

IRAQ

SITUATION REPORT



UNITED NATIONS
19-25 April 2004

UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION FOR IRAQ

OVERVIEW ►

Although an increase in dialogue has resulted in a fragile lull in conflict in Falluja and Najaf, violent attacks by armed groups in many parts of the country continue to exact a horrifying toll on Iraqi civilians, not least children. The random nature of the attacks, and the uncertain security environment more generally across the country, is taking a heavy toll at the community level with many schools now shut and families too fearful to leave their homes. Kidnapping and criminal acts perpetrated mostly against Iraqis, but increasingly internationals, remain a serious concern that must be addressed more vigorously by those responsible for security.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ►

Missing Kuwaitis The UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Kofi Anna called on Tuesday (20 April) for the Security Council (SC) to extend the mandate of the high-level coordinator, Ambassador Yuliy Vorontsov. Ambassador Vorontsov has made appreciable progress since last December in closing the files of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and third country nationals held in Iraq, with 92 resolved cases and more than 200 files pending identification. The UNSG stressed the need for the Ambassador to go to Baghdad to discuss these issues with the new Iraqi authorities.

OFFP The UNSG announced on Wednesday (21 April) the formation of the three-member independent panel (Mr. Paul A. Volcker (Chair), Justice Richard Goldstone and Mr. Mark Pieth) that will conduct an inquiry into allegations of impropriety in the administration and management of the Iraq Oil-for-Food Programme.

Protection of civilians The UNSG said Thursday (22 April) he hoped that the ceasefire and the discussions in Falluja would lead to a peaceful settlement. *"It has dragged on a bit but I hope that efforts will continue because fighting in built-up areas often places civilians in harm's way and we need to do whatever we can to ensure that innocent civilians do not get hurt, and avoid using heavy weaponry in built-up areas."*

ELECTORAL MISSION ►

Electoral Assistance Mission for Iraq On March 17th 2004 the UNSG received two letters of invitation to come to Iraq, one from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), as the occupying power, and the other from the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), recognised by SC resolutions as the Iraqi authority. These letters contained two requests – (1) For the United Nations (UN) to dispatch a team to conduct consultations on the mechanism for the transition for the interim government. Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi was appointed to lead that initiative. (2) For the UN to provide electoral assistance at a technical level in order to be able to organise and conduct the process, to be finalised by 31st of January 2005 at the latest. Ms. Carina Perelli was appointed Head of the Electoral Assistance Mission for Iraq (EAM) which undertook (26 March – 15 April) to evaluate what type of assistance the UN could provide. The EAM met with political actors, religious groups, civil society, charitable organisations, members of academia, political parties and groups that are not present in the IGC, as well as with IGC members. Outside of Baghdad the EAM travelled to Erbil, Sulimaniyah, Kirkuk and Basra.

The Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) is the regulatory framework that the EAM must recognise. The TAL stipulates in Article 57(b) that three elections are to be conducted in January 2005 (1) Iraq National Assembly, (2) Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA), and (3) Governorate Council elections (GCE). Ms Perelli has stated it is likely that the regulatory framework will not be confined to one piece of electoral legislation. The EAM has advised that legislation establishing the electoral authority will be signed by the CPA in consultation with the IGC. Ms. Perelli has said that the Iraq elections need to be conducted by Iraqis and by Iraqi institutions, and that they should not be organised or conducted by the United Nations. Rather, Ms Perelli believes the UN should be the lead entity putting together, with Iraqi electoral authorities, the plan in order to determine what type of electoral assistance is required. To this end Ms Perelli has proposed that the UN help establish the electoral authority, establish their structure, their procedures and standard operating procedures of a commission. Ms Perelli will meet with the UNSG to discuss the official role the UN will adopt in regard to electoral assistance for Iraq.

