

# WEEK IN REVIEW

# IRAQ

## SITUATION REPORT



UNITED NATIONS

12-18 April 2004

UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION FOR IRAQ

### OVERVIEW ►

Insecurity and armed conflict of note persisted last week in Falluja and Baghdad, and threatens to spread to the holy city of Najaf. Mounting civilian casualties and deaths, many reportedly women and children, have caused alarm amongst the international community. The prevailing insecurity has given rise to a growth in the targeting of foreigners as political targets, and is now severely restricting the ability of non-government organisations (NGOs) to work in all parts of Iraq. The United Nations (UN) and its NGO partners continue to operate, in large part due the tireless efforts of Iraqis, though under extremely difficult circumstances. Concerns have been raised that localised clashes may lead to major confrontations with widespread humanitarian needs.

### UN MISSIONS ►

**Secretary-General, Kofi Annan** Voicing grave concern at the recent bloodshed and deteriorating security in Iraq, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan has underlined the importance of taking all necessary measures to protect civilians - a requirement under international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. Echoing concerns voiced by Secretary-General, Mr. Ross Mountain, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq *ad interim* (SRSGa.i.) called for the respect of international law particularly in regard to the protection of civilians.

The Secretary-General also announced on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April that three individuals have been identified for the independent panel that will conduct an inquiry into the Oil-for-Food humanitarian relief effort for Iraq.

**Special Adviser, Lakhdar Brahimi** At the end of his trip to Iraq to advise on the formation of the new Iraqi administration, Special Adviser Lakhdar Brahimi told a press conference on Wednesday (14 April) that he was confident a caretaker Iraqi government could be set up on time, ahead of the June 30<sup>th</sup> handover of power. The UN envoy proposed that the United States (US) appointed Governing Council (GC) cease to exist June 30<sup>th</sup> and said the US should surrender sovereignty to a "caretaker" government of "respected Iraqis". The caretaker government, it is proposed, would be chosen by the UN, the current GC, the Coalition Forces (CF) and a select group of Iraqi judges.

Mr. Brahimi also said there was wide support for convening a "national conference", which he proposed to take place in July and elect a consultative assembly to serve alongside the government until the election. According to Mr. Brahimi, the UN role in Iraq after 30 June had not been decided and he said that UN workers would not be able to assist an election if they were "locked up in the Green Zone".

**Electoral Mission, Carina Perelli** Director of the UN Electoral Assistance Division, Ms. Carina Perelli, left Baghdad on Friday (16 April) and told reporters that the security situation in Iraq would have to stabilise for elections to be held. She also said a national electoral authority should be formed by the end of May to ensure elections scheduled for January next year can go ahead as planned.

### HUMANITARIAN ►

**Falluja** Fighting in Falluja between US Marines and predominately Sunni armed elements decreased in intensity this week although clashes remained commonplace. US officials have reiterated their demand for the handover of the killers of four American civilians, whose slaying and mutilation sparked the Marine assault on Falluja on 5<sup>th</sup> April. CF also demanded the surrender of foreign fighters and international terrorists, allegedly among them Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi and his supporters.

The Emergency Coordination Group (ECG) – *see Coordination*, estimate that at least 33% of the population (some 50,000 people) have left Falluja city and have found shelter with host families in neighbouring villages and in Baghdad. The IDPs are being assisted by the UN World Health Organisation (WHO) through the Iraq Ministry of Health, Iraq Red Cross, and assisted by the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and numerous non-government organisations (NGOs).

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On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April a shortage of fresh food, water and medical supplies was reported in Falluja city although adequate quantities of dry food are reportedly available. The city's water treatment and sewage plants have not been functional for the last week and are a cause for concern. NGO relief convoys have had irregular access into Falluja, as they are often advised against entering the city by armed groups. In cooperation, WHO, UNHCR, other UN agencies and NGOs (INTERSOS of Italy, the Iraq Red Crescent Society, Première Urgence of France and British-based Islamic Relief) have been able to support Iraqis by mobilising medical supplies, water and non-food items (NFI). UNHCR made available 3,500 blankets, 1,200 mattresses, 5 emergency kits (benefiting over 50,000 people), 500 stoves and 500 plastic sheets to cater for those IDPs in Falluja and Baghdad.

**Baghdad** An outbreak of Hepatitis E, caused by poor sanitation, was reported in Baghdad's Shia district of Sadr City (previously Saddam City). NGOs and WHO are seeking to address the situation.

On Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April Handicap International announced the temporary suspension of its Baghdad operations while the Spanish-based Médicos del Mundo returned their coordinator to Spain. The security environment in Baghdad is reportedly tense. Commence has been adversely affected by the prevailing insecurity, affecting livelihoods. Women and children are fearful of the deterioration in security, with many women now reportedly wearing a burkah to protect their identity.

**Ramadi** Tensions between the local population and Kurdish refugees from Iran has prompted several families to leave for Al-Tash Refugee Camp in "no-man's land" between Iraq and the Jordanian border.

**Najaf** The Iraq Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO and other UN agencies and NGOs are building up stocks of medical supplies in surrounding areas. As of 17<sup>th</sup> April 2004 CF continue to occupy the main hospital in Najaf which has severely affected its capability to treat the sick and wounded. An NGO and local clerics continue to negotiate with the CF and armed groups to seek an end to the occupation.

**UNHAS and Contingency planning** The UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) transported (1-15 April) three consignments of emergency medical equipment into Baghdad. The UN Country Team (UNCT) has started development of a contingency plan which anticipates a number of humanitarian scenarios.

## HUMAN RIGHTS ►

**Deterioration** Reports to UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) concerning the human rights situation in Iraq continue to depict a deteriorating situation. Although Iraqis have been exposed to kidnapping for criminal reasons since the fall of the Ba'th regime, the kidnapping of foreigners for political reasons represents a new development.

**UN Special Adviser** In a media conference in Baghdad (Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April) the Secretary-General's Special Adviser Mr. Brahimi voiced his concern at the number of detainees in Iraq held often without charge or trial - "They should be either charged or released, and their families and lawyers must have access to them." Mr. Brahimi added that "collective punishments are certainly not acceptable at all - and the siege of a city is not acceptable."

**Falluja** Restriction of movement continues to affect Falluja residents, although some improvements occurred on the 17<sup>th</sup> April following an agreement. Previously, access had been impossible due to military operations. Casualty figures continue to be uncertain, although there are consistent reports that in Falluja alone over 600 people were killed and over 1,200 wounded. Many eye witnesses reported a heavy toll of civilians, including women and children.

**Resignation** The Iraqi Minister for Human Rights, Mr. Abdul Bassit Turki, resigned from the cabinet due to the human rights situation in the country. In a letter to the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, dated 12<sup>th</sup> April the Minister called upon the UN to intervene and ensure the lifting of the 'blockade of Iraqi cities'.

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On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> April the NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI) denounced “*the current violations of international conventions governing armed conflicts*”. The NCCI Emergency Response Working Group condemned the use of health facilities as abuses for military operations, occupation of hospitals, shooting at ambulances carrying patients, posting of snipers shooting at civilians and preventing 18-40 year old males from leaving Falluja. At weeks end (Friday 16 April) the US-based Human Rights Watch called for an investigation into heavy civilian casualties in Falluja.

**Kirkuk and Basra** The killing of two ethnic Kurds on Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> April has been interpreted as an attempt to stir animosity between Arab and Kurdish communities. News that in Falluja Kurdish Peshmerga are assisting the Coalition as part of the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps is also fuelling tensions. UNAMI has received reports of leaflets circulating in Kirkuk and Baghdad accusing the two Kurdish parties of collaborating with the CF and of displacing Arabs from land around Kirkuk. UNAMI is also monitoring the emerging situation in Basra where women have complained that they have been harassed by men on the street for not wearing a headscarf. Reports tell about group of religious extremists standing at the gates of the University and verbally abusing Muslim and Catholic women. As a direct result some women have ceased attending work and school.

### COORDINATION ►

**Emergency Coordination Group** The Emergency Coordination Group (ECG) met three times last week (12, 14 and 17). Chaired by the SRSGa.i., Mr. Mountain in his capacity as Humanitarian Coordinator, the ECG brings together humanitarian UN agencies, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation for the Red Crescent (IFRC), NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI) and numerous other NGOs. Participants share the most recent humanitarian information, establish a common analysis, determine priorities and agree specific emergency actions on the ground. The ECG continues to work closely with UN Iraqi staff, Iraq authorities, NGOs and contractors who ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches vulnerable groups. The ECG has overseen the dispatch of significant number of emergency medical kits (four from WHO) and extensive medical supplies for use in Fallujah, Karbala, Kufa and Najaf. The next ECG meeting is scheduled on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April.

