-based projects that encourage social cohesion and help to rebuild trust and self-sufficiency.

But for the 2 million Iraqis still in displacement, return must happen. This means obstacles to return must be removed and conditions conducive to return must be created. The extent of the devastation in places like West Mosul cannot be underestimated.

People continue to cross the border from Syria into Iraq at the rate of 700 new arrivals each month. After seven years, the conflict shows no sign of abating. Even now the United Nations received new reports of escalating hostilities in southern Syria, endangering three-quarters of a million people. So far 320,000 people have already been displaced, in just a matter of days. Syrian refugees and the communities that host them will continue to need support for some time to come.

For the 250,000 Syrian refugees sheltering in Iraq, return is not a sustainable option at present. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq houses 97 per cent of the Syrian refugees in Iraq, generously received by the people and
the Kurdistan Regional Government. For a country barely out of the shadow of conflict and extremism, the benevolence of Iraqis and Kurds towards their Syrian neighbours is truly humbling. UNHCR is committed to supporting Syrian refugees and the communities that host them in Iraq and across the MENA region for as long as necessary.

The situation in Iraq is complex. We need to be nimble and creative in our response in order to meet the needs of vulnerable Iraqis and Syrian refugees across an ever-broadening spectrum. 2018-2019 must be a year of return. Iraq needs to leave behind the legacy of 25 years of displacement and move towards normalization. I would like to take this opportunity to reinforce UNHCR’s firm commitment to stand with the people of Iraq and the KR-I for as long as it takes.

Sustainable return for the thousands of its displaced residents will not materialize if reconstruction and basic services aren’t tackled with ever more urgency and resolution

Erbil, 11 July 2018 – Mr. George Okoth-Obbo, UN Refugee Agency Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, visited UNHCR operations in Iraq. On concluding the visit, he said: “That 1 year after the battle for Mosul, 2 million Iraqi internally displaced persons remain in and outside camps like this one I visited in Al-Salamiyah today”. He underlined the urgency of decisively resolving the myriad protection, basic needs and coexistence obstacles to their safe and sustainable return.

“Nothing I had learned or imagined prepared me for the profound destruction I saw for myself today in Mosul. Sustainable return for the thousands of its displaced residents will not materialize if reconstruction and basic services aren’t tackled with ever more urgency and resolution,” added Mr. Okoth-Obbo.

Raising a small family away from home

How the World Food Programme (WFP) is helping a young Syrian widow and her two girls make ends meet in Iraq

Sulaymaniyah, 16 July 2018 - Sulaf Khalid Jabagji is a single mom living in Iraq. Trying to raise two young girls in a refugee camp has not been an easy feat, but with help from her mother and sister, she believes they will be okay.

The war in Syria did not spare Raqqa city, where heavy fighting flattened buildings, damaged civilian infrastructure and took thousands of innocent lives—including that of Sulaf’s husband, Anas. Leaving whatever was left of her home as well as precious memories, Sulaf crossed the Iraqi-Syrian border with her mother, daughters and sister in search of safety and stability.

New beginnings

“It was a very difficult time, losing my husband when I was just 21-years-old. I was young and alone with my little girls,” said Sulaf who is currently living in Arbat refugee camp, located in Sulaymaniyah in northern Iraq. “I didn’t know what to do and my family said they were leaving the country so I followed them here.”

At first, Sulaf and her family rented a small house, but after six months and no work, they could not afford to pay the rent anymore so they moved into a refugee camp nearby.

“It was a very difficult time, losing my husband when I was 21-years-old. I was young and alone with my little girls.”
Raising a small family away from home (continued)

“When we first got here, it was very hot and I was afraid for my daughters. They were younger, one and two at the time,” she said. “The camp was nothing but dust and tents and it was still being constructed.”

Until construction on the camp had finished, WFP supported families living there with monthly food rations. Each ration had enough food to last a month and included wheat flour, lentils, sugar, cooking oil and bulgur wheat.

Once shops were set up in the camp, WFP started giving families electronic food cards—or e-cards—instead of food rations. Sulaf prefers this form of assistance because it gives her more freedom and control over the food she can provide to her girls. Every month, WFP loads her card with a monthly allowance that she can use to buy fresh food from the camp’s shops.

“We used to receive a monthly food ration, but once we started getting cash assistance, life got a lot better. We can get foods we want rather than cooking with the same ingredients each month. The e-card is much better,” said Sulaf while preparing a breakfast of fried eggs, cheese, olives, dates and biscuits, all of which were purchased from the supermarket.

After losing her husband and home in Syria, Sulaf is relieved to at least be settled in a safe location with her family.

“We can’t go back there now, it’s not safe and there are memories that sadden us. Here, my daughters go to school and we are being taken care of,” says Sulaf while feeding her daughter Ranya. “We prefer to stay in Iraq for now. The only real issue we have right now is the weather.”

Written by Saif al-Tatooz, Communication Officer at WFP Iraq, with additional reporting by Cristina Graziani.

IOM: Peace Ambassadors programme engages youth in community-based activities so they can play a meaningful and supportive role in their communities

Karbala, 22 July 2018 - “I used to work as a teacher in Al Qa'qaa High School in the district of Telafar, Ninewa. We had to leave our house in 2014 because of shelling; we fled at four in the morning by car, with my wife and one-year-old daughter.

After a two-day trip we arrived in Karbala and rented a house. After a while IOM visited the area where we live and I met with IOM staff. They told me about the Peace Ambassadors programme and encouraged me to participate, especially since the programme includes psychology subjects with which I am familiar, being a psychology graduate of Babylon University.

After completing the Peace Ambassadors programme, I will convey what I have learned to the people of Telafar; so many people need psychosocial support,” said Hussam, a 34-year-old participant of the Peace Ambassadors programme.

With funds from Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, Hussam participated in the Peace Ambassadors programme with 20 other IDPs and host community members. The goal of the programme is to engage youth in community-based activities so they can play a meaningful and supportive role in their communities. The programme also raises awareness about the importance of giving youth social responsibilities and encourages them to get involved in voluntary work during crises.
OCHA held a briefing on the humanitarian situation in the Arab region

Cairo, Egypt, 26 July 2018 – The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs held today a briefing on the humanitarian situation in the Arab region with special focus on Iraq, Libya and Palestine. On this meeting, Ms. Marta Ruedas, Iraq’s UN Humanitarian Coordinator said: “We have a large humanitarian presence in Iraq and we’ve reached about 47% of targeted population with some form of humanitarian assistance, but there is still so much yet to be done”.

How do you deal with scorching summer heat?

Kirkuk, 29 July 2018 - With support of Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, last week 250 families, who recently returned to their homes in Kirkuk’s Hawija district, received from IOM summer kits, including cool box and rechargeable fans.

Joint Vulnerability Assessment (JVA) presented by UNHCR and WFP

Baghdad, 31 July 2018 – The Joint Vulnerability Assessment (JVA) done by UNHCR and WFP has just been published. The assessment investigated the status of Syrian refugees – in camps and outside of camps – to determine food-targeting criteria that would allow programme adjustments based on needs. It also was designed to address long-standing concerns expressed by refugees and local authorities regarding previous targeting. Here are the Recommendations of the Assessment: Continuation of food assistance for Syrian refugees calls for developing accurate targeting to ensure that food insecure households receive the assistance they need. At the same time, the targeting should allow for the identification of families that are not receiving food assistance but appear to be food insecure, and those that are likely to become so, due to their socio-economic and protection vulnerabilities. Further to the study outcomes, UNHCR and WFP concluded that a joint monitoring and targeting exercise should be applied to verify which households are food insecure and to assess the multidimensional vulnerability of refugee households. To this aim, the food security calculation model used during the JVA should be combined with protection indicators. Existing UNHCR registration data should be used to provide an initial prediction of which families are food insecure, based on the JVA’s sample findings. A phased targeting exercise will allow for the careful monitoring of vulnerable households in the camps, in order to verify their food security and protection status. WFP and UNHCR will combine efforts and resources to conduct the targeting exercise gradually and in a transparent and informative manner to minimize the impact on the refugee population. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) should be drawn up to clearly delineate responsibilities through this process. Targeting should be conducted in close coordination with local authorities, refugee communities, camp management and other service providers.

Full text of the assessment is available at https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/65023
Swiss Ambassador visited Mosul

Mosul, 2 August 2018 - The Swiss Ambassador to Jordan and Iraq, Hans-Peter Lenz, visited today Mosul. With the ongoing support of donors like Switzerland, UNHCR Iraq can continue to assist vulnerable displaced and returning Iraqis.

United Nations Country Team supports displaced to rebuild their normal lives

Iraq, July-August 2018 – Muhammed Khalid and his family escaped fighting in the war-torn city of Aleppo in 2013 and sought refuge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. They now live in Domiz refugee camp in Duhok. Like many other refugees in the camp, he couldn’t afford to fix his shelter, damaged by the cold winters and hot summers of the KR-I. Muhammed’s family is one of 1,500 families benefiting from UNHCR’s shelter-upgrade programme funded by Kuwait Fund For Arab Economic Development. 1,500 shelters in the Domiz camps were upgraded as part of this programme. The programme also included improvements to water, electricity and sanitation facilities, new roads and irrigation channels in the camp, plus cash-for-work.

Amer Hameed, a father of seven, fled Abu Ghraib in 2014, as extremist groups first arrived in the city. They left in haste – so rushed, they even left some savings behind in their home. Amer moved back home three years later, along with his disabled wife, and children. “We were shocked when we moved in,” said Amer. “The hall was totally burned, and you can still see the scorch marks. Two rooms and a bathroom were levelled to the ground.” UNHCR, with its partner, Canadian Aid Organization have supported Amer’s family and 129 other families in Abu Ghraib to repair their homes. Another 20 families whose houses were totally destroyed or uninhabitable have been given sturdy housing units as temporary shelters. The family are happy to be back home and two of Amer’s daughters are back at school, but with only one income, the family still faces some hardships. “Lack of money is the main difficulty we face,” he says. “Everything else is getting back to normal.” UNHCR advocates for voluntary, safe and dignified returns, while at the same time continuing to provide services to displaced people sheltering in camps and out-of-camp settings. Displaced people need more than just a place to return; they need services, livelihoods support, and social cohesion efforts. Displaced families often return to damaged houses and have limited resources. In the first week of August, IOM distributed non-food item kits to 1,000 returnee families in Saqlawiyyah and Amiriyat Al Fallujah in Anbar. IOM is committed to supporting returnees throughout Iraq. The kits were funded by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. “I lost my husband when we fled from Jurf Al-Askhar to Kerbala in 2014. When we arrived, I was in such bad mental state that I stayed home for five months. Then one day I decided to go to the women’s centre in Karbala. There I met with the IOM team and they encouraged me to participate in the women’s leadership course. This marked a turning point in my life. My thoughts developed, and I learned a how to be a leader, how to be a woman. I also learned how to react in times of crisis, how to focus, and also to hear from others. I am now thinking of completing my studies because I left school when we displaced. I also would like to share the things I learned in the women’s leadership course. I would like to explain to others how they can obtain psychological support and how they can overcome difficult situations,” said Amal, one of the participants in the women’s leadership course. In Sinjar District, Ninewa Governorate, female returnees are employed to rehabilitate war-damaged houses and
UNCT supports displaced to rebuild their normal lives (continued)

Taking initiative to rebuild their communities and livelihoods. This UN-Habitat project is generously funded by the Government of Germany through UNDP Iraq’s ICRRP.

UN-HABITAT supports returnees return to their homes and towns and the construction of 120 core housing units in Fallujah, Anbar Governorate continues. The project is generously funded by the Government of Japan. Many families living at the Jada’aa camp still need assistance with basic household items. IOM is supporting the displaced families with the distribution of basic non-food item kits that includes light mattresses, bed sheets, kitchen sets and other necessary items.

With the USAID’s help, IOM Iraq delivered supplies to 600 Yezidi families near Sinjar, including: mattresses, blankets, cooking stoves, hygiene kits, rechargeable lights, fans, & more.

Under UNDP implemented stabilization programme, 48 years old Abed cleans up Al Shifa Hospital Complex in Mosul. The father of 6 worked as a truck driver before ISIL took control of the city, and was later forced to sell two cars to buy food for his family. He now earns 100USD per week for his help in Rebuilding Iraq.

