



SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR IRAQ

الممثل الخاص للأمين العام للأمم المتحدة في العراق

Briefing by SRSB for Iraq Jan Kubiš to the Security Council

New York, 6 May 2016

Mr. President,

I have the honour to present the third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233(2015), as well as the tenth 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.

Mr. President,

Since my last briefing to the Council, a profound political crisis has engulfed Baghdad and the country, brought paralysis and deadlock in the work of the Government and the Council of Representatives and added a new layer of complications to the already complex set of military, security, humanitarian, economic and human rights challenges the country is facing.

Failure of Iraq's government and political class to agree on and carry out genuine reforms that would improve governance and accountability and include equal justice for all, jobs and services while curbing corruption demanded by the Iraqi people notably in Baghdad and southern Shiite provinces since last August prompted the demonstrators to request reform of the whole government and political process, abandoning the ethnic and sectarian quota approach that is in the fundament of the Iraq political system since 2003.

In February, an increasingly frustrated mix of the civil society protestors was joined by masses of supporters of Sayyed Muqtada al-Sadr. Spurred by this pressure, Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi attempted to accelerate the delivery on his reform program and to replace the cabinet created on the basis of party affiliation or ethnic or sectarian identity by a "technocratic" cabinet requested by Sayyed Muqtada al-Sadr. For the majority of Iraqi protestors, such cabinet is needed to enact genuine reforms, get rid of a powerful patronage system and achieve success in fighting corruption. However, majority of Iraqi political blocs reject such fundamental overhaul of the political process. They view such attempts as efforts to delegitimize not only the government, or the Council of Representatives but the whole political system. They also view notably, Sadr's action as an attempt to take over the power on the back of the Shiite street.

Following months of controversies and weeks of political paralysis and split of the Council of Representatives, the promise of a solution to the political deadlock came with some new ministerial appointments at the parliamentary session of 26 April. Yet, this hope suffered a significant setback on 30 April. Once it was clear that voting on another set of ministerial candidates would not take place because of the lack of quorum. Sadrist and civil society demonstrators breached the entry checkpoints of the Green Zone and stormed Parliament building. Acts of vandalism and attacks on some MPs sadly broke with the practice of many months of peaceful protests. The protestors withdrew from the Green Zone the following day, yet they pledged further action in series of escalating steps – dismissal of the three constitutional leaders of the country, early elections culminating, if necessary with attack on the seats of power, civil disobedience

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or a general strike unless the Government and Parliament make rapid progress on reforms. At this stage although, the situation has calmed down it remains unpredictable and could unfold in many different directions. I am concerned that solutions currently discussed among the three Presidencies or political blocs would not meet the demands of the people. Therefore demonstrations are set to continue.

Since the beginning of the pro-reform protest movement in August 2015, the Shite religious leadership, the Marja'iyah has backed the peoples' requests for a political solution to the current deep political crisis as well as for progressive reforms in Iraq, including through the most recent statement by the office of the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani on 4 May, which broke his four-month-long silence on Iraqi political developments that broadly coincided with the start of the efforts to create a technocratic government. There, the Marja'iyah renewed its warning to the parties against continuation of the current course in dealing with the country's issues and its many crises and called on them to think of the future of their people and take serious and tangible steps to resolve the current situation.

Mr. President,

I strongly urge the Government, constitutional and political leaders and civil society to work together in constructive dialogue that will not only resolve the political impasse but give a clear perspective of better future to the people regardless of their ethnicity or religion, which will unite them and their leaders in one Iraq. Maintaining focus and unity of efforts in fighting the so called ISIL remains a critical priority, followed by mobilizing international assistance to help alleviate a deep economic and fiscal as well as humanitarian crisis, and promote stabilization and the return of IDPs. A business as usual approach simply will not be enough for the people. They want genuine change that will improve their lives.

It is imperative to resume soon the work of the Council of Representatives and to confirm the government that will be able and willing to promote genuine reforms. Political crisis and chaos only serve the interest of the enemies of Iraq, first and foremost the terrorist ISIL. They are the ones who stand to benefit from political instability and lack of reforms. Iraq's political groups must find together a political solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy that will respond to the needs of the people, put an end to the split and paralysis in Parliament, and enable the rapid enactment of the necessary reforms and anti-corruption measures, strengthening of law and order and the smooth functioning of State institutions without threat or intimidation. I also call on the Government to take specific steps to promote women's participation in politics as a part of the reforms process.

Mr. President,

Despite the notable and consistent progress on the ground against ISIL, it remains a formidable and determined enemy that constantly adjusts its tactics and attack patterns, taking into account also developments in Syria. As the Secretary-General has advised the Council on numerous occasions, ISIL cannot be defeated by military means alone. Without addressing the root causes of violent extremism and the underlying ideology, efforts will not be sustainable and lasting. Military victories need to be complemented by support for the people who are displaced and increased stabilisation and rehabilitation efforts that prioritise rule of law and good governance, and allow for the safe and voluntary return of IDPs to their places of origin. Simultaneously, Iraqis must prioritise political and community reconciliation.

