



Iraq Crisis Update

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The UN Headquarters (Canal Hotel) in Baghdad after the bombing on 19 August © UNOHCI

The United Nations continues operations in Iraq

The UN family in Baghdad is recovering from the shock caused by the massive terrorist bombing that occurred on 19 August at the UN headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad. The bomb killed the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and 23 other colleagues, and injured more than 100 staff members.

The Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (HCI), Ramiro Lopes da Silva, slightly injured during the blast, has been directing the response on the ground since the very beginning. The United Nations Secretary-General nominated Mr. Lopes da Silva as SRSG for Iraq a.i. on 22 August. On 25 August the Secretary-General sent a message to thank staff for their dedication and commitment to continue the work of the United Nations in Iraq.

Coalition Forces (CF), doctors and nurses in Iraqi hospitals, paramedics from the Swedish Rescue Services Agency and Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, and UN staff worked together to assist the injured, who were immediately transferred to hospitals spread across a large area of central Iraq. The HCI has asked for Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) support to be able to visit these hospitals and begin the difficult task of collecting additional information on wounded UN staff members. Following the bombing all UN agencies have been actively involved in the joint effort to provide assistance and comfort to the victims, including visits to hospitals for body identification, support to those who were injured, and organization and coordination of medical evacuation of affected personnel.

In his briefing to the Security Council on 20 August, the Secretary-General paid tribute to all – Iraqi and international – UN staff working in Iraq. “It is a source of great sadness and dismay that the UN has been so brutally targeted in this way. But Iraq was also a target” he said. He added “the people who were killed were fulfilling the mandate given by the Security Council with one – and only one – purpose in mind: to help the Iraqi people recover their independence and sovereignty, and to rebuild their country as fast as possible, under leaders of their own choosing. They were doing difficult and important work in dangerous conditions. They were doing that work with skill and devotion. They were working under the blue flag of the United Nations – a symbol of impartial aid and international unity. They were victims of an outrageous, inexcusable act of terrorism against the United Nations and the people of Iraq itself”.

At UN headquarters and in the field, there is a determination that the organisation will not be swayed from its mandate in Iraq. While the bombing will make it difficult to continue operations at the same level as before the incident, the UN is working with and for the Iraqi people to ensure that the population does not bear the brunt of this tragedy. The priorities established under Security Council Resolution 1483 remain:

- Provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need;
 - Emergency rehabilitation and reconstruction;
 - Phase-out of the ‘Oil-for-Food’ Programme (OFFP); and
 - Support to the political process,
- all of which contribute to the overall mission of helping to stabilize the country.

However, proper security arrangements have to be put in place in order to create the enabling environment to effectively carry out any degree of programmatic activity. Mr. Tun Myat, the United Nations Security Coordinator, arrived in Baghdad 4 days after the bombing of the Canal Hotel. Mr. Myat’s visit was scheduled prior to the incident, and occurs at a moment when security of UN staff and operations is the primary concern for the organization. Mr. Myat, together with the HCI and UN agency senior officials, discussed security arrangements and staff welfare.

The issue of security of staff, as the Secretary-General underlined in his report to the Security Council, is inseparable from the general security situation. In an effort to minimize the risks to staff, the UN is reviewing security arrangements: security conditions need to be in place to accommodate operational requirements. Initial findings of the review have resulted in a temporary reduction in staffing levels. In the

immediate aftermath of the bombing, staff members who need or wish to be leave the country are being relocated to Amman in Jordan or to their home countries, while essential staff wishing to stay will remain in Iraq. Staff located in Baghdad at the moment of the attack have been granted a special mandatory 14 day leave, with other colleagues from headquarters and other field stations arrived in the Iraqi capital to guarantee continuity of operations.

A team of staff counselors has arrived in Baghdad to ensure that regular visits are maintained to UN staff members receiving treatment in hospital facilities. Briefings are being organized for all UN personnel in Iraq.

During the blast, the Hospital for Spinal Injuries, located beside Canal Hotel, was also damaged. Ten patients were injured. The donor community has pledged to make resources available to rehabilitate the facility.