Stabilization and Development

UNDP-Toyota Iraq: a recipe for success to improve the lives of displaced Iraqi youth

Erbil, 19 June 2018 - Displaced Youth in Iraq are forging a new path for their future with support from UNDP and Toyota Iraq. The conflict that erupted in Iraq in the end of 2013 displaced over three million people, disrupting the lives, livelihoods and education of Iraqis throughout the country. UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) partnered with one of the world's leading automotive companies, Toyota Iraq, to offer unique opportunities for displaced youth who struggle to find employment.

Established in July 2016, this training programme is conducted in English and Arabic. The Toyota Iraq team provides top class training to sharpen the skills of displaced youth and develop their professional capacity in three fields: auto technician development, warehouse management and customer relations development. Some of the graduates of the programme have been employed by Toyota Iraq and its partner dealers in Iraq, placed in jobs by ICRRP and its partners with support from the Government of Japan, or have returned to their area of origin to find employment there.

"My family and I were driven out of our home because of the danger posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Since I arrived in Erbil, I have been seeking a better future, but it is very difficult to find a job without practical skills and experience," says Noor who successfully graduated in 2017 from the Customer Relations Development training.

Beyond vocational training, this programme provides on-the-job training that prepares graduates for practical tasks.

By challenging gender norms in Iraq, this programme also encourages displaced women to work outside their homes and contributes to their economic empowerment.

Some of the trainees who have successfully completed the vocational training programme have been recruited by Toyota Iraq, which has brought encouragement and the necessary hope and stability to their lives to continue fighting for a better future.

Yasser, 27, whose life was disrupted by the war in Baghdad, where he lived for some years until 2006 when the insecurity caused his family to move to Damascus. The spread of the internet in Syria saw him use his skills to establish a small technology company. When he moved to Erbil in 2013 due to the Syrian crisis, he already knew that he wanted to improve his knowledge on information technology. The Toyota training came at the right time!

Taghrid, 28, has been working with Toyota Iraq since her graduation from the Customer Relations Development training in May 2017. Originally from Mosul, she grew up in Baghdad until the war became unbearable for her family. In 2006, they decided to move to Syria where she earned a degree in civil engineering. When Taghrid's family decided to return to Iraq and settled in Erbil in 2013, she found that her degree from Damascus University was not recognized in Iraq. "I was always trying to improve my skills, studying English, reading anything I could, but I still could not find a job. When I was selected to participate in the training with Toyota, I finally felt like my life became organized and on track."

UNDP's ICRRP and Toyota Iraq are committed to continuing this partnership to support Iraqi youth to improve their lives.

The private sector is an important strategic partner for UNDP's ICRRP in achieving its vision to strengthen livelihoods and resilience of internally displaced people, Syrian refugees and host communities. Since ICRRP's inception in 2015, over 1,000 people (27% women) have found a full-time employment for a minimum duration of 6 months through partnership agreements with 35 private companies. Over 10,800 people (45% women) have enhanced their skills through professional trainings.

UNDP's ICRRP promotes the recovery and resilience of communities vulnerable to multi-dimensional shocks associated with post-liberation and large-scale returns, as well as Iraqis and Syrian refugees in protracted displacement. This is achieved through a medium-term, 24-36 month period of programming integrating crisis management capacity building, rehabilitating basic service infrastructure, livelihood recovery and social cohesion.

Text by Linda Fawaz and Paola Piccione, UNDP Iraq
Iraq: Providing support to victims of terrorism

Erbil, 26 June 2018 - Following the defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq in July 2017, the national justice system is now encountering the cases and claims of thousands of direct and indirect victims who have experienced violence, crime and atrocities of different nature at the hands of ISIL. During the criminal justice process, it is important that victims can tell their story in their own way and that they are prepared and supported psychologically for their appearance in the court without any risk of revictimization.

Under the UNODC project "Strengthening the Legal Regime Against Terrorism in Iraq after the liberation of Mosul (2018-2019), the Global Programme on Terrorism Prevention held, for the first time, a workshop on “Supporting victims of terrorism in Iraq following ISIL's military defeat” in Erbil, Iraq from 23 to 26 June 2018. Together with the Superior Judicial Council, some 10 victims were identified who had experienced the most heinous crimes and violence With the help of a specialized NGO, "Association des Victimes du Terrorisme - Liban", the victims received counselling and psychological support as well as legal information regarding their rights as victims. Part of the workshop included the space to talk about their traumatic experiences and guide them on how to deal with their memories building psychological resilience to balance their life after terrorist attacks. Art therapy was used to help the victims unfold their coping skills and strengths as well as externalize their internalized fears related to violent trauma.

At the end of the workshop, the supported victims expressed that "although it’s hard to forget what ISIL has done to us and to move on, I learned now that it is not impossible. I am not alone in this, and that's why we should all get together to rebuild what they have destroyed".

The UNODC/TPB project is supporting Iraq in building safer communities in the liberated areas. UNODC/TPB will continue providing legal and psychological support to victims of terrorism, including children and women and will continue to enhance the capacity of criminal justice and law enforcement officers and to promote awareness about the importance of supporting and assisting victims of acts of terrorism thus also contributing to the Sustainable Development Goal 16 on strong, effective and accountable institutions and access to justice.

The activity was possible thanks to the generous contribution of the Government of Japan.

Iraq sets up National Authority to mobilize global climate finance, manage environment and climate change challenges

Amman, Jordan, 27 June 2018 – In June 2018, Iraq has established a high-powered National Designated Authority to help mobilize global climate funding in support of dealing with pressures imposed by a range of environmental and climate change-related issues. This was announced by the Iraqi Deputy Minister for Health and Environment, Dr. Jassim Abdul Aziz, at a high-level workshop on Iraq’s Green Climate Fund Readiness held in Amman this month.

With grant assistance from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Government of Iraq has embarked on a national readiness programme for a period of two years during 2018-2019. UNDP Iraq will serve as a delivery partner for this grant assistance that aims to support the Government of Iraq in strengthening the national capacities to effectively access and efficiently manage, track and guide climate financing with particular attention to the requirement of Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Water insecurity, land degradation, desertification, loss of vegetation and biodiversity and salinity form part of the complex challenges that Iraq faces, posing significant obstacles for the country to mount a resilient recovery following decades of conflict. The Government of Iraq has formulated an economy-wide plan to cut GHG emission by around 14% between 2020 until 2035. However, Iraq is also facing a huge economic challenge as a result of the collapse in the international oil market in 2015 and its very significant impact on the national economy.

Guided by Iraq’s national development plan, policies and priorities, the readiness programme will include the preparatory activities that include establishing a National Designated Authority (NDA) in Iraq under the leadership by the GCF Focal Point. Strengthening stakeholders’ engagement and effective participation and assisting Iraq in developing a gender- responsive country programme including climate change adaptation and mitigation priorities are some of the core objectives of the readiness programme.

The accomplishment of readiness activities will lay the foundation for Iraq to kick-start concrete steps towards meeting the need for climate financing in an effective and coordinated way. The three-day workshop, attended by the Iraqi Ambassador in Jordan Mrs. Safia Al Sauhail, the Iraqi deputy minister of Health and Environment Dr. Jassim Al Falahy, and by an inter-ministerial group comprising several heads of Iraqi government institutions, took stock of Iraq’s readiness for GCF and the roles and responsibilities of the associated the National Designated Authority.

Participants at the workshop agreed on the steps to be taken for the implementation of a roadmap for Nationally Determined Contributions consistent with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) guidelines.
A long journey home

Baghdad, 28 June 2018 - In Iraq’s Nineawa plains, UNDP is rehabilitating 2,100 houses destroyed during the ISIL conflict. Six families share their stories about returning home.

Khadar, 53 and wife Dunnia, 44
“We spent one year in that house, without furniture or anything.” Yazidis Khadar and Dunnia tell their story frankly, and with passion. Dunnia recalls the horrors she experienced and the long, arduous journey out of Bashiqa, walking and hitchhiking with her family for nine hours to escape the Islamic State (ISIL), also known as Daesh.

“When we returned home, everything was burnt. Nothing was left. The house was full of soil, because Daesh excavated tunnels to make their tunnel network. For one week, we all slept on the soil—the whole family,” she says. Khadar adds: “The work UNDP did was like a dream for us. If only you had seen the house before.”

Butrus, 56, and family
“If you had not responded to our requests, we could have never finished our home.” Butrus’ house is a hive of activity. His mother, wife, two sons, their wives and two grandchildren. Butrus recalls the moment he and his family fled—all eight of them in one car. When they reached Zahko near Dubok, they stayed in a community hall for a month, sleeping on the floor with other families.

“When we returned home, everything was burnt. Nothing was left. The house was going to be completely demolished. We did not have any hope,” he says. “But when we came back and we saw that the house was only burnt, we thanked God. UNDP gave us hope.”

Sinam, 31
“We felt fear. Fear for our children.” Sinam, along with her two sisters-in-law, their husbands, and their 12 children live together in one house. When the families fled to the south of Iraq in November 2014, the children were asking questions about why they were leaving in such a hurry. Sinam told them it was for safety. Like many other families, the kids missed school and the adults found it difficult to work. “We are happy to be back home, trying to live a normal life again with our families.”

*Name has been changed to protect identity.

Qays, 35
“When we left, we never thought we were coming back. We thought it was the end.” Qays’ story is a familiar one. When he heard ISIL was approaching, he gathered his family and drove south to Hillah, along with many other Shabaks living in Bartela. “We left everything here. We escaped with only the clothes on our back.”

For three years, they lived away from home, seeking refuge with strangers. The children missed out on school, and Qays could not find work, so living day-to-day was a struggle. They had lost hope, until May 2017 when they returned. Upon arriving home, Qays found everything had been stolen, and the house had been torched. “When I walked into the house, I couldn’t believe it. I didn’t think it would look that bad. Without UNDP’s help, it would’ve been impossible to live here.”

Ismail, 18
“The hardest part was watching my mother get beaten.” Ismail tells his story blankly, expressing almost no emotion; his trauma is clear. To channel his frustration, Ismail draws, and his bedroom is adorned with his portraits of people he met over the two years he was captured. His mother Jandark suffers from epilepsy and a mental illness, leaving Ismail to work 12-hour shifts at a local restaurant for 10,000 dinars (US$8.40) per day. At least, they no longer have to worry about keeping a roof over their heads.

Narayan, 32
“I’m so thankful for the head-start.” Narayan lost her husband to cancer about 12 years ago, leaving her with two young sons, now teenagers. ISIL destroyed almost everything she had—except, miraculously, a framed portrait of her husband, which at the time was wedged behind a dresser. It is displayed proudly in her sister-in-law’s home, where she currently lives. UNDP has rehabilitated Narayan’s house, but she can’t move in yet—the debris next door is making it impossible for electricity and water to function in her own home. But she is hopeful. “I’m so thankful for the head-start UNDP has given me,” she says.

About FFS
At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the Funding Facility for Stabilization in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis after the ISIL conflict, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism. FFS currently has more than 2,400 projects in the 31 liberated towns and districts where UNDP works helping local authorities to quickly rehabilitate essential infrastructure and services.
Weaving a brighter future

Khanke, July 2018 - Khazal, Ibtisam and Flous were total strangers before ISIL attacked their villages near the Yazidi town of Sinjar in 2014. Four years later, these internally displaced persons live in Khanke, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where they work together in Khanke’s Carpet Factory. They have formed strong bonds of friendship, sharing their joys and sorrows while weaving carpets for a brighter future.

“We take comfort in each other's company here. We work together. We laugh together, and sometimes we pour out our hearts out to each other,” says Khazal, a 57-year-old woman from Til Ezeir, south of Sinjar, who fled in 2014 with her family. “We all come here to work and earn money to support our families.”

Established in 2018 by IOM, the UN Migration Agency, with the financial support of the German Federal State of Baden-Württemberg, the aim of the carpet factory is to increase economic and social opportunities for vulnerable women and to contribute to sustainable local economic development.

“The project aims to integrate Kurdish wool and carpet products into the local value chain and to facilitate the distribution of manufactured products in the local market. We are focusing on Kurdish carpets for now, but we hope to produce kilims [flat-woven carpets] at the factory in the future,” said Bradly Mellicker, IOM Iraq’s Return and Recovery Coordinator. “In addition to the women working in the factory, the project will also benefit local farmers, weavers, wool-spinners and other entrepreneurs dealing with raw wool and wool products in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.”