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HUMANITARIAN ►

Emergency UN Aid The United Nations Children's agency (UNICEF) provided emergency health support to children and their families in conflict areas in coordination with the Iraqi Red Crescent and the Iraqi Ministry of Health (MoH). This humanitarian assistance included deliveries to Falluja, Ramadi, Najaf, Kerbala and Sadr City including First Aid Kits, Emergency Health Kits, Obstetrical Surgery Kits, syringes, and flexible drinking water bags to potentially benefit approximately 19,000 people. UNICEF also supported fuel supplies for hospital generators in Baghdad and water tankering to Falluja. In expectation of an increase in water-borne diseases UNICEF is planning in May to send 4 million sachets of oral re-hydration salts into Iraq.

Falluja A lull in fighting in Falluja permitted the MoH to assess the humanitarian situation in the city. As a result of its investigations the MoH adjusted their figures for the number of people killed in the city since April 5th downward from 750 to approximately 360 (there are no official figures recognised by all parties). The MoH also confirmed over 1,000 other casualties. The displacement of Falluja's population remains an issue of concern. NGOs confirm that at least 40% of Falluja's population (estimated between 100,000-150,000 people) may have previously left the city. Many families took refuge in the neighbouring villages, where conditions are often poor and with little or no water, food and essential cooking items. The Iraqi Red Crescent, International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are providing assistance to two IDP camps outside Falluja city.

Baghdad According to the MoH and United Nations World Health Organisation (WHO) an outbreak of Hepatitis E in Baghdad's Sadr city appears to be under control. Aid agencies estimate that as many as 8,000 families from Falluja remain in Baghdad, after fighting caused their displacement from Falluja in early April. Many of these families have received assistance provided by local mosques, NGOs, ICRC, Iraq Red Crescent and the MoH.

Najaf The picture emerging from Najaf is reportedly tense. Reports suggest a deterioration of normal life, exemplified by rising amounts of uncollected trash and a lack of police presence. The presence of Shiite leader Moqtada al-Sadr in the city continues to cause heightened anxiety within Najaf, as does the continuing presence of Coalition Forces (CF) at the city's main hospital. A second operation room has been set up in maternity hospital.

Basra UNICEF will supply water quality tests, while the MoH has undertaken to provide purification tablets, for the respective measurement and treatment of contaminated water in Basra. Two suspected cases of cholera examined in Basra this week by the MoH returned negative results though served to highlight what NGOs advise is a deterioration in water quality in the city.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Medical Evacuation and Health Reconstruction Programme in Iraq (MEHRPI) has received Euro 40,000 from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pay for training at the Interventional Cardiology Centre at Basra's Talimi Teaching Hospital. MEHRPI, supported by core funding from ECHO and the State of Kuwait, combines selective medical evacuations with assistance in helping to rebuild Iraq's dilapidated specialist health care system. It matches patients who cannot be treated inside Iraq with free hospital beds and treatment offered by foreign donor countries. Of 186 patients evacuated to 11 countries since May, 78 have already returned to Iraq following successful treatment.

UNHAS The UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has completed four flights (19-25 April) including destinations inside Iraq, and neighbouring countries.

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HUMAN RIGHTS ►

Attacks condemned Although the level of violence in Falluja diminished during the past week, a series of bombings in Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul continue to cause large numbers of casualties among civilians. The acting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Bertrand Ramcharan, condemned the killing of more than 70 persons, including many children, in Basra (21 April). In a statement issued on Wednesday 21st April by Mr. Ramcharan, the Acting High Commissioner “condemned in the strongest possible terms the terrorist bombing” in Basra, and reaffirmed that “An essential element in fighting this scourge is to uphold the rule of law and fundamental standards of human rights, the very things terrorists seek to destroy.” Echoing similar sentiments UNICEF also responded to the attack on children on a school bus in Basra. “The fighting is extracting a heavy toll” said Executive Director, Carol Bellamy, “and children are paying with their lives.” According to UNICEF many schools are closed due to the recent upsurge in violence, and where schools are open, parents are keeping their children at home out of fear. In many cities across Iraq children are unable to lead a normal life. “They are not just unable to attend school and get decent health care and clean water, but far too often they are paying the ultimate price. The ongoing instability and fighting is hitting children the hardest,” said Bellamy.