Tribute to the colleagues killed in the bombing at UN Headquarters (Canal Hotel) in Baghdad © UNOHCI

Sergio Vieira de Mello was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary General in Iraq in May 2003. He was tragically killed in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, together with 23 colleagues. Mr. De Mello joined the UN in 1969. He spent the majority of his career working for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva, and served in numerous humanitarian and peace-keeping operations. In his brilliant career, he occupied several important functions. He served as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. He briefly held the position of Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo and also served as United Nations Transitional Administrator in East Timor. On 12 September 2002 he was appointed United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

He was asked by the United Nations to tackle some of the world's most complicated humanitarian and peacekeeping challenges. His track record of success was extraordinary.

During his tribute to Mr. De Mello, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan vowed to honour his dying wish that the UN complete its mission in the war-ravaged nation. Addressing the funeral in Mr. Vieira de Mello's hometown of Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Annan said that 'Sergio, who has given his life in that cause, [should] find a fitting memorial in a free and sovereign Iraq'.

The Secretary-General denounced the atrocious tactics of the terrorists who deliberately targeted the UN. 'We cannot accept that Sergio had to die at this time, in this way, or that anything good can come of it', he said. 'We cannot accept that all his brilliance, his energy, his devotion to his staff and his loyalty to the ideals of the United Nations, have been so abruptly taken from us. Indeed,' he emphasized, 'we can imagine nothing more cruel, or pointless, or unjust'.

Others colleagues lost their lives in the brutal attack: Gillian Clark and Chris Klein-Beckman of Canada; Reham Farah, Jean-Selim Kanaan and Nadia Younes of Egypt, Reza Hosseini of Iran; Raied Shakir Mohammed Al Mahdawi, Omar Khatan Al Orfali, Leen Al Qadi, Bassam Atyayi, Alyawi Bassem, Alya Sousa Dow, Saad Hurmiz, Ihsan Taha Husein, Sahir Khidir Saleem, Ismail Ahmed Salman, and Alya Souza of Iraq; Ranillo Buenaventura of the Philippines; Manuel Martin of Spain; Fiona Watson of the United Kingdom; and Arthur Helton, Rick Hooper, and Martha Teas of the United States. All these colleagues were an integral part of the humanitarian community in Iraq and made a valuable contribution for the provision of assistance to the Iraqi people. Their loss is a great blow to all of us who knew them not only as dedicated professionals, but also as friends. The remains of these colleagues are being returned to their families, accompanied by senior UN personnel.

Among the injured, over 30 staff were evacuated to different countries to receive medical treatment not available in Baghdad. Doctors and nurses of Iraqi and coalition hospitals did their best to assist the colleagues, in a situation that is far from ideal. The Iraqi health care system has been dilapidated by more than a decade of sanctions, has been further overstretched during the conflict earlier this year. The health care system is the focus of a number of UN projects aimed at rebuilding its capacity to respond to the needs of the Iraqi population.

Oil for Food Programme

The UN is concerned that the attack on the Canal hotel has seriously reduced the capacity of the organisation to handle contract prioritization, and conclude all procedures needed for the hand-over of the OFFP by the target date of 21 November.

Tri-partite negotiations over contract prioritization resumed immediately after the attack, and with some 13 weeks to the closure of the OFFP, almost half the supplies in the OFFP pipeline have been prioritized for delivery. Tri-partite consultations between the Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraqi ministries and the UN, have so far resulted in the prioritization of 2,422 contracts valued at more than \$4.45 billion. UN agencies and programmes are negotiating with suppliers to expedite delivery.



Destruction at the UN Headquarters (Canal Hotel) in Baghdad after the bombing on 19 August © UNOHCI

Sectoral highlights

Food. Food dispatches to Iraq and WFP activities inside the country were temporarily suspended after the bomb attack against the UN headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August. Dispatches resumed on 21 August, albeit at a slower pace. Since 19 August some 44,660 MTs of food dispatches have been completed. The distribution of the food basket continued for all 27 million beneficiaries despite increased insecurity. WFP monitoring activities have been reduced.

WFP communications to Baghdad have been restored and WFP activities and cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Trade is returning to normal. The south of Iraq will however security-wise be treated on par with Baghdad and staff presence is expected to be reduced in these areas.

Food security. The FAO-WFP-World Bank draft document on agriculture, food security and water

resources management needs assessment is completed. Discussion on the document was expected to occur in the workshop organized for 25 August in Baghdad, which has been postponed.