Having fled Sinjar, the women had escaped the fate befallen thousands of other Yazidi women at the hands of ISIL from slavery to sexual abuse; but not the trauma, nor the difficult reality of unemployment. Yazidi families are in urgent need of employment opportunities because they are unable to return home due to ongoing security concerns, damage to their homes and public infrastructure and the lack of adequate services.

“Each married woman here has seven to nine children. These children have expenses, they need clothes. They need to go to school. I come here to support my family but also to get out of the house and engage in an activity that helps me forget the painful memories of being forced to leave our homes, and the trauma of losing loved ones,” says Flous, who fled from Tel Qassim, a village north of Sinjar.

A childcare area is available in the factory for women while they work and a recreational centre and a café provide members of the displaced and host community with safe spaces to meet and socialize.

The women are part of a 30-member all-female team who were trained in wool processing, carpet manufacturing and business development. Many are internally displaced. Out of the 30, eight are sole breadwinners for their families.

“In three months of training, I learned a lot and I really enjoyed it,” says Ibtisam, a mother of five, who was displaced from Khasaros village, northwest of Sinjar. “I earn an income from this carpet factory, and this has improved the living conditions of my family. We are comfortable here. We are working and we are safe.”

Safety is particularly important for Yazidi girls and women because they live with the psychological trauma of the 2014 attacks on the Yazidi communities in the Sinjar area, where many female Yazidis were captured by ISIL and forced into slavery, sexual exploitation and violent abuse; many of them also lost loved ones.

Ibtisam and her family took refuge on Sinjar mountain for seven days in August 2014, surrounded by ISIL from all directions. They finally managed to cross over to north eastern Syria; from there, they entered Iraq again and made it to the city of Duhok. There, Ibtisam managed to generate some income for her family by making sweets to sell in the camps and by working as a cook, but it wasn’t enough.

The factory opened in mid-July and the women are producing their first carpets. As an initial phase, IOM will be supporting the women with a US$300 monthly salary for six months until the factory is efficient and fully running, before handing it over to a private partner. A bazar will be organized in December to showcase, and sell, the products the women have made.

Most of the women selected for the carpet factory project had some previous experience with wool processing or weaving. Yazidi women are known for producing unique handicrafts.

“Yazidi women are skilled in tailoring, weaving, knitting, and producing crafts by themselves,” says Flous. “This is what makes this factory a good project. We do what we do best.”

“I always wanted to do something different, something that is a craft,” said Shayma, a Yazidi girl from the host community in Khanke. “I learned how to design and weave carpets during the training sessions. I have just finished a carpet with the picture of Lalish temple. I’m very proud of it.”

The facility provides a safe space for women to engage in commercial and social activities, assisting in their psychological recovery from the trauma they have suffered.

“Most of the displaced persons are mentally exhausted because of what they have gone through as well as their displacement, especially with nothing to do in the camps,” said Flous. “My mind can relax a little when I come to the factory and work.”

While most of the women long to return to their home villages, their current priorities are to provide for their families, send their children to school, and address their own psychological needs to alleviate stress resulting from living in displacement. The carpet factory has become the sanctuary where these needs are met.

Written by Raber Y. Aziz, IOM Iraq
UNHCR rehabilitates community centre in Baghdad, with support from the People’s Republic of China

Baghdad, 03 July 2018 - The Haifa Club community centre in Baghdad officially reopened today, following extensive renovation works. The centre has stood at the heart of the local community for almost 50 years, bringing together the Iraqis and Palestinian refugees who share the neighbourhood.

Through its activities, the Haifa Club helps to foster social cohesion between the local populace and the Palestinian refugees sheltering here. Over 3,000 people from the local community use this centre. Local football and basketball teams train using the Club’s facilities. Families bring their children to the nursery, and celebrate milestone events in their lives in the community hall. When the Club fell into disrepair it affected the whole community.

UNHCR and its partner, Islamic Relief Worldwide, rehabilitated the centre with the support of the People’s Republic of China. Since the start of 2017 China generously donated US$2 million to support UNHCR’s efforts to assist Palestinian refugees in Iraq. The funds supported a range of activities for Palestinian refugees, from education grants to vital health care. The Haifa Club renovations are at the heart of this project.

"China would like to continue to work together with the United Nations and the international community to play a constructive role in improving the Palestinian refugees’ humanitarian situation,” said Mr. Chen Weiqing, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Iraq.

The Palestinian Ambassador, Ahmed Aqel, responded: “We thank the Chinese Government and people for funding to help Palestinians in Iraq. We also thank UNHCR for their continued efforts to improve the lives of Palestinians in Iraq. The Palestinian Embassy is pleased to continue their cooperation with UNHCR in Iraq.”

“As forced displacement around the world grows year by year, helping refugees rebuild their lives must be a shared responsibility, and UNHCR is grateful to the People's Republic of China for this generous donation,” said UNHCR Representative in Iraq, Mr. Bruno Geddo. “Equally important, we must empower the communities who welcome refugees through funding for projects that bring refugees and their hosts together, like the renovation of this centre. We hope the Haifa club where Iraqis and Palestinians socialize will remain at the heart of the local community for many years to come.”

UNDP supports 284,000 people with access to fundamental basic services in Erbil Governorate

Erbil, 04 July 2018 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Erbil Governorate have launched eight infrastructure projects to improve services that are fundamental to daily life, such as electricity, water, roads, and sewerage, for over 284,000 people across the Governorate of Erbil.

With the continuous support from the Government of Germany, UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) and the Erbil Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (E-JCC) will construct or upgrade six critical infrastructure projects, namely constructing roads, improving lighting, repairing the water network, and upgrading the electricity grid. This initiative directly supports residents of Sarbasty, Farmanbaran, Baharka, Naly, Shamamik, and Krechyan quarters of Erbil Governorate.

With continuous funding from the Government of Japan, ICRRP and the E-JCC are supporting two projects benefiting over 210,000 host community members and displaced people. The supply and installation of 40 transformers, already completed, has improved access to reliable electricity for people living in the targeted quarters of Erbil city and the districts of Soran, Koyia, Shaqlawa and Salah Al Din sub-district. In addition, the supply and installation of a mobile substation for Ifraz Water Treatment Plant, which is the main water source in Erbil Governorate, is expected to increase the supply of water in Darashakran and Kawergosk sub-districts, as well as in Kawergosk refugee camp, Darashakran refugee camp and in the nearby villages.

At a ceremony marking the launch of the projects, the Governor of Erbil, H.E Mr. Nawzad Hadi, said: “We highly appreciate the support from the
UNDP supports 284,000 people with access to fundamental basic services in Erbil Governorate (continued)

Governments of Germany and Japan, and collaboration with UNDP, to improve the delivery of basic services and boost livelihood opportunities for displaced populations in Erbil. Today we are signing the agreements with UNDP to launch infrastructure projects with a total budget of up to US $3 million. These contributions are essential for coping with the current crisis and ongoing recession and will meet current community needs.”

The Consul and Head of the Consular Office of Japan in Erbil, Mr. Katsumi Moriyasu, said: “Japan is very active in extending humanitarian and stabilization assistance to IDPs, refugees and host communities in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Its contributions in those areas so far reached US$460 million since 2012. As well, Japan is determined to stay as a close partner of Iraq and Kurdistan Region with respect to their reconstruction and socio-economic development.”

The Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Johannes Schneider, noted: “Thanks to UNDP and the ICRRP the enormous challenges in the response to the Iraqi Crisis are being addressed in a timely and effective manner. The programme ensures that anybody in need, independent from his or her ethnic or religious background can benefit from the support. Germany is happy to have contributed to this program with a total amount of €95.5 million so far.”

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Marta Ruedas, notes that, “Supporting Iraq’s livelihoods and basic service delivery bolsters Iraq’s path to recovery from the recent conflict. UNDP is committed to working closely with the Erbil Governorate on these critical infrastructure projects that support both displaced populations and host communities”.

UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) promotes the recovery and resilience of communities vulnerable to multidimensional shocks associated with large-scale returns and protracted displacement of Iraqis and Syrian refugees. This is achieved through a medium-term programming integrating crisis management capacity building, rehabilitating basic service infrastructure, livelihood recovery and social cohesion.

IOM: More help needed for Yazidis struggling to rebuild in Sinjar

Hardan, 17 July 2018 - As millions of Iraqi returnees grapple with post-conflict realities in areas devastated by war, the UN Migration Agency (IOM) has provided more than 600 Yazidi families with non-food items in villages around the town of Sinjar, about 120 km west of Mosul. IOM distributed essential household items such as mattresses, blankets, cooking stoves, hygiene kits, rechargeable lights and fans with the financial support of the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance.

For the first time since the end of the conflict, IOM last week was able to access Hardan, a village located about 30 km east of Sinjar town. The local Mukhtar (community leader) of Hardan, Qolo Qasem Elyas, explained that about one fifth of families have returned to the village.

“More than 300 families, around 2,100 individuals, used to live in Hardan but to date only about 60 families have returned,” said Elyas. “On 3 August 2014, when ISIL militants attacked and overran Sinjar district, including Hardan, 70 people were killed and 376 kidnapped, many of whom are still missing.”


Today, thousands of people are still too afraid to leave the mountain, preferring living in tents on Sinjar’s plateau, rather than returning to their villages. Rebuilding their lives has brought immense challenges for the trickle of families who chose to return. Many have nothing at all; their savings have been depleted, their homes looted and destroyed, and their livelihoods, wiped out.

Where they are available, essential services in these villages are only partially functioning, and the area remains heavily contaminated with the explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. Communities are often a fraction of what they once were and, as people have begun to return, the absence of thousands of family members is palpable. The Mukhtar of Hardan village explained that neither the school nor the health clinic are functional because the community has no piped water due to infrastructure damage.

Families who invited IOM staff into their homes said that there is little support available to help them cope with their psychological and physical trauma, and they expressed great anxiety about the future.

Over the coming months, IOM will help to improve conditions across multiple sectors in communities of return, repairing essential infrastructure, such as the public water network, supporting the local government to deliver healthcare and other essential services, and facilitating access to livelihoods through cash-for-work projects.

“IOM is providing critical humanitarian assistance to the population in Sinjar, and we expect to scale up this assistance soon,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite.

“After more than three and a half years in exile, Yazidis deserve the chance to be able to return and re-establish their lives and communities. Given the scale of damage, much support is needed.”

According to IOM Iraq’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), in the year since the area was fully retaken from ISIL, most Yazidi families remain unable to return to Sinjar town and surrounding villages; of the 52,158 internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have returned to Sinjar district.
The UN outline activities under Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme

Baghdad, 19 July 2018 – A meeting of the United Nations Country Team and development partners convened today to present activities under the Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP), a bridging strategy to transition UN work from an intense focus on humanitarian and immediate stabilization activities to one more oriented towards recovery, reconstruction and development. The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq, Marta Ruedas, briefed on the ongoing and planned efforts of the UN system in the Framework of the RRP. Ms. Ruedas highlighted that “the RRP activities are designed to fast-track the social dimensions of stabilization and will help ensure that people see tangible improvements in their daily lives at the start of the reconstruction process, rather than waiting years to benefit from structural reforms.” The United Nations is hoping to mobilise USD $943 million for the implementation of the 61 RRP projects, said DSRSG Ruedas, who also serves as the UN Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.

The Projects presented under the RRP place special attention on helping the people who have suffered the most, restoring confidence in the Government, revitalizing the areas at the highest risk of violence and advancing broad political participation and inclusive social cohesion. RRP projects build on the work that has been done by humanitarian partners to support displaced and host families during the conflict and also on the efforts made by the Government and UNDP to stabilize the cities and districts newly liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

UN Secretary-General António Guterres launched the two-year RRP at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq in February. The RRP is aligned with the Government’s priorities and its Recovery and Development Framework.