60th Session of the Commission The 60th Session of the Commission on Human Rights met in Geneva, Switzerland (15 March – 23 April). The Commission decided not to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iraq, Mr. Andreas Mavrommatis. In his closing remarks the acting High Commissioner said that he will present a report on the human rights situation in Iraq to the Commission.

Working Group The Protection Working Group (for Iraq) chaired by the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) met in Amman, Jordan, on Sunday 25th of April and expressed concern at allegations of violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and human rights committed by the parties to the conflict. The group, consisting of UN agencies and NGOs, fears that increasing attacks against humanitarian workers and the general level of insecurity is hampering efforts to provide assistance to those in need.

Detainees The US based Human Rights Watch said in a statement on Thursday (22 April) that the “United States has failed to provide clear or consistent information on its treatment of some 10,000 civilians detained in Iraq.”

COORDINATION ►

Emergency Coordination Group The Emergency Coordination Group (ECG) met twice last week (20 and 22 April). Chaired by the WHO Iraq Country Representative, Dr. Naeema Al-Gasseer, participants continued to coordinate the humanitarian response with various partners in Iraq. A presentation was also made to the ECG from Fallujan representatives visiting Amman, Jordan.

Coordination with local authorities A weekly video-conference, the first of its kind, was conducted this week and comprised the UN Country Team (UNCT), Council for International Cooperation (CIC), the Iraqi Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, and representatives from other Iraqi ministries. The opportunity to conduct technical discussions and further reinforce cooperation and coordination with Iraqi authorities was seized on by the UN agencies involved in Cluster 4 (Infrastructure and Housing) and Cluster 5 (Agriculture, Water Resources and Environment). In a related development, on Thursday (22 April) a meeting of Cluster 9 (Governance and Civil Society) discussed the possibility of funding human rights projects in Iraq through local partners.

Funding for UN activities The Steering Committee of the UN Development Group (UNDG) Iraq Trust Fund is expected to review and approve the first batch of projects next week. The 10 UN Clusters have proposed more than 20 projects, valued at over US\$70 million, for financing from the Fund. Additional project proposals are expected to be submitted in the coming weeks. The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Fund’s Steering Committee were finalised and adopted by the UNCT on Wednesday 21st May.

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POLITICAL ►

Administrator's Address to Iraqis Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Administrator, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, III, in a televised address (Friday 23 April) to the nation "*Turning the Page*" made several key announcements: 1) Starting May 10th, lists of detainees held by CF will be posted regularly at police stations and courthouses; 2) Two thousand police officers will graduate from police academies every month from April until next February 2005; 3) 16,000 Iraqis will be devoted to border security by 30th June - across the 20 major border crossing points; 4) Over a million and a half jobs will be created over the next year with an additional US\$500 million to spend on reconstruction projects; 5) US\$75 million to pay for the Iraq Special Tribunal's annual budget and in addition to judicial training for the newly appointed seven judges and five prosecutors; 6) Establishment of a National Commission for Remembrance, administering a US\$10 million fund in addition to seeking private funds to establish a national museum in Baghdad; 7) Decisions made by local appeals committees (*debaathification* policy) of the Ministry of Education will be effective immediately. Those primary and secondary school teachers formerly of the rank *firqah* whose appeals have not yet been heard will have their appeal adjudicated within 20 days.

Falluja Ceasefire Beginning on Tuesday 13th April, and continuing on April 16th, 17th and 19th, a Coalition delegation, led by Ambassador Richard Jones, Deputy Chief Administrator, negotiated a settlement to the armed standoff in Falluja. Delegation participants included representatives from the IGC, Dr. Hajim, and a representative of Dr. Pachachi and of Sheikh Ghazi.