**Weekly Video Conference (VC) with WB and CIC** A weekly video conference between the UN and World Bank (WB) in Amman, Jordan, and the Council for International Cooperation (CIC) in Baghdad on behalf of the Ministry of Planning has been established to strengthen the link between the 10 Clusters with Iraqi ministries. The Minister of Planning and Development Cooperation has requested recruitment of a UN advisor on donor coordination. CPA's Programme Management Office (PMO) managing projects funded under the US\$ 18.4 billion supplemental budget provided a briefing to the UN representatives.

**Donor relations** In December 2003 the UN and the WB established the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) as a multi-donor funding framework for reconstruction activities in Iraq. The Fund Facility consists of two Trust Funds, one managed by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and another by the WB. The donors to the UNDG Trust Fund have an option of earmarking their contributions to support UN activities in one of ten Clusters of the UN Strategic Plan for Iraq or undertaken by an individual Donor Agency. Modalities of the Trust Fund were developed jointly by UN (UNAMI-led) and WB and presented to the donors during the first meeting of the IRFFI Donor Committee in Abu Dhabi in February 2004. During the meeting, the donor community elected the representative of Japan as the Chairperson of the Donor Committee and pledged over US\$ 1 billion to the Fund Facility. As of today, contributions to the IRFFI exceed US\$ 650 million, with US\$ 440 million donated to the UNDG Trust Fund. Planning is currently underway for the second meeting of the IRFFI Donor Committee, to be held in Doha, Qatar in the fourth week of May. A core group will meet in Washington on 22<sup>nd</sup> April to discuss modalities for the coming meeting. UN Clusters are currently developing programmes that can be delivered under existing security conditions against a May 3<sup>rd</sup> deadline.

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### POLITICAL ►

**Mediation** Several efforts were reportedly undertaken to find a compromise between the US-led coalition and the Shiite leader Moqtada al-Sadr. On Monday (12<sup>th</sup> April) Al-Sadr partly withdrew militiamen and reportedly dropped all preconditions to negotiations. An Iranian delegation arrived in Baghdad on Wednesday (14 April). Iranian Foreign Minister, Dr Kamal Kharrazi, said on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April that "Some negotiations are being accomplished between Iran and the US through the Swiss embassy in Teheran." On Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> April unidentified people/person assassinated the First Secretary of the Iranian Embassy, Mr. Khalil Na`imi, while driving in Baghdad. On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April Dr Kharrazi rejected the speculation of Iran's mediation. Dr Kharrazi said, "The objective of the Iranian delegation's visit to Iraq, initiated by the Islamic Republic of Iran, has been to conduct a fact finding mission and consult with the members of Iraqi GC and the political and religious authorities of the country, as well as to caution the allied forces against continuation of occupation."

**Najaf** The Shiite leader Moqtada al-Sadr has taken refuge in Najaf since the 6th of April. US forces have vowed to kill or capture him. On Friday (16 April) Shiite guerrillas clashed with US troops near Kufa, as al-Sadr allegedly remained in defiance of demands that he (al-Sadr) disband his militia. Tensions rose in Najaf again on Saturday (17 April) as al-Sadr backers said mediated efforts with the US-led coalition had failed and they feared American troops were poised to attack. A representative of the Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, warned coalition troops against entering the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf, describing them as "red lines".

### SECURITY ►

**Kidnappings** Foreigners from different countries (China, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Japan, Pakistan, Russia, Turkey, UK, Ukraine) were taken hostage during the week. On Thursday (15 April) the ordeal of three Japanese hostages ended after a week in captivity. A Syrian-born Canadian aid worker Fadi Ihsan Fadel working with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) seized on April 8<sup>th</sup>, was also freed by his captors on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April. Militants executed Italian Fabrizio Quattrocch, the first captive known to have been killed among the 40 or more foreigners kidnapped since the beginning of this month. By the end of the week - among others - the fate of three other Italians and an American truck driver abducted on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April by gunman remained unclear. There were also reports about new abductions. Foreign workers were urged to leave Iraq as governments and private companies reacted to growing insecurity and the spate of kidnappings. Amnesty International (AI) issued a statement on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April to express its concern and appeal to armed groups in Iraq to end the practice of hostage taking and immediately release all hostages. The United States-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) called for the killers of Italian, Fabrizio Quattrocchi to be held responsible.

**Russian Evacuation** On Thursday April 15<sup>th</sup> the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation announced the commencement of their evacuation of citizens of the Russian Federation and Commonwealth of Independent States countries from Iraq.

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