Iraq Humanitarian Fund allocates US$34M to jumpstart priority activities

Baghdad, 19 July 2018 - The Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF) has allocated US$34 million to support NGOs, UN agencies and Red Cross/Crescent partners in providing crucial humanitarian assistance in Iraq. Established in June 2015, the IHF aims to support humanitarian partners in responding to the complex and dynamic crisis in Iraq. The IHF aims to further strengthen the national response capacity in Iraq in 2018 and to foster partnerships between international and national actors. This allocation has a geographical focus on the most severely affected governorates - Ninewa, Anbar and Kirkuk. The allocation will support 82 projects through 53 international and national humanitarian partners to implement priority activities under the Humanitarian Response Plan. US$5.1 million will be specifically allocated to health projects with the aim to reach 1.6 million people. This is particularly critical as health partners urgently need US$54 million under the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan to ensure continuation of health services in conflict-affected and newly accessible areas. To date, the Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan remains only 54 per cent funded. Among the most critical humanitarian sectors, food security, gender-based violence and health remain severely underfunded. 38 per cent of health facilities at risk of closure

Due to this severe funding shortage, 38 per cent of health facilities supported by nine Health Cluster partners are at risk of closure by the end of July 2018 due to funding shortages, as announced by the World Health Organization on 17 July. This will affect more than 900,000 people who need treatment for common and more severe diseases, vaccinations, nutrition screening and gynecological services.

According to WHO, support for health services in Iraq has drastically declined since the end of the Mosul campaign just over one year ago. 22 health service delivery points have already...
Iraq Humanitarian Fund allocates US$34M to jumpstart priority activities (continued)

closed this year, due to funding shortages. This has left critical gaps in humanitarian partners' ability to provide care for both displaced persons and returnees.

The Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF, formerly known as the Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund) is a pooled fund led by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and managed by OCHA. Established in June 2015, the IHF quickly became one of the world’s largest country-based pooled funds (CBPFs). The fund supports humanitarian partners responding to the complex and dynamic crisis in Iraq, including through direct funding to national front-line responders.

The objectives of the IHF are to:
- Support life-saving and life-sustaining activities while filling critical funding gaps.
- Promote needs-based assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles.
- Strengthen coordination and leadership primarily through the HC function and by leveraging the cluster system.
- Improve the relevance and coherence of humanitarian response by strategically funding priorities as identified under the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).
- Expand the delivery of assistance in hard-to-reach areas by partnering with national and international NGOs.

The IHF facilitates timely resource mobilization for the most critical humanitarian needs as defined by the HRP, while retaining flexibility to allocate funds to unforeseen emergency needs and critical gaps as they emerge.

From 2016 to 2017, the Fund has addressed escalating humanitarian needs in the wake of military offensives to retake areas controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) including Fallujah and Mosul.

For the Mosul response, the IHF was among the first, fastest and largest funding mechanisms available for humanitarian partners, contributing over 15 per cent of the US$284 million Mosul Flash Appeal.

In February 2018, the IHF launched the year’s first Standard Allocation, through which $34.5 million is being allocated to support partners implement priority activities of the 2018 HRP. This includes assistance to vulnerable populations in areas where displaced families are returning, support to principled returns and service provision in the remaining displacement camps.

Online Damage Assessment System launched in Mosul

Mosul, 19 July 2018 – The Nineveh Governor Nofal al-Akoub and EU Delegation representative Mathieu Goodstein launched the Online Damage Assessment System today in Mosul at the Governorate building.

The system gathers information about the damage of vital facilities in a centralized data base and informs administration and donors on both needs and projects implementation in restoring stability and future development of the city. The reporting system uses web and mobile phone applications, easy graphical interface in both English and Arabic languages, and contains the damages assessed in the province accurately for each sector.

Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for citizens, local and international government agencies, NGOs and donors to monitor process of reconstruction and improvement of services that are fundamental to daily life.

Mathieu Goodstein from the Delegation of the European Union to Iraq, said: "This project illustrates perfectly well the tangible impacts such initiative has. The real time data collection equally strengthens accountability on all sides of the equation, and the end result is the improvement of the conditions of the people of Nineva. It is noteworthy to point out that such tool is “homegrown”, epitomizing an Iraqi solution of an Iraqi situation. Widening its scope, this tool clearly has the potential to be replicated in other Governorates - covering a wide range of sectors.

Nofal al-Akoub, Governor of Nineveh said that: “This EU visit is a support to the local government of Nineveh. We also thank UNDP for its support for the reconstruction, which was the first organization to support of Nineveh province. This online system is unique in Iraq and the rest of the provinces can borrow this experience and we are fully prepared to support that.”

The system was developed under Local Area Development Programme (LADP), implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the European Union. In addition, LADP has supported the Governorate in building capacity for effective planning through the development of Nineva Response Plan.
UN says ‘many humanitarian achievements’, one year after ouster of ISIL from Mosul

Baghdad, 21 July 2018 - On the first anniversary of the liberation of Mosul the Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, gave the following statement: “Today marks the one-year anniversary of the end of military operations by Iraqi security forces to retake Mosul city in Ninewa governorate from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Mosul’s occupation by ISIL from June 2014 to July 2017 caused a humanitarian catastrophe with immense human suffering and enormous physical destruction. Close to one million people were forced to flee the conflict in Mosul. Assessments conducted by the UN and its humanitarian partners found that hospitals, bridges, schools, water treatment and power plants were contaminated with unprecedented quantities of explosive hazards and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that were left by ISIL.

“One year later, many humanitarian achievements can be observed,” said Ms. Marta Ruedas, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. “Almost 870,000 people have now returned to Mosul. The Government of Iraq, the United Nations and its national and international NGO partners are working together to ensure the safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced Mosul residents, rehabilitation of damaged infrastructures, and restoration of livelihoods.”

UNHCR established six camps for displaced Mosul residents in Ninewa governorate and in the Kurdistan Region and provided protection and essential assistance services to displaced people in camps and in informal settlements. IOM, in addition to supporting the displaced people who are unable to return, has also partnered with the Government’s Joint Coordination and Monitoring Center to establish two Community Resource Centres in Mosul to facilitate the reintegration of returnees. UNICEF has helped the basic rehabilitation of one-third of the 638 schools that have re-opened and enabled more than half a million girls and boys to return to local schools. WFP and the government provided emergency school meals to 87,000 primary school children in 145 primary schools and four kindergartens in West Mosul from March to May. UNICEF has also supported local authorities with the repair of water networks and more than 800,000 people benefited from the delivery of safe drinking water. In the past year, WHO has placed 53 ambulances in the governorate to ensure that patients with serious conditions can receive secondary care. In West Mosul, where six major hospitals were damaged, WHO has relocated two field hospitals to deliver emergency healthcare services to returnees and is supporting six primary health care centres that will benefit approximately 150,000 displaced persons. As ISIL had closed most maternity wards and hospitals in Mosul, UNFPA responded to the staggering reproductive health and protection needs and was already supporting a delivery room in East Mosul in December 2016. In 2017, it supported 16 primary health care clinics with the provision of almost 800,000 reproductive health consultations to women and girls and deployed six mobile reproductive health clinics and teams in the city. UNDP’s stabilisation programme has rebuilt infrastructure in these sectors as well, and is working to rebuild the electric grid that will keep the health, education and water supply running in Mosul.

Since the liberation of Mosul, UNMAS clearance teams have removed more than 43,700 explosive hazards, including 1,000 IEDs, from roads, bridges, schools, universities, hospitals, clinics, water treatment plants and municipal buildings in Mosul city. In addition, UNMAS has cleared to date 550 critical infrastructure locations of explosive hazards, allowing for the resumption of basic services for Mosul residents and returnees. UN-Habitat provided legal assistance to more than 1,200 returnee households in 12 neighbourhoods in East Mosul to address their housing, land and property rights and also rehabilitated 257 conflict-damaged houses in West Mosul, allowing almost 3,000 people to return home.

Despite these achievements, extensive humanitarian needs remain in Mosul and across Iraq. The 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, which aims to reach the most vulnerable 3.4 million people with priority life-saving and life-sustaining assistance, is only 54 per cent funded. “While it is heartening to see life returning to Mosul, close to 2 million people in Iraq remain displaced and those who have chosen to return to the city and other liberated areas face a multitude of challenges,” said Ms. Ruedas. “Partners urgently require an additional US$260.5 million to address the critical needs of Iraqis who have suffered years of conflict and displacement. They deserve peace and normalcy in their lives without further delay.”
Comprehend the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) to introduce meaningful anti-corruption reforms

Baghdad, 24 July 2018 - The United Nations Development Program UNDP, in partnership with the Iraqi Commission of Integrity, organized a workshop designed to discuss and provide an understanding on the data and methodologies used to rank countries on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI).

The Workshop organized jointly with the Transparency International (TI), and hosted by the Iraqi Anti-Corruption Academy bringing together for the first-time government officials with civil society representatives to meaningfully discuss the factors influencing the corruption perception in the public sector.

The Regional advisor for Arab States in Transparency International Ms. Kinda Hattar, facilitated the very interactive discussion among the participants who acquired in-depth knowledge on the source of information, and the global surveys that feed into the CPI.

Moreover, the discussion led to recognize the institutional changes and reforms needed to introduce impactful results on combating and preventing corruption.

The workshop is a significant milestone towards building a partnership between the UNDP, TI, Iraqi Government and stakeholders to reinforce the government’s efforts in fighting corruption. This workshop was followed by several high-level meetings with government officials to discuss practical action plans to sensitize relevant public institutions and civil society to fight corruption. UNDP through its FFER-Federal Project has already deployed high-caliber international experts to support Anti-Corruption activities and to build the capacity of relevant government entities engaged in fighting corruption.

Water and electricity are now available in the Surdash Camp

Sulaymaniyyah, 31 July 2018 - For people living in displacement camps, the importance of water and electricity go well beyond comfort – it stands for an improved quality of life. Water and electricity supplies are now available to over 3,000 displaced people living in the Surdash Camp in Sulaymaniyyah helping them to cope with high summer temperatures.

The construction work conducted by UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) includes digging an artesian well, connection of the water source to the main water tanks in the Camp, as well as extension of the electricity line. This was possible thanks to the generous support from the Government of Japan.

UN Migration Agency, Iraqi Government inaugurate Community Resource Centres in Mosul, Anbar

Mosul, 3 August 2018 - In the year since Mosul was liberated from Daesh in July 2017, around 870,000 people have returned to the city, according to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). As part of the effort to support displaced persons returning home and other vulnerable populations in Daesh occupation-affected areas in Iraq, IOM, the UN Migration Agency, and the Government of Iraq’s Joint Coordination and Monitoring Centre (JC MCC) launched two Community Resource Centres in Mosul, which suffered widespread destruction at the hands of Daesh and during the military operations to liberate the area.

Through the partnership, IOM and JCMC established a third centre in Fallujah, Anbar Governorate.

In many neighbourhoods of West Mosul, homes and shops have been reduced to rubble. Even those citizens with the resources to rehabilitate their property are unable to do so due to fears it has been booby-trapped by Daesh or is contaminated with explosive remnants of war.

The official ceremony to inaugurate the centres took place on Wednesday, 25 July, in west Mosul. The two centres are located in Al-Jadeda, a severely affected neighbourhood in West Mosul, and in Tahrir, a neighbourhood of east Mosul where returnees live alongside internally displaced persons from other parts of Nineva. The ceremony brought together representatives from the Government of Iraq, international humanitarian agencies and the local community.

“While the Government of Iraq, the UN and NGOs continue to scale up their support to Mosul, we know that returnee families often struggle to find out what services are available, or how these services can be accessed,” said Siobhan Simojoki, the Head of IOM Iraq’s Mosul Office.

“These Community Resource Centres will help to address this issue and provide information, referral, and a priority set of centralized services. The centres will be open to all people in need – whether returnees, host communities or internally displaced,” added Simojoki.

“The road to recovery in Iraq is long and challenging. The community-based services that Community Resource Centres are providing will support communities to recover from the consequences of Daesh,” said Marwan Hadi Ahmed, assistant director of the JCMC representational office in
UN Migration Agency, Iraqi Government inaugurate Community Resource Centres in Mosul, Anbar (continued)

Ninewahe.
In addition to the two centres in Mosul, IOM and JCMC have opened another in Fallujah, Anbar Governorate.
Fallujah was also on a major fault line in the battle against Daesh and suffered widespread destruction and displacement. Since June 2016, when the city was liberated from Daesh, more than 500,000 people have returned.