The stability, security and unity of Iraq hinge on an effective and inclusive political system, and equality in decision-making at the federal and local levels, tangible solutions to prevent political and sectarian exclusion.

Mr. President,

The recent resumption of contacts and dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil should be turned into a genuine partnership of mutually-beneficial cooperation. Reconciling differences and working together on the necessary reforms will create conditions for enhanced financial and technical support by the international community to Iraq, including the Kurdistan region. It is imperative that both Baghdad and Erbil remain committed to reaching an understanding on oil exports and revenue-sharing, on Peshmerga salaries and on other outstanding issues including those that concerns situation in the liberated and disputed areas.

At the same time, I call on political parties in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to redouble their efforts, through inclusive dialogue on the basis of democratic and legal principles, to resolve the lingering political stalemate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq which has been paralysing the normal functioning of the Kurdistan Regional parliament since October last year.

Mr. President,

The visit of the Secretary-General to Iraq on 26 March, accompanied by Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group, and Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al-Madani, President of the Islamic Development Bank, is an illustration of the seriousness of the international community in its support for Iraq. The world must recognise that Iraq requires more not less international support at this critical juncture as it faces a growing military, security, economic and humanitarian burden and struggles to break from past legacies of poor governance and corruption. While the international community is ready to offer more support, Iraqis themselves must implement reforms that will put their country on the road to recovery.

I welcome the progress achieved during Iraq's negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank that should be finalised during another round of negotiations in Amman in mid-May, positive results will be needed also for promoting the case of Iraq at the forthcoming G7 Summit in Japan.

Aimed at improving regional relations during a round of telephone calls by Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi in mid-April, the leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council countries, having given assurances of their support for the stability and unity of Iraq, pledged their support to Iraq in the fight against ISIL and commended the success of the Iraqi security forces. Similarly, Prime Minister Abadi reiterated the need for good relations with neighbouring countries and requested continued assistance in the fight against ISIL.

Mr. President,

Government control over Anbar province is progressively expanding, with Ramadi being consolidated and Heet being retaken from ISIL on 14 April, paving the way for further progress in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Ninewa provinces like in Bashir these days, including preparations towards retaking the city of Mosul. Coordination and cooperation of the Iraqi security forces, Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga, and local and tribal forces, with the increased support of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, remain key to this and future progress as is a speedy resolution of the current political inertia and crisis. Continuous deadlock and unrest coupled with economic and fiscal crisis is undermining a key ally in fighting ISIL. At the same time, all support provided to Iraq must be given in full compliance with the UN Charter and in full respect of Iraq's sovereignty.

Mr. President,

Stabilization and rehabilitation of newly-liberated areas remains a priority, and is and is key for laying the groundwork for future reconciliation. The problems are immense, as shown in the example of Ramadi with the huge challenges posed by the vast level of destruction and unprecedented contamination by explosive devices. Despite the Government's warning of the threat of IEDs, thousands of desperate families have already returned to Ramadi City and surrounding areas. We are very concerned about reports of dozens of civilian casualties from booby-trap IEDs placed by ISIL as well as remnant explosive devices. In close collaboration with and under the guidance of the national and provincial authorities on mine action, the UNMAS has played a role in helping to mobilize international capacities to address explosive remnants of war, including IEDs, at the local level.

Mr. President,

I am concerned by the reports of ISIL's use of weaponized chemicals in its attacks on civilians and security force personnel like these days in Bashir. One of the most worrying such incidents was a rocket attack in Taza district, Kirkuk governorate, on 8 March, after which two young girls died from complications believed to stem from the attack, and a number of people were admitted to hospital. The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsequently transmitted letters to the Security Council on the incident, and also informed that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). A team from the OPCW visited Iraq in April at the request of the Iraqi Government to assist the Iraqi authorities with their investigation into this and other similar reported attacks by ISIL. I strongly condemn any attempt by ISIL to use chemical agents as weapons, the use of which is prohibited and considered a violation of international law. I call on the international community to support the ongoing investigation into these incidents and to ensure accountability of anyone found to be involved in the use of weaponised chemicals or in facilitating that.

Mr. President,

I also condemn in the strongest possible terms the continued killings, kidnapping, rape and torture of Iraqis by ISIL, which may constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes and even genocide. I call on the international community to take steps to ensure the accountability of members of ISIL for the atrocious crimes they have perpetrated. As territory is retaken from the criminal and terrorist gangs of Daesh, evidence of the heinous crimes they have committed continues to be uncovered. More than 50 mass graves have been discovered so far in several areas of Iraq. Most recently, on 19 April, three graves were found in the football ground area of central Ramadi, with indications that the remains of as many as 40 people may have been discovered. ISIL also continues to commit violations against women and children. Information continues to be received that ISIL forcibly recruits hundreds of Yazidi children in Ninewa and for use as combatants in Syria and Iraq. In addition, the whereabouts and fate of thousands of Yazidi women and girls held in captivity by ISIL remain unknown. Limited but notable efforts undertaken by the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, together with tribal leaders, have successfully led to the release of some of these women and girls, but much more needs to be done.