FAO is preparing a survey designed to gather data on the current status of the agriculture sector in the 15 centre/south governorates. The survey will be completed by the end of October 2003 and is expected to provide data on vulnerable households, land tenure, infrastructure needing rehabilitation and the actual needs of farmers.

The OFFP-funded project for the 'last resort' purchase of barley continues. The project envisages the purchase, at a fixed price, of up to 500,000MT of locally produced barley, out of an estimated total production of 775,000MT from the 2003 harvest season. As at 10 August farmers delivered 160,000MT, or 32% of the target. This project has created market opportunities for farmers.

Health. In the health sector, WHO, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the CPA are discussing the outcomes of the 17-19 August health sector priority setting workshop. Among other issues, laboratory specialists discussed standards for the rehabilitation and provision of equipment for four key public health laboratories (Baghdad, Basra, Najaf, and Mosul), which provide services for approximately 60% of the population of Iraq. The aim is to ensure a reasonable uniformity throughout the public health laboratory system, so as to minimize problems that could be associated with the supply of reagents and spares and the repair of equipment. The workshop results are being incorporated in the Health Situation Assessment Report being prepared jointly by the UN Development Group and the World Bank in cooperation with MoH and the CPA, in preparation for the donors conference on Iraq scheduled for October 2003. On the basis of the conference results, WHO is also revising its 3-months plan of action for the jump-start of the health care system.

The MOH/CPA is undertaking an extensive programme, supported by WHO, to improve surveillance of communicable diseases. The surveillance is currently based on a system of sentinel sites and requires improvement.

UNICEF's support to national routine immunization continued.

Water and Sanitation. UNICEF and UNDP have been working to maintain essential emergency services in the water and sanitation sector. Over 80 million litres of water was distributed to

hospitals and impoverished communities in Baghdad and southern Iraq during the week. Garbage collection initiatives are also ongoing.

Education. Despite the relocation of part of the UNESCO staff from Baghdad to Erbil and Amman, needs assessment activities continue. The first draft the UNDG report for the October conference has now been completed. Collection of data on needs for secondary schools, teacher training institutes, vocational schools, universities, technical colleges and technical institutes is ongoing.

UNESCO's textbook programme continues. The 26 titles in Arabic for Grades 1 to 12 in Mathematics and Science have been scanned and revised according to the recommendations of the Review Committee. Contracts for printing will be signed shortly. A quality control team of nine MoE staff has been recruited to monitor the progress of production and another team of seven is being identified to follow up distribution.

The rehabilitation of National Heritage Institute Baghdad started on 16 August. This institute trains students in traditional carpet weaving, costumes tailoring, pottery, wood carving, metal work, calligraphy and traditional building techniques and has a student population of 120. Works should be concluded by the beginning of the next academic year in October.

Mine Action. MACT Technical advisors have recommenced advisory activities for the newly established Iraq National Mine Action Authority. MACT and UNOPS mine action programmes continue in other part of the country. The Victim Assistance and Emergency Survey functions have been temporarily relocated to Erbil, whilst the Mine Risk Education function has been temporarily relocated to Amman.

Media. The UNDP project for a media centre is a starting point to enable the Iraqi media to play a significant role in the daily political and social life in Iraq. The overall objective of the project is to help Iraqi journalists to access essential information and journalism resources; to develop their skills; and to contribute to the development of independent media and open dialogue in Iraq. The need for these basic services has been articulated by a committee of Iraqi journalists representing a larger group of journalists, which convened in May-July 2003. Through the provision of these services, the center will complement efforts to reorganize the national journalists' association and to prepare a new code of conduct for the press. The project will be completed by end of August.

Income generation. Under the Community Based Rehabilitation Project, UNDP is launching micro-credit projects targeting disabled and women-headed households in 10 Governorates. Around 50 Micro-credit projects will be launched in each governorate by the end of the year.

Gender. The UNDP-UNIFEM National Technical Symposium to support the integration of gender issues in national legislative, economic and social frameworks, institutions and policies planned for 28-29 August, has been postponed after the bomb attack in Canal hotel.

Child protection. The UNICEF-supported drop-in centre for street children remained open over the last week caring for between 30-50 street children per day. Children are driven to the center each day where they receive hot meals, a shower, and support from social workers.

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