Over the coming months, a network of partners will collaborate with the JCMC to establish Community Resource Centres in other areas with a high number of returns. These partners are the ACTED, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Terre des hommes (TDH) Lausanne and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Since Mosul was liberated in July 2017, IOM has implemented 18 community service projects in the city’s most affected neighbourhoods, rehabilitating essential services and infrastructure such as water networks, garbage collection, factories, schools and parks.
IOM is also rehabilitating two youth centres in Mosul, supporting families to repair damaged homes, and providing essential medical supplies and health services through two mobile clinics and a specialized ophthalmology unit at Wadi Hajar General Hospital.
“IOM is the first to acknowledge that current support falls short of needs, and that families who have suffered for years in exile or under Daesh occupation need more,” said Gerard Waite, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission.
“Despite the significant efforts of the government of Iraq and the generosity of donors however, Mosul’s recovery remains underfunded, and more needs to be done to close the gap.”

An ancient river with a modern bridge

Fallujah, 5 August 2018 · On a hot, windless summer’s day, a crowd gathered on the banks of the Euphrates to celebrate a significant moment for the region. The Fallujah Iron Bridge, the iconic landmark around since the 1930s, was finally re-opening. Fallujah suffered greatly under ISIL occupation for well over two years. It is estimated that well over half a million people fled the city, and those who stayed behind were forced to live under a brutal regime. Countless people were killed, businesses closed, and vital infrastructure was destroyed. Among the casualties was the Fallujah Iron Bridge – blown up by ISIL, cutting off the movement of people and goods to and from the city.
As soon as Fallujah was liberated in June 2016, the Government of Iraq, with support from UNDP, immediately got to work stabilizing infrastructure, restoring basic services and creating conditions for people to return to the city. UNDP targeted three key bridges in need of extensive repair and committed to fully restoring them. Spanning some 270m across the Euphrates, and with one its sections completely destroyed, the restoration of the bridge was a complex challenge. The whole bridge was in a state of disrepair and in need of total rehabilitation.
Construction work began in October 2017. However, it had to stop in February 2018, when explosive material was discovered both on the riverbank and below the waterline in the center of the bridge. With the help of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), a team of specialized scuba divers were sent to safely dispose of the explosive material.
The rehabilitated bridge in now complete and re-links the city center to north-west Fallujah and beyond. At the official opening, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Marta Ruedas said: “The rehabilitation of roads and bridges is a vital element to restoring communication and enabling people and businesses to get back to normal. UNDP is proud to work with local and federal authorities to achieve this impact on the lives of Iraqis here in Fallujah and around the country.”
With over 2,400 projects across the country – 700 in Anbar governorate alone – the work of UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization is focused primarily on improving access in liberated communities. Improving access to education. Improving access to towns and cities. Improving access to electricity and clean running water.
Without an improvement to this access, it will remain difficult to encourage Iraqis to return home.
The restoration of the Fallujah Iron Bridge was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Government of The Netherlands. This investment in critical infrastructure and services sets the stage for longer-term reconstruction and development activities and supports the Iraqi people and their government to achieve sustainable peace and development.
Karbala, 5 August 2018 - The Governorate of Karbala in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and support of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organized a conference to roll out the Holly Karbala Private Sector Development Strategy (2018-2030) in Karbala province. The Holly Karbala Private Sector Development Strategy (2018-2030) (HKPSDS) will support the diversification of the economy as one of the most important keys for the economic growth in Karbala. This new strategy will help create jobs and promote growth in the local economy. UNDP, and the Governorate of Karbala, Provincial Council, Holy Shrines, private sector and academia, have been developing the HKPSDS for the province. Representatives of private sector companies, associations, academics, Directors of public departments, media and other UN agencies as well as officials from the local authority attended the conference. The Governor of Karbala, Mr. Ageel Al-Turaihi, said in his speech during the conference: “The Private Sector Development Strategy will be a center of excellence of the private sector development among the local governorates, and Holy Karbala Government will provide full support to the implementation of this strategy”. UNDP Deputy Country Director Mr. Gerardo Noto said: “The implementation of this strategy will contribute significantly to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In particular SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), leading to achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation”. Adding: “it will also help to achieve SDG 17 (Partnerships for Goal) to encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships”. The HKPSDS is an adaptation to the local context of the PSDS Iraq 2014 – 2030. It is designed to address the challenges identified and to achieve the objectives set on the national level in the PSDS Iraq (2014-2030) within Karbala Province and is intended to utilize the resources and opportunities available in the province, to achieve the overarching development objectives of revitalizing and strengthening the local private sector and improve the business environment, to contribute to local economic growth, sustainable development and job creation. As the first one of its kind to be implemented in the local governorates of Iraq, The PSDS envisages achieving, by 2030, the vision of “Developing a viable, competitive, local private sector, led by the business community that contributes to the local economy, job creation and sustainable local development in partnership between the Local Government of Karbala Governorate and the local private sector. FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Fadel El-Zubi, gave a presentation at the conference highlighting the current agricultural status in Iraq, challenges faced, and best practices implemented for solutions to improve the agricultural sector in the holy city of Karbala.

Bartella’s small grants projects support return of IDPs to their homes

Bartella, 07 August 2018 - Nabeel’s game center is the most popular spot for young people in Bartella, Ninewah. “During the day, my center is full of children 8-14 while in the evening the older teenage crowd takes over. I am now earning an income and children enjoy a safe place to play” he said.

In this ethnically mixed town, boys from different religious and ethnic background gather together to play computer games and football competitions. On sunny, good weather days, the tournaments move to the nearby football field.

Nabeel was able to open the game center thanks to a small grant he received through a project supported by UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) with generous funding from the Government of France. By creating jobs and economic opportunities, this project is contributing to the return of hundreds of people to Bartella after liberation from ISIL.

In the two months since Nabeel and his son opened the game center, they have been able to grow the business now selling snacks and purchasing two additional computers from the profits they have made.
UNHCR welcomes a new donation from the Government of Finland

Baghdad, 07 August 2018 - UNHCR welcomes the generous donation of 1.5 million euros from the Government of Finland. The new funds will help UNHCR support vulnerable Iraqis and Syrian refugees in a rapidly changing context.

A year on from the end of fighting in Mosul, the situation in Iraq is increasingly complex. While the country recovers from conflict, the needs of Iraqis diversify. Almost 3.9 million people displaced by the recent conflict returned to their homes and are restarting their lives. Children are back at school, water and electricity networks are functioning, and devastated communities are seeing the shoots of regrowth. In places hard-hit by the conflict, the conditions for sustainable return are not yet met. Assistance for the 2 million internally displaced Iraqis and the communities that host them must continue for some time to come to discourage people from returning home too soon.

In addition, around 700 people cross the border every month to escape the fighting in Syria that shows no sign of abating.

To meet diversifying needs, UNHCR provides support over a broadening spectrum. From comprehensive humanitarian assistance in camps to community-based projects to promote social cohesion in slowly reforming communities; from psychological assistance for survivors of gender-based violence to support in acquiring the new or replacement identification documents people need to access state social welfare benefits.

"Iraq is an important partner to Finland and the EU," said Ms. Päivi Laine, the Finnish Ambassador to Iraq. "We want to support the Iraqis to return home after years of conflict and continue their lives in home communities. It is remarkable that despite its own complicated situation Iraq is generous towards refugees from Syria. UNHCR has been for years a reliable partner and Finland is very satisfied to continue the co-operation in Iraq. The latest donation is 1.5 million euros."

"The changing context in Iraq requires us to be ever-more nimble in our response," said Mr. Bruno Geddo, UNHCR's Representative in Iraq. "Even as cities are rebuilt and communities begin to flourish, hundreds of thousands of people struggle to make ends meet. Flexibility and creativity are at the heart of UNHCR's work in Iraq, to consistently meet people's changing needs. Unearmarked funding from donors like the Government of Finland enables us to be responsive and compassionate to the changing situation Iraqis face. With their ongoing support, we will stand with the people of Iraq until the job is done."

UN-Habitat and UNESCO launch plan to reconstruct Mosul

Mosul, 8 August 2018 - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) today jointly hosted the first workshop to develop an Initial Planning Framework for Reconstruction of Mosul. The all-day event was held at Mosul University with leaders and experts from the Government of Iraq, academia, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society.

Since the liberation of Mosul, rebuilding work has started around the city, including cultural heritage buildings and public spaces, especially in the Old City; but the care required to remove large amounts of rubble due to explosives contamination has slowed the pace tremendously.

The masterplan of Mosul has not been updated since 1974. UN-Habitat’s study shows that the lack of an updated masterplan resulted in the growth of informal settlements without adequate infrastructure or social services, and lack of access to land and housing created grievances among the city's residents, contributing to the rise of violent extremism. Simply returning Mosul to its status before ISIL is not good enough – now is a unique opportunity to ‘build back better’ and develop a people-centred urban vision for the future.

The Initial Planning Framework for Reconstruction of Mosul is an inclusive participatory vision and strategy backed up with data that will facilitate the city’s transition from an emergency response and stabilization phase to reconstruction by providing agreed guidelines for reconstruction activities. H.E. Mr. Nawfal Hamadi Al-Sultan, Governor of Ninewa, opened the workshop by emphasizing the need for coordination among multiple actors working on reconstruction of Mosul.

Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, urged everyone rebuilding Mosul to work together towards a shared vision and a coordinated approach, which should be guided by the Initial Planning Framework for Reconstruction of Mosul.

This workshop will be followed by field studies and information analysis by the expert team of UN-Habitat, UNESCO and government partners. The findings and the proposed practical approach for reconstruction will be presented and validated at a second workshop to be held in November 2018.
UN continues to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction of destroyed Iraqi communities

Erbil, 8 August 2018 - On 5th and 7th August 2018, a United Nations Iraq delegation, headed by Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy UN Iraq Special Representative, Humanitarian Coordinator, Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme Iraq Resident Representative, visited Mosul and Bartela in northern Iraq. In Mosul, discussions were held with Iraqi Government interlocuters and partners on next steps for rehabilitation, stabilization and reconstruction of Mosul and surrounding areas destroyed by Daesh. Discussions also focused on the removal of landmines and unexploded remnants and the reconstruction of the places of worship for the Sunnis, Christians, Yazidis and Sabean Mandeans. After the meeting, the committee visited some sites at the Old City. In Bartela, Nineva Province, DSRSG Ruedas inaugurated a rehabilitated health centre and later visited a returnee family in their newly reconstructed house. The delegation also visited Mar Matta Monastery founded in the 4th Century. During the conflict with Daesh/ISIL in 2014-2017, the Monastery became a refuge for families in the Nineva Plains. DSRSG Ruedas met with Bishop Shamani as part of ongoing efforts to engage with community leaders to understand current needs. DSRSG Ruedas says it is important to follow-up on the progress made in the United Nations’ stabilization work in Nineva and Mosul.

Mosul, 10 August 2018 - Major General Felix Gedney, Deputy Commander-Strategy and Support (S&S) Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve, visits today Mosul with UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, where they assessed damage in the area. The visit was an opportunity to see how key sites including Nineva University’s Jawsach campus and the electrical substation at Sumar are being restored for local communities after Mosul’s liberation from ISIL. Many communities can now access essential services like water, education and electricity. Rubble-removal projects in West Mosul as well as Al Wathba School – which is being cleared for explosives by UNMAS – were also part of the visit.
Safe spaces, secure futures

Baghdad, 12 August 2018 - Through the Funding Facility for Stabilization and the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme, UNDP is creating #SafeSpaces4Youth in Iraq through employment; building hope and securing futures for young people, their families and their country.

Christian community, began to save to reopen the business. Upon receiving a cash grant of USD 1,200 from the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme in October 2017, he wasted no time buying the necessary equipment and materials. King Barber was up and running just over a month later in late November 2017 and Randy became the youngest barbershop owner in Bartella. “Before ISIL I was called the King because I gave the best haircuts,” he explained, “so I thought I should call it King Barber.” Randy has a new child on the way with his wife and the income from the barbershop is crucial to supporting his growing family. His best friend, Ayaat, who is 21 years old and a Shabak Muslim is Randy’s only employee, and the shop also brings him an important monthly wage. That both Randy, Ayaat and their friends, despite coming from different religious backgrounds, gather in the barbershop to work and socialize makes this a remarkable safe space in a community that previously saw significant tensions between the two groups.

Although the business environment in Bartella is still in the process of rebounding, Randy is happy to have returned to his hometown and particularly to a livelihood opportunity through ICRRP, that through hard work and dedication, he has managed to turn into a career which will be able to support his family for years to come.