Terrorist attacks directly targeting civilians also continue to take place on a daily basis throughout the country, predominantly in Baghdad. Just two of the latest such tragedies include a suspected suicide truck bomb targeting pilgrims and shoppers in a market in the Nahrawan area of Baghdad on 30 April that killed an estimated 24 people and wounded 48, as well as twin suicide car bombings in Samawa, Muthanna province, on 1 May that killed an estimated 38 people and wounded 86. I strongly condemn these cowardly acts, which attempt to stoke sectarian tensions and to weaken the national unity of Iraq and its people.

Daesh terrorists feed on division and disputes among Iraqis. The answer to such crimes is for Iraqis of all affiliations and backgrounds starting with their political leaders and Members of Parliament to redouble their efforts to work towards unity and reconciliation.

Mr. President,

On 29 April, I, together with my Deputy participated in the Security Council Informal Experts Group (IEG) meeting co-chaired by the Permanent Missions of Spain and the United Kingdom to discuss the context of Iraq with regard to women, peace and security. Discussions highlighted the deteriorating situation of women's rights due to the armed conflict against ISIL, as well as the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. A number of recommendations were made, including specific steps by the GoI to promote women's participation in politics and public life, the need to sustain high-level political engagement in support of advancing the women, peace and security agenda, including in reconciliation, counter-terrorism efforts and stabilization, support for advocacy efforts to explore funding options for the advancement of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325 and establishment a government entity to coordinate women's affairs. In collaboration with the Office of the SRSG for Sexual Violence in Conflict, UNAMI is currently seeking to strengthen the capacity of the UN in Iraq to address conflict-related sexual violence through the deployment of a Senior Women's Protection Advisor.

Mr. President,

Renewed clashes beginning in late April between the Peshmerga and the Popular Mobilization Forces in Tuz Khurmatu, near Kirkuk, which have caused at least 131 casualties among those fighting and civilians, highlight the urgent need to make progress in intercommunity relations and swiftly restore state and local authority, rule of law, good governance, justice and the provision of services to newly-liberated areas, and exert firm control over all fighters and weapons. Security sector reform that will address the issue of uncontrolled armed groups and their presence in cities, notably in liberated areas, is becoming the country's priority.

Mr. President,

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq remains one of the world's worst. In the last year, the number of Iraqis in need has doubled. Nearly a third of the population – over ten million people – now require some form of humanitarian assistance. The military campaign, depending on its scope and intensity will almost certainly lead to mass displacement in the months ahead. In a worst case scenario, more than 2 million more Iraqis may be newly displaced by the end of the year.

The UN is deeply worried about humanitarian conditions in Fallujah in particular, which remains under ISIL control and effectively under siege. Food prices are increasingly exponentially and stocks in shops and households are running out, according to WFP remote food security monitoring. At the request of the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator and my deputy, the Government is extracting families which manage to reach mustering points, bringing them to safety. The humanitarian community is mobilized to provide life-saving support to these families and to people trapped in Fallujah.

The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan requests US\$861 million to provide life-saving assistance to seven million Iraqis. Disappointingly, only a quarter of this amount has been secured thus far. Unless USD 300 million is received by June, tens of front-line lives-saving programmes will be cut-back or closed. With needs far outstripping national capacities, international action and engagement is essential. The highly

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prioritized humanitarian plan for this year is intended to cover existing needs in country - it does not include the additional needs included in the contingency plan for Mosul. The amount required to help the people who will be impacted by the military operation in Mosul will depend directly on the type of military operation. If destruction is widespread and there is mass displacement for a long period, the cost of supporting these populations will be enormous. There is also a need to step-up human and funding resources to address the immense needs of displaced women and girls, including the provision of specialized psychosocial care and education.

Mr. President,

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

Iraq's Ministry of Defence has officially taken over the technical overview of the missing Kuwaiti persons file, resuming work and undertaking a number of activities since the transition. This is an encouraging and welcome step, which I hope will add impetus to the Government of Iraq's efforts. In April the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs again called on citizens of Iraq who have information about supposed graves of missing persons to inform them. Unfortunately, stalemate still persists with respect to the missing Kuwaiti property.

In follow-up to the visit to Iraq, the Secretary-General and I visited Kuwait at the end of March, encouraging the Iraqi leadership to take every possible step to achieve tangible progress concerning the issue of both missing persons and property. To more actively contribute to the file, UNAMI will be reaching out to different stakeholders to seek their assistance in various aspects that will push the process forward.

However, I would like to underline that the main responsibility in ensuring advancement lies with the Government of Iraq. While we remain cognisant of the sheer volume of challenges that the Iraq is currently facing, its international obligations have to be fulfilled and this issue cannot fall by the wayside.

Thank you, Mr President.