A Joint Communiqué was issued late Monday evening (19 April 2004) by the IGC a Coalition Delegation (CD) and a delegation of Fallujan and civic leaders. The Parties agreed: To faithfully observe the ceasefire; In the absence of a true ceasefire, major hostilities could resume on short notice; To allow unfettered access to the Falluja General Hospital to treat sick and injured; Arrange the removal and burial of the dead and the provision of food and medicine in the isolated areas of the city; Shorten the curfew to begin 2100 rather than 1900 to fulfil religious duties; To facilitate passage for official ambulances through the city and checkpoints; To take steps to allow security, medical and technical personnel to access Falluja city; In due course, consideration will be given to allow additional civilians to enter the city, beginning with 50 families per day commencing 20 April 2004; Amnesty for individuals who turn in their illegal weapons and associated ammunitions (collection has begun, discussions continue regarding the handover of the weapons to the CF); Not attack unarmed individuals; The need for restoring regular and routine CF and Iraqi Security Forces patrols; To oversee the urgent reformation of Iraqi Police Force and ICDC in the city to "eliminate remaining foreign fighters, criminals and drug users"; The CF do not intend to resume offensive operations if all people in Falluja turn in their heavy weapons; The need to restore order, rebuild judicial system initiate Iraqi investigations into criminal acts, including the mutilation of four American contractors (31 March) and an attack on the Iraq Police Station in February; To monitor agreements daily, agree a reasonable implementation period and ensure progress clearly demonstrated, and; An end to ongoing negotiations/implementation will continue no later than April 25.

Renewed Agreement Ambassador Bremer said on Friday 23rd April that "*The current ceasefire is a good start, but without exception, armed bands must submit to national authority. If these bands do not surrender their military weapons and instead continue to use them against Iraqi and CF, major hostilities could resume on short notice.*" On Saturday (24 April) Ambassador Bremer visited the Marine base outside of Falluja for additional consultations. Ambassador Bremer agreed a two-day extension of the April 25th deadline, subject to heavy weapons surrendering, and commencement of joint patrols of Iraq Civil Defense Corps, Iraqi Police Service and CF beginning April 28th.

Australian Prime Minister Australian Prime Minister, Mr. John Howard, visited Baghdad on Sunday (25 April) to attend an ANZAC Day memorial service dedicated to memory of Australia's servicemen and women.

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SECURITY ►

Summary Iraq was marred by violence last week. Despite a ceasefire several clashes between Falluja's armed groups and US-military were reported. On Tuesday (20 April) mortar rounds were fired at Baghdad's largest prison killing 22 prisoners and wounding 92 others. On Wednesday (21 April) 74 Iraqis, including at least 16 children, were killed in suicide bombings at four police stations in Basra and the nearby town of Zubair, the bloodiest attack yet in the British-controlled zone. On Thursday (22 April) an Italian soldier was shot and wounded while guarding a polling booth in the town of al-Gharraf, near Nasariyah, where municipal elections were due to be held. On Saturday (24 April) 50 Iraqis and at least nine Coalition Force troops, as well as one Italian civilian, were killed in several incidents throughout the country, among them a suicide attack against two Iraqi oil terminals in the Gulf.

Coalition Forces CF contingents from Spain, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua have begun preparation for their departure from Iraq.

Journalists Killed CF advised they fired upon and killed the occupants of a vehicle (containing two employees of Al-Iraqiyah Television Network) and wounding another (Monday 19 April), after the journalists vehicle allegedly ceased to halt upon repeated command. Another fourth man in the vehicle was unharmed.

Kidnappings A Danish national was found dead a day after he was kidnapped, the Danish Foreign Ministry confirmed to media on Wednesday (21 April). The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported on Friday (23 April) the release of an Israeli Arab, who had been abducted two weeks earlier, and of a married Swiss couple, after being held for 48 hours. The whereabouts of around 10 foreigners missing or confirmed abducted remained unclear, including a Canadian, Mr. Mohammed Rifat, who is believed to have been kidnapped on Thursday April 8th. Iraq's newly appointed Minister of the Interior, Mr. Samir Sumaidy (and former ICG member) said on Tuesday (20 April) that a specialist unit was being created within his Ministry to deal with the spate of kidnappings.

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