Ali

Ali, 18 years old, is originally from the Old City of Mosul, which was decimated during the battle to liberate the city from ISIL. Ali’s father died five years ago, forcing him to drop out of school when he was only 13 years old in order to support his family. As a worker on the job site of the Al Jamhouryia police station, a project that is funded by UNDP’s FFS, Ali earns an income which supports his family, including his 25-year-old brother who is blind, and unable to work.

Iraq is one of the youngest countries in the world, with Iraqis under 25 years old accounting for some 60% of the population. Years of conflict has taken its toll, and young people, many of whom are the sole breadwinners for their families, struggle to find both short and long-term livelihood opportunities. Youth living across Iraq, in newly liberated areas, and those who are IDPs, returning IDPs, refugees and members of host communities, all struggle with the reality of limited job and career prospects. As of 2017, 15% of male youth and 29.2% of female youth in Iraq were unemployed.

UNDP recognizes the crucial nature of addressing this problem. Unemployed youth remain one of the demographics most vulnerable to radicalization, and livelihoods opportunities from UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme and Funding Facility for Stabilization, are actively supporting the next generation of Iraqis to rebuild their lives and to bring back much needed hope for a safer future; for them, their families and their country.

For many young people, like Lumia and Ali, living in areas of Iraq newly liberated areas from ISIL, short term employment through UNDP’s FFS is the only way to pay for basic services, like electricity and medical care, for their families. For others, like Randy, who was forced to flee, leaving his business, and live as an IDP, long term career development and entrepreneurial opportunities would be out of reach without the support of cash grants, like the one he received from UNDP’s ICRRP. Together, UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization and Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme are working to create #SafeSpaces4Youth and, in that way, build safer and more secure futures for youth across Iraq.

Randy

Randy, 22 years old, was forced to flee when ISIL invaded the town and lived as an internally displaced person (IDP) with his family for three years in Erbil. When he returned to Bartela, Randy took odd jobs and worked as an electrician but struggled to earn a steady and reliable income and dreamed of being a business owner. Having worked in his uncle’s barbershop prior to being displaced, Randy, who is a member of the Bartela

Lumia

“This work is very helpful for me,” says Lumia. “I hope I can continue with this work. It’s the only way I can support my family.” In the battle for Mosul, one of her sons lost an eye after being hit by an ISIL car bomb.

Her husband suffers from severe mental illness after ISIL militants tried to kill him, so Lumia is the sole breadwinner for her and her family. She works with a cash for work team supported by UNDP’s FFS, which allows her to bring in a small income to support her family. “When I received my first payment, I was very happy to be able to buy electricity for my home,” she explains.

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Where there is water, there is life

The World Food Programme (WFP) is changing lives in Iraq by creating jobs focused on restoring agriculture for vulnerable people in Anbar governorate.

Garma, 13 August 2018 - After three years in a camp for displaced families, the first thing Ali wanted to do when he returned to his home in Garma was to swim in the nearby canal as he used to during the hot summer months. To his disappointment, years of neglect and fighting reduced the canal to a long trench of rubble.

This changed after WFP launched a project in Garma to restore damaged irrigation canals so farmers can return to their abandoned lands and rehabilitate their farms.

Qasim

“Where there is water, there is life. When people heard that NGOs are working in the area, they started to come back,” said Qasim Mohammed Muhkilif, a father of four who was displaced from his home in 2013 and returned two years later once the area was deemed safe.

“When we first arrived, there was no work, it was so barren we couldn’t even find a bird. We couldn’t farm because there was no water, so many of us and left again to work in Baghdad.”

The main issue facing many returnees is securing a livelihood—a steady source of income to support themselves and their families as they rebuild their lives. They also have to deal with decimated infrastructure and badly damaged houses.

“Now that water is back the place is lush and green again. Life has returned, and we are living again under our roof even though our home was damaged,” he says.

WFP has helped vulnerable families living near water networks and irrigation canals through a cash-for-work program. This means that workers who were in dire need of assistance were given money to clean the canals. When water returned to their farmlands, they were able to restart agriculture production and provide for their own needs rather than relying entirely on assistance.

Malick

“When water started flowing again, things changed immediately. The first thing I grew was carrots,” said Malick Fadhil Salman, a father of five who left Garma in 2013 and returned once his neighbourhood was declared safe. “Now I’m planting fava beans. They don’t take a lot of time to grow.”

The work opportunities generated by this WFP cash-for-work project and the impact of reviving agriculture has encouraged many families to return to their homes and resume their lives.

In addition to the long-term benefits of restoring agriculture and livestock, people participating in the project reaped the benefits of cash from the intensive work schemes to make their resettlement a little easier.

“It feels really good to finally see life coming back to our lands, especially for us who suffered the woes of displacement,” said Hussam, 29, who works with WFP’s cooperating partner in the area the local NGO SSORD (Sabe’a Sanabul Organization for Relief & Development).

Along the newly cleaned canals, water runs now freely. Ali and many other boys his age are back to beating the summer heat with a dip in the once destroyed canal.

“We love to swim here. It’s very hot these days and with school over we don’t have much to do. We couldn’t swim here when we first returned. Now the water is high and clean, and we come every day to cool off,” say a group of boys in between somersaults.

By Saif al-Tatooz, Communication Officer at WFP Iraq

Mine Action

Erbil, 27 June 2018 - UNMAS Iraq recently handed over a collection of demining equipment to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency IKMAA which has carried out life-saving activities over two decades. (Photo left)

Baghdad, 30 June 2018 - UNMAS Iraq organizes a bi-weekly Explosive Hazard Awareness trainings for humanitarian organizations in Erbil and Baghdad. To date, five sessions have been provided to over 60 humanitarians! (Photo right)
The Government of France supports explosive hazards management to enable humanitarian and stabilization efforts

Baghdad, 25 July 2018 - The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) welcomes a first contribution of EUR 500,000 (USD 590,000) from the Government of France dedicated to explosive hazard management in support of humanitarian and stabilization efforts. The presence of explosive hazards, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in areas liberated from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), will continue to impede security and stability efforts until they are cleared and rendered safe.

Approximately 1.9 million civilians are still displaced in Iraq due to the recent conflict and unsafe conditions to allow their return. It is estimated that 21% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are not planning to return to their area of origin because of the presence of explosive hazards and IEDs (REACH/CCCM Cluster ‘Intentions Survey’, January 2018). The Government of Iraq maintains explosive hazard management capacities within a number of government entities and established mine action authorities, though the demand for assistance far exceeds the resources available.

With this first contribution from France, UNMAS will increase capacity to conduct survey and clearance of liberated areas suspected to be affected by explosive hazards in Anbar, Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Diyala Governorates. UNMAS Iraq will more specifically coordinate the deployment of appropriate clearance capacity in priority locations depending on assessments in direct support of the Government of Iraq, UN plans and humanitarian assistance efforts as well as in coordination with relevant UN agencies.

In collaboration with the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), risk education will be also provided to those living in and returning to liberated areas known to be contaminated by explosive hazards.

Finally, this donation will help UNMAS to further enhance Governmental authorities’ ability to better manage, regulate and coordinate response to the current contamination through training and advisory support.

The French Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Bruno Aubert said: “This contribution testifies not only to the concrete commitment of France alongside Iraqis but also to a desire for effective collaboration with all our partners to develop concrete projects for the reconstruction of Iraq”.

“This first contribution from the Government of France will make a significant difference. It will not only support UNMAS efforts to address the threat posed by explosive hazards, but also contribute to the safe and dignified return of displaced communities” stated Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager.

Faces of UNMAS - Dorra

West Mosul, 3 July 2018 – “I have been working in Iraq for two years now, and I have seen the inspiring resilience of the Iraqi people during and after the liberation, especially women and girls. I remind myself in the darkest hours that mine action is a life-saving activity, and I don’t think there is anything more life-saving and life-giving than a woman in Mine Action.... that keeps me going” says Dorra while walking in an area cleared from improvised explosive devices and other explosive hazards by United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

Dorra, a young Tunisian, working as liaison officer and interpreter (she speaks four languages fluently, including her native Arabic). She joined the UNMAS Iraq team consisting of international and national experts, as well as implementing partners engaged in on-going explosive hazard management operations, the first step to restore a safe environment for more than 2 million internally displaced persons who just want to return to their homes. Dorra, as many other women from different countries and from Iraq, are serving, with their unique skills, compassion and competences, UNMAS work in the field.
Erbil, 8 July 2018 - The Deputy UN Special Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Marta Ruedas, handed over a letter of commendation from United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to UNMAS Chief of Operations, Mark Warburton, for exceptional courage.

“Your mindset and selflessness reflect the finest traditions of the United Nations. Indeed, over an extended period, while leading a team of experts in the field of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), you have played a vital role in high-risk search and IED clearance operations, day after day, under the most difficult circumstances. You often, voluntarily, took the initiative to personally render safe highly dangerous and unstable IEDs found on human remains, in order to allow the Government of Iraq to recover those remains for proper investigation and burial”, UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

UNMAS Iraq has cleared over 800 suicide belts. More than 700 of these were cleared in 2018.

Additionally, a ceremony was also organized in honor of Mark Warburton at the British Consulate General in Erbil.

Baghdad, 17 July 2018 - Thousands of displaced people are still expected to return to their homes in Iraq. About 40 billboards with life-saving messages related to mine hazards awareness are currently installed in strategic points throughout the country.

Baghdad, 21 July 2018 - United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Iraq together with the Joint Coordination Monitoring Centre recently organised a two-day training introducing Humanitarian Mine Action Basic Management for governmental stakeholders.

Baghdad, 12 August 2018 - Youth need safe spaces where they can come together and engage in activities related to their diverse needs and interests. Iraq has emerged from over three years of intense conflict, and its critical infrastructure has been severely damaged, and its population deeply traumatized.

Youth is perhaps one of the groups most affected by the conflict and has witnessed unimaginable acts of violence, including events related to explosive hazards during which they may have lost friends and family.

Now that the conflict has ended, UNMAS is supporting access to safe spaces for youth by clearing explosive hazards from public parks, sporting grounds, kindergartens, schools and universities, and thus contributing to social cohesion, empowerment, inclusion and development.
The Federal Republic of Germany supports joint Ministry of Interior and UNMAS training to respond to explosive hazards

Baghdad, 13 August 2018 – This week marked the beginning of a 75-day training course in Anbar jointly organized by the Ministry of Interior and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). This course will be the first of its kind, with Iraqi Police instructors and UNMAS instructors working closely side-by-side to train local police in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and improvised explosive devices disposal (IEDD).

Explosive hazards continue to pose a significant risk for people returning to their homes, as well as for the security services providing the initial response to the explosive threat. Displaced people who are returning to former battle areas are likely to encounter explosive hazards. One of the options available to them is to contact local police who, in turn, will be the first responders. The presence of trained local police contributes to a safer environment and mitigates the risks of casualties amongst returnees.

“Explosive hazard clearance remains of the utmost importance in order to allow displaced people to return to their homes. Such clearances are a vital part of our stabilisation efforts” said Dr Cyrill Jean Nunn, Ambassador of Germany to Iraq. “Therefore Germany remains committed to supporting UNMAS in this important task.”

“Capacity enhancement support to enable local police response to explosive hazards is critical for the re-establishment of rule of law in liberated areas” said Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager. “Germany is a crucial partner for supporting explosive hazard management training and providing advice to the Government of Iraq.”

The generous contribution of EUR 4.5 million from the Federal Republic of Germany allows UNMAS to provide training and advice to National Mine Action Authorities and the Ministry of Interior to mitigate the threat from explosive hazards. This also includes a dedicated Gender Advisor who is working with relevant stakeholders (implementing partners and authorities) to mainstream gender into Mine Action processes.

UNMAS continues to train local police to provide life-saving first response in affected communities. Since January 2018, more than 370 police officers have been trained as first responders and 30 police officers are now able to train other police officers in Anbar and Kirkuk Governorates.

The Federal Republic of Germany remains the largest contributor to UNMAS in Iraq, providing a total of EUR 44.2 million since 2016.

UNMAS: ongoing and future clearance operations in Kirkuk and the surrounding area discussed

Kirkuk, 14 August 2018 – The Acting Kirkuk Governor, Rakan Said Al-Jubouri received today Gregory Robin, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Officer in charge of the Explosive Hazards Management (EHM) unit.

During the meeting, they discussed ongoing and future clearance operations in Kirkuk and the surrounding area. They highlighted the importance of mitigating the explosive threat not only to create a safe environment for the civilian population but also to restore the stability and economic recovery of this farming area.

Photo: Courtesy of the Office of the Acting Kirkuk Governor
Health related SDGs discussed in Baghdad

Baghdad, 10 July 2018 – The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Planning, UNICEF Iraq and WHO Iraq organized the first ever orientation workshop to discuss health related Strategic Development Goals and agree on a road map to implement them.

Funding gaps threaten closure of health facilities serving almost one million vulnerable Iraqis

Baghdad, 17 July 2018 – A lack of funding is threatening to close critical health facilities in Iraq, leaving almost one million people without access to basic medicines and health care. Support for health services in Iraq has drastically declined since the end of the Mosul campaign just over one year ago. Four health partners have already shut down 22 health service delivery points in 2018 due to a shortage of funds, leaving critical gaps in the provision of health care for children, women and men who are still displaced from their homes, and those who have returned to areas with heavily damaged infrastructure. In total, 38% of health facilities supported by nine health cluster partners are at risk of closure by the end of July, resulting in increased risk of communicable diseases outbreaks and roll back recovery efforts in areas devastated by conflict. These facilities currently offer health services to more than 900,000 displaced Iraqis and residents of host communities, including the treatment of common diseases, gynecological services, vaccinations for children, nutrition screening and referral of complicated medical cases for advanced treatment. So far, only US$ 8.4 (12.5%) of the US$ 67.4 million required by health cluster partners for the Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan for 2018 has been funded. $54 million is urgently required by health partners under the Humanitarian Response Plan to ensure continuation of health services in newly-accessible governorates of Iraq. Health cluster partners play a crucial role in providing health care for displaced people and host communities in Iraq. Since 2018, health partners have treated more than 1.2 million Iraqis.

Essential and lifesaving medicine and medical kits operates back Hawija General Hospital after 3 years of halt

Baghdad, 18 July 2018 - Al Hawija District, 45 km west of Kirkuk governorate in Iraq, has suffered severe shortages of critical supplies, including food, water, and medicine during the conflict and displacement crisis in 2014. The district health facilities were significantly impacted by the fight which led medical staff to leave the area and consequently deprived significant numbers of people of the medical assistance they need. Al Hawija General Hospital, the only major health facility in the district and which used to serve the district populations of approximately 300,000 inhabitants, was extensively damaged like the pediatric ward. Some were burned like the Emergency Room and the operation theaters. Majority of the assets were looted and stolen,” said Dr. Falah Sami, a pediatric doctor in the hospital. Responding to the immense need of the newly operated hospital, the Directorate of Health in Kirkuk rehabilitated the Emergency Room, while the World Health Organization (WHO) arranged for a big consignment of medicines, medical disposables, equipment and furniture to support the hospital. The consignment included 2 surgical kits sufficient to support 200 operations, 5 trauma A kits sufficient to treat 500 injuries, 5 trauma B kits enough for 500 patients, and a list of medical furniture of 24 items including beds, wheelchairs, trolleys, stretchers, and others. “This support from WHO came as the lifeline for the hospital,” said Dr. Imad
Aldin Ahmed, a surgeon staff of the hospital. “It will help the medical staff in the hospital to work more efficiently and save more lives.”

“The hospital has been struggling to provide secondary healthcare services for the affected population in Hawija. So this WHO donation will provide the urgent intervention many lives have been waiting for,” added Hameed Nima, a paramedic with over 19 years of service in the hospital.

The above support was in response to two assessment missions that were conducted by WHO to assess the health services in the district; and with the number of returnees to Hawija steadily increasing and based on the availability of resources, WHO is considering an official request to expand Hawija General Hospital and to equip an additional Operation Theater, currently under construction in the facility.

This urgent lifesaving support to Hawija General Hospital was made possible through the generous contribution from donors and health partners especially USAID-OFDA, ECHO, and the Government and People of Germany.

WHO and Ministry of Health build capacity of frontline health care workers in Iraq

Baghdad, 24 July 2018 – The long-term crisis affecting Iraq has weakened the country’s capacity to respond to major public health threats. To pursue improvements to health security in the country through strengthening preparedness and response capabilities, and through continued investment to help address health security threats, WHO and the Ministry of Health, Iraq with funding from USAID and ECHO have launched a series of capacity-building workshops for frontline health care workers.

The workshops prioritize 3 key areas: strengthening the public health laboratory system by increasing the capacity of diagnostic and specimen referral networks; improving case management of infectious diseases cases; and enhancing the existing communications and information systems for outbreak response.

Over 200 participants including physicians, laboratory technicians and epidemiologists drawn from the 18 Directorates of Health and districts in Iraq are expected to benefit, and later will scale up the trainings to other frontline health care workers in lower level health facilities.

Dr Sabah, Director of the Communicable Diseases Control Center (CDC), acknowledged WHO’s role in strengthening Iraq’s capacity to prevent, detect and respond to public health threats. He noted that this initiative will build resilient and sustainable human and health systems and strengthen country preparedness for existing and emerging health threats, such as cholera.

WHO has made significant contributions in the past few years to strengthen the country’s capacities to respond to major public health threats, mainly focused on key areas such as the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005). With CDC and other partners, WHO is committed to assisting Iraq with strengthening its national capacity for integrated disease surveillance and response as required by the IHR (2005).

“The recent humanitarian crisis in Iraq has not only resulted in large-scale population displacement but also structural damage to water supply and sewerage systems and poor environmental health conditions, putting hundreds of thousands of people at risk of communicable diseases. Moreover, destruction of health facilities implies that an outbreak could easily overwhelm the country’s health system in addition to the morbidity and mortality that disease may bring,” said Dr Mikiko Senga, the team leader for the Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN) in Iraq.

Given Iraq’s increased vulnerability to disease outbreaks, continued investment in health security is paramount if excess morbidity and mortality from epidemic-prone diseases are to be averted. WHO’s pledge is to continue working with the Ministry of Health and partners to build a robust national disease surveillance system that will foster national and international public health security.
Baghdad, 30 July 2018 - The European Commission for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) has provided an additional € 4.5 million to the World Health Organization (WHO) to maintain health security and resilience for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees and host communities in conflict-affected governorates of Iraq. This comes on top of the €29.2 million already contributed by the commission since 2015. This renewed support will be used to sustain health services for more than 500,000 vulnerable people in hard to reach and newly accessible areas of Ninewa and Anbar for the coming 12 months and to ensure vigilance for diseases with a potential of causing outbreaks. The funds will also support to provide necessary essential medicines and medical supplies as well as facilitate referral services for returnees who have limited access to primary healthcare, secondary rehabilitative and referral health services.

ECHO Head of Office in Iraq, Simon Mansfield said, “ECHO is keen to continue this support of the provision of medical humanitarian assistance in Iraq. Access to essential medical services for displaced populations and assistance for victims of war injuries remain ECHO's priorities in country. In 2018, ECHO maintains this strategic partnership with WHO”.

WHO’s Representative in Iraq, Altaf Musani said, “We welcome this additional contribution from our long term partner, ECHO. This contribution will support WHO and health partners to ensure uninterrupted access to essential and rehabilitative health care services for at least 500,000 IDPs, returnees and vulnerable host communities in the country’s most conflict-affected governorates”. This partnership between ECHO and WHO represents a strong commitment in improving the health of the people of Iraq.

UNMAS participated at the workshop “Protect your roots, create your future: EUAM working to protect cultural heritage”

Baghdad, 28 June 2018 - The European Union’s Advisory Mission on civilian security sector reform in Iraq (EUAM Iraq) ran a three-day workshop on cultural heritage protection in Baghdad under the theme ‘protect your roots, create your future’.

This workshop has specifically been motivated by and focused on those reasons with security implications, which can be divided into two categories:

- **Organised crime**, encompassing the stealing, smuggling and selling cultural artefacts. These interconnected activities are not only crimes in themselves but often also fund other crimes, including terrorism.

- **Destruction.** On the one hand, preventing and punishing deliberate destruction of cultural heritage require competent and efficient law enforcement. On the other, destruction of national treasures and symbols of cultural diversity can have severe destabilising consequences.

The European Union attaches high importance to preserving cultural heritage and preventing illicit trafficking of cultural property, as well as preventing that income generated by heritage crimes is used to fund terrorist activities. In this regard, the European Union is helping to facilitate the collective, cross-border responses that are necessary to counter the dangers emanating from loss of cultural heritage in Iraq.

The workshop had a good attention from the local/international media and was very well received by Iraqi participants with the attendance of high profile officials as well as guests from the International community. The three days included several presentations and group discussion which results were presented in the last day.

The workshop enables Iraqi and international experts to exchange best practices, challenges and ideas and to build helpful networks. It provides an opportunity for authorities and experts to learn from each other and each other’s diverse experience, all with the aim of strengthening the collective protection of Iraq’s cultural heritage.

At this workshop UNMAS presentation focused on UNSCR 2347 and it’s work with UNESCO Iraq.
Reconstruction and recovery in Iraq: reviving the spirit of Mosul

Paris, France, 1 July 2018 - The ‘Revive the Spirit of Mosul’ Initiative was presented on 30 June 2018 during the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee.

Launched by UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay in February 2018, the Mosul Initiative is conceived in partnership with the Iraqi Government to integrate the human dimension in the reconstruction and recovery of the city, particularly through culture and education, after years of painful destruction. Between 2014 and 2017, historic monuments and sites were systematically destroyed in Iraq.

Ernesto Ottone-Ramirez, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture, pointed out that the international community has the responsibility to support the Iraqi people in the reconstruction and recovery of Iraq, and that the first signs are already positive. “Last April in Baghdad, UNESCO and the United Arab Emirates signed a historic partnership for the reconstruction of Mosul, which includes rebuilding the iconic Great Mosque of Al Nuri and its leaning Al-Hadba minaret. This pioneering partnership is a message of hope that Iraq's future will be shaped with its young women and men as agents of reconstruction and change in a prosperous, inclusive, reconciled and open society.” The United Arab Emirates have committed USD 50.4 million to rebuild and restore the Al Nuri Mosque over a five-year period.

H.E Fryad Rawandouzi, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq, expressed his gratitude to the countries standing alongside Iraq to protect its culture. “Iraq, which has stood up in the face of terrorism and triumphed, is fully aware of the power of culture to bring back hope and peace, and restore the archaeological sites, museums, buildings and intangible heritage that terrorism has destroyed. Culture contributes to peaceful coexistence.” He also took the occasion to hand to Mr Ottone-Ramirez the submission of Mosul to be included on the Tentative List of sites of Iraq, for potential future inscription on the World Heritage List.

H.E Ruba Al Hassan, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, United Arab Emirates, said, “We have a collective responsibility, not only in the Arab region, but in the wider international community towards Iraq and other nations that have endured conflict to work towards protecting our shared heritage, not only as Muslims or as Arabs but as human beings who value the wealth and weight that heritage and culture brings to enriching our common humanity.”

Mosul is a living symbol of the multifaceted identity of Iraq, and one of the oldest cities in the world; it is at the crossroads of the Middle East and bears witness to the wealth of civilizations that crossed the region over centuries. The archaeological site of Nimrud, the Museum of Mosul, the Nabi Younes Shrine and many other sites there have been targeted for intentional destruction.

The ‘Revive the Spirit of Mosul’ initiative is a UNESCO priority and one of its most ambitious reconstruction and recovery campaigns. A conference organized in conjunction with the Iraqi Government will take place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 10 September 2018, to mobilize the support of the international community.

Youth

ZAIN supports UNICEF in awareness-raising and behavioral change campaigns in all issues involving children

Baghdad, 14 August 2018 - UNICEF and ZAIN Iraq signed today a memorandum of understanding on supporting UNICEF in awareness-raising and behavioral change campaigns in all issues involving children through health, education, child protection, water and environmental sanitation. ZAIN will also support UNICEF innovative project to measure poverty by collecting and analyzing available data sources.
Netherlands, IOM partner to provide opportunities for youth in conflict-affected areas of Iraq

Baghdad, 7 August 2018 - IOM, the UN Migration Agency, and the Government of the Netherlands have signed a strategic partnership agreement this past week to provide livelihood and psychosocial support to Iraqi youth in crisis-affected areas and to assist the Government of Iraq in addressing challenges related to migration management.

Funded by the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the EUR 3.5 million, 18-month project aims to support the Iraqi Government to manage migration in a safe and orderly manner and to promote durable solutions for internally displaced persons and communities of return, through improved standards of living, sustainable livelihoods and employment, and cohesive communities.

“Through this partnership with IOM, we are pleased to support the Government of Iraq in their effort to enhance stabilization and social cohesion in conflict-affected territories and to tackle the root causes of irregular migration,” said Marielle Geraedts, Chargé d’Affairs from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Baghdad.

“By helping Iraq on these issues, we hope that young Iraqis will see a brighter future in Iraq,” added Geraedts. The new partnership fits within the designation of Iraq as a focus country for Dutch foreign policy assistance.

The project, which is part of a larger partnership between IOM in Iraq and the Government of the Netherlands, will provide young Iraqis with opportunities to play a stabilizing role in their communities, enhancing their economical capacities as well as their role as peace and confidence builders. This will be achieved through psychosocial and livelihood support, including vocational training, job placement and business development support.

Livelihood and psychosocial support go hand-in-hand in achieving durable solutions to displacement, including return and reintegration in Iraq’s post-conflict era.

In addition to this, IOM and the Netherlands will support the Government of Iraq to analyse the migration context in Iraq and identify gaps and recommendations, which could inform the further development of evidence-based migration policies. While the project’s geographical coverage will be nation-wide, including the Kurdistan Region, the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad, and Kirkuk will receive special focus as they were heavily affected by the conflict, and subsequent displacement and return.

“As displaced families continue to return to their cities and villages, it is now more crucial than ever to support and facilitate the livelihood of young men and women, as they are the backbone of Iraqi families,” said Gerard Waite, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission.

Following the eruption of conflict in Iraq in 2014 in which ISIL seized a vast swath of Iraq, around six million people were displaced, while more than 1.9 million Iraqis are still living in displacement, according to IOM Iraq’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

Running for peace; walking for better understanding

Duhok, 4 July 2018 - In Shiekhan district in Duhok over 300 young people participated in a marathon to promote Social Cohesion and Peace Building. The race was supported by UNICEF.

Duhok, 5 August 2018 - 100 displaced Yazidi youth and 100 host community students in Duhok walked for 5 KM together to discuss challenges they face in their lives, allowing them to release stress from traumatic events of 2014, and to create positive interaction between the displaced and host communities.

IOM’s Social Cohesion activities in Duhok are funded by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.
Iraq celebrates its Youth

Baghdad, 15 August 2018 - Youth in Iraq are compelling agents of change; as they become more empowered, they can and should, play a critical role in building back their communities after the three-year war that hit the country. To make changes, young people need safe spaces to develop and recover as well as find stability. Safe spaces are the physical or virtual spaces where they can come together, engage in activities related to their diverse needs and interests, participate in decision making processes and freely express themselves.

To celebrate the young men and women in Iraq, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, under the auspices of Prime Minister, Mr Hayder Al-Abadi, with the support of UNFPA in Iraq, held on 10 August a gathering at Al-Rasheed hotel in Baghdad, in presence of high level officials and diplomats, and youth.

Speaking at the celebration, Mr Abdul Hussein Abtan, Minister of Youth and Sport (MoYS), praised the Iraqi youth for their resilience: “Iraq defeated to Islamic States in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) thanks to the strength and unity of its people, especially the youth. Now, the country can only recover through their determination which will lead us towards development and rebuilding our nation.”

On his part, Mr Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, emphasized on the importance of the provision of safe spaces for youth: “The safe spaces, be it physical, digital, virtual or public, offer a meaningful platform for young Iraqis, enabling them to dialogue on topics of peace and tolerance, to contribute to the prevention of and awareness on violence and extremism, as well as accelerate the social and economic recovery and get involved in the decision-making in Iraq. The youth spaces also act as platforms where youth can be trained in skills of leadership, entrepreneurship, etc”.

He also announced the upcoming launch of the national survey on Youth Needs for evidence-based policy making & programming, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth.

At the end of the ceremony, Mr Abtan honoured Mr Balakrishnan for his support to youth in Iraq through UNFPA partnership with the MoYS; the Minister thanked UNFPA for its close collaboration with the MoYS for the last four years, which enabled the Ministry to establish projects to empower youth in Iraq and build their capacities, especially with the peace and development projects.

UNAMI delegation visits ancient Mesopotamian city of Babylon

Babylon, 13 July 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Alice Walpole, and some UNAMI colleagues took the opportunity of a recent official trip to Babil governorate to visit the ancient Mesopotamian city of Babylon, located just outside Hilla, Babil’s capital. Ms. Walpole was delighted to discover that the curator, Mr. Hadi Kadhem Mussa, has remained unchanged since her last visit to Babylon in 2010.

Captivated by the majestic dimensions of the archaeological site and its splendid artefacts, DSRSG Walpole, who is an enthusiastic scholar of the Ancient World, emphasised the importance of preserving Iraq’s extraordinarily rich cultural heritage, observing that “the sustainable preservation of marvellous sites like Babylon is part of our obligation towards future generations”.

Revered for its archaeological history, Babylon is probably most renowned for its mythical hanging gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Legend has it that Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II who ruled between 605 and 562 BC built the gardens for his wife because she missed the lush green hills and valleys of her homeland. Touring the sun-baked archaeological site of the ancient city, the UNAMI delegation particularly enjoyed the historical statue of the Lion of Babylon and the wall relief sculptures of fantastical beasts.
Victims of terrorism continue to struggle to get their voices heard, have their needs supported and their rights upheld. Victims often feel forgotten and neglected once the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack fades.

The primary responsibility to support victims of terrorism and uphold their rights rests with Member States. But, the United Nations has been working to provide resources, mobilise the international community and better address the needs of victims of terrorism.

Our hearts go out to all those who have been victims of terrorism here in Iraq. And to their families. We know that you have suffered and are still suffering. Terrorism must be eliminated from this country; the United Nations remains committed to helping the government and people of Iraq reach that goal.

**SRSG Kubiš’s message on Eid Al-Adha**

Baghdad, 20 August 2018 – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, extends his warmest greetings and best wishes to the Iraqi people in general and Muslims in particular on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha.

“Eid Al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, is one of the most important occasions for Muslims worldwide. It is a time of joy and sharing, within families and among communities,” Mr. Kubiš said. “At such a time, however, we should also remember those who have lost loved ones, or are displaced from their homes, or who bear the scars of conflict. This year, Eid Al-Adha coincides with the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism. It is therefore an opportune time for us to remember Iraq’s many victims of terrorism”.

“Let us all come together to work for peace and prosperity, and join hands in rebuilding this beautiful country,” Mr. Kubiš added. “Eid Mubarak to all”.

**Message by DSRSG Alice Walpole on the first International Day of Remembrance of, and Tribute to, the Victims of Terrorism**

Baghdad, 21 August 2018 - In December last year, the United Nations General Assembly decided that there should be an annual International Day of Remembrance of, and Tribute to, the Victims of Terrorism, to honour and support the victims and survivors of terrorism, and to promote and protect their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The UN General Assembly chose 21 August as the date.

The Day is being observed for the first time this year.

Terrorism may be the most challenging issue of our time. It is a serious threat to global peace and security. The number and deadliness of ruthless terrorist attacks on civilians has increased in recent years, shattering countless communities and destroying lives.

No country can count itself immune. But, while many are affected by terrorism today, victims have largely been concentrated in a small number of Member States. Last year, 2017, nearly three-quarters of all deaths caused by terrorism were in just five countries: Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria and, of course, our home Iraq, which suffered greatly from the terror of Da‘esh.

The United Nations itself is regularly targeted. Only two days ago, we marked the 15th anniversary of the attack on the headquarters of the United Nations mission in Iraq, in which 22 people lost their lives and more than a hundred were injured, some severely.
UN Secretary-General message on first International Day of Remembrance of, and Tribute to, the Victims of Terrorism

New York, 21 August 2018 —
Terrorism is one of the most challenging issues of our time and a serious threat to international peace and security. From Tajikistan to the United Kingdom, from Baghdad to Barcelona, these ruthless attacks have shaken us all to the core. No country can consider itself immune, with almost every nationality in the world falling victim to terrorist attacks.

The United Nations itself is regularly targeted. Twenty-two people lost their lives in the attack on the headquarters of the United Nations mission in Iraq, which took place 15 years ago this week. Some of our peacekeeping missions are under constant threat. But after terrorist attacks, we rarely hear about those who were killed and injured; the ordinary women, men, girls and boys, who were going about their daily business when their lives ended or were changed forever. We rarely hear about their surviving families, friends and communities, who must learn to live with the burden of terrorism for their entire lives.

Today, the International day of Remembrance of, and Tribute to, the victims of terrorism, reminds us to stop and listen to the victims and survivors of terrorism, to raise up their voices and recognize the impact terrorism has on their lives.

Communities around the world are demonstrating their resilience in response to terrorist attacks. They are countering terrorism and violent extremism in their everyday lives, in their schools, markets and places of worship. Supporting victims and their families is a moral imperative, based on promoting, protecting and respecting their human rights. Caring for victims and survivors and amplifying their voices helps to challenge the narrative of hatred and division that terrorism aims to spread. We need to provide victims with long-term assistance, including financial, legal, medical and psychosocial support. When we lift up the victims and survivors of terrorism, listen to their voices, respect their rights and provide them with support and justice, we are honouring our common bonds, and reducing the lasting damage done by terrorists to individuals, families and communities.

I thank those who are willing to speak out against terrorism every day. Your voices matter, and your courage in the face of adversity is a lesson to us all.

Today and every day, the United Nations stands in solidarity with you.

Sights and Sounds of Iraq

Playing “Seni Zarf” in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, June 2018 - Kirkuk has witnessed difficult times in recent months, but the diverse community refuses to submit to fear and tensions.

On a warm night, men start arriving at a park where they will make merry in traditional song and foot-stomping dance and compete in teams to play “seni zarf”.

The game is traditionally played at night during the holy month of Ramadan. Players uncover a ring, a dice or a coin hidden under one of 11 miniature copper cups placed on a circular tray. The tray signifies the year, while each of the 11 cups represents a month - with the 12th cup missing as that would represent the month of Ramadan.

Promoting peaceful coexistence, harmony and national reconciliation among Iraq’s various components lies at the core of the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Events like the one at Kirkuk park are a testament that what brings Iraqis together and their common destiny overwhelms what divides them and suppresses any attempts at sowing discord. Ramadan Kareem.
And Mariam is one of them. “The best thing about living in the dorm is that I can get to know so many different people, and of course experience things like an independent lifestyle, and learning to count on myself while I’m studying is important too,” says Mariam.

Mariam is an oil and mining engineering student—not a traditional field of study for women in Iraq. When she first started, she studied nuclear engineering. “There are always people saying this field is not for women. They keep telling me that I can’t actually work in the field, that all I’d do is just sit at my desk in some office. That’s not true, because I believe that women can do everything men can do—and more.”

We meet Mariam during Ramadan, and she is busy in the dorm with her friends making dolma for evening Iftar celebrations. It’s a delicious, traditional Iraqi dish of stuffed vine leaves and vegetables, and the women are using a brand-new kitchen to prepare it. The smell wafts through the halls. “It’s a good meal to make with friends because it’s a fun and you can chat while each person is looking after one step,” says Mariam.

Education is a critical element of UNDP’s stabilization program, with almost 900 projects completed or underway in schools and universities across Iraq. From rehabilitating classrooms, to providing lab equipment and desks, to restoring sporting facilities—giving students the best possible chance to succeed at learning is at the program’s core.

As the sun sets at Al Hadba dormitory, the outdoor courtyard becomes a hive of activity. Some women are walking around chatting with friends; others are seated studiously on tables preparing for exams. Almost all of them wear a uniform of cozy, colorful pajamas.

It’s the night before a major exam for Mariam, but she is relaxed. Despite the challenges ahead of her as a female engineer, she oozes optimism. She is ready to quell stereotypes and is keeping her dreams big. “I want to work abroad. My dream job involves moving from one country to the next,” she says. “I’d also love to learn more languages,” (she’s already self-taught Korean and is fluent in English). “Oh, and I want to climb Mount Everest,” she adds.

At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis after the ISIL conflict, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism.

FFS currently has more than 2,400 projects in 31 liberated towns and districts, helping local authorities quickly rehabilitate essential infrastructure and services.