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UN continues its electoral support during recount process



Iraqi Parliamentary Elections (UN Photo: Waseem Wastin)

Iraq launches first vaccination week



Mothers attend an awareness seminar during national vaccination week. (Photo: WHO)

DSRSG McNab mobilises Spain's support to sustainable development in Iraq



DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq, Christine McNab, third from the left at Casa Arabe Conference, (Photo: Casa Arabe)

UN continues its electoral support during recount process



Day of Iraqi parliamentary elections. UNAMI SRS Ad Melkert inspects ballot box (Photo: Rick Bajornas)

By UNAMI PIO

On March 7, more than 12 million Iraqis went to the polls, some braving insecurity, to cast their ballots for a better future. The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC) supported by more than 300,000 Iraqis, conducted these parliamentary elections in a professional manner that was praised by the international community, including UNAMI leadership.

In response to an appeal filed with respect to the election's results, the Electoral Judicial Panel of Iraq ordered the IHEC on 19 April 2010 to conduct a manual recount of the ballots cast in the Baghdad governorate. The Panel's order meant that ballots from more than 11,000 polling stations had to be recounted by the IHEC.

Affirming the UN's full respect for the independence of Iraq's judicial institutions, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq (SRS), Ad Melkert, pledged continued support during the recount process: "The UN will continue to provide the same technical assistance and advice made available during previous stages of this election".

As part of the technical advice and support to the IHEC in preparing and conducting the recount, UNAMI provides advice on the procedures for re-sorting and recounting the ballots, and on operational preparations, such as the lay-out of the recount centre and the handling of ballot boxes.

During the recount, UNAMI deployed a team of international staff members to the recount centre to follow the process on a continual basis. UNAMI staff

gave advice where necessary to help the IHEC ensure a transparent and credible recount process. They continue to provide technical advice to the IHEC on any remaining issues relating to the certification of the results for the Council of Representatives election.

DSRSG McNab mobilises Spain's support to sustainable development in Iraq



DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq, Christine McNab, third from the left at Casa Arabe Conference, (Photo: Casa Arabe)

By Juliette Touma

During a two-day visit to Spain aiming at mobilizing support to sustainable development in Iraq, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General and Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (DSRSG/RC/HC), Ms. Christine McNab, had meetings with a number of development partners including the Director General of the Middle East Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Director of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. She was also invited by the Madrid based institution *Casa Arabe* to a roundtable on Human Development in Iraq.

In her lecture delivered on 24 March at *Casa Arabe*, Ms. McNab provided an overview of the current situation in Iraq, the UN's humanitarian response, as well as the medium and long term development support the United Nations and its partners provide to the people of Iraq. "Despite security challenges, a great deal of progress has been made towards reducing food insecurity, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality in Iraq. But much work needs to be done to increase participation in education, reduce unemployment, and ensure access to safe and reliable water and sanitation", she said.

Reminding that the United Nations has been present in Iraq since 1955, Ms. McNab focused on the role the organization has been playing since 2003 to support the different institutions in providing humanitarian assistance, accelerating reconstruction and shifting to early recovery and development.

She also elaborated on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Iraq, which is aligned with the priorities of the Five Year National Development Plan and considers effective human capital as a main pillar to boost development, restore economic growth and improve access to services.

“There is no doubt that humanitarian needs persist in Iraq. Over a million people are still displaced with limited access to shelter, food, health care or other basic needs. It is therefore critical that Spain and the international community continue to support humanitarian programs in the country while working hand-in-hand with the United Nations to help Iraqis focus on development after three decades of conflict and deprivation”, the deputy head of UNAMI said, underscoring the progress the country has made towards reducing food insecurity and child mortality, and promoting gender equality.

Emphasizing the importance the UNDAF will play in guiding the work of reducing poverty rates and generating jobs for the unemployed Iraqis, working with the Government and the private sector as well as other international partners and local civil society organizations, the DSRSG/RC/HC also highlighted the relevance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the work undertaken by the United Nations to support the Government of Iraq to achieve the MDGs by the year 2015.

The other participants in the roundtable were Amal Shlash, director of the Economics Department of Bayt al-Hikma in Baghdad and main author of the National Human Development Report, Iraq: National Report on the Status of Human Development 2008, and Adib Nehmeh, Regional Advisor on Social Statistics to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Beirut.

Established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Spain, Casa Arabe⁽¹⁾ aims to increase knowledge on the reality and history of the Arab and Muslim World through cultural, intellectual and economic means.

(1) For more see <http://www.casaarabe-ieam.es/>

UN calls for more funds to improve access to quality public education in Iraq



As part of the Global Action Week for Education celebrated across the world on 19-23 April, the United Nations in Iraq added its voice to a global call for “financing quality education as a right for all”.

“Iraq faces considerable challenges to improve access to education and guarantee that girls and boys have equal opportunities” said Christine McNab, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. “More financial resources are needed to ensure that the constitutional right to education, from early childhood care, to mainstream schooling, to literacy and life skills for youth and adults in Iraq, is met by the government. The coming years will be crucial in determining whether Iraq will be able to achieve the objectives envisaged in the six “Education for All” goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).”

Measuring progress towards achieving the “Education for All” goals worldwide, the 2010 “Global Education For All Monitoring Report” shows that Iraq lags behind most countries in the region. As a result of decades of conflict and sanctions, quality and access to formal learning has decreased, negatively affecting enrollment at all levels of education. Primary school enrollment rates have dropped from 91% in 1990 to 85% in 2007.

The deterioration of the education system has led to higher drop-out rates and illiteracy remains a concerning trend, with the current national literacy rates estimated at 80% for children aged 10 years old and over. The Report also shows that women are particularly affected by illiteracy, especially in rural areas where 50% of women aged 15 to 24 are literate, compared with 72% to 80% of women living in urban and metropolitan areas respectively.

The Government of Iraq has increased funding for education budget from 7.2% in 2008 to 9.9% in 2009 of total government expenditure. However, considerable efforts are still needed to meet the 2015 target of 100% net primary enrolment ratio particularly in rural areas in accordance with the “Education for All” and MDGs aimed at achieving Universal Primary Education.

To mark the Global Action Week for Education stressing the need for increased public spending, UNESCO, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, launched a public awareness campaign highlighting the importance of education. In the same vein, the World Health Organization (WHO) undertook several health education activities in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

UN’s responses to education needs in Iraq

To help Iraq tackle the education needs, United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies have teamed up to form the UN Education Sector Team in the country. The UN education team is made up of UNESCO, UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, WHO, ESCWA, ILO, UNOPS, WFP, in addition to the IOM and other international NGOs⁽¹⁾.

Working closely with Ministries of Education in Baghdad and Erbil, the Parliament, the Directorates of Education, civil society organizations, NGOs and local communities, the UN’s response to the education needs of all parts of Iraqi society is extensive and varied.

UNESCO and UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Bank, are helping the government develop a national strategy to improve education policies and institutional capacity. In support of this goal, they have trained 137 governmental staff in strategic planning and sector diagnosis since 2009. UNESCO alone has invested more than US\$50 million in Iraq’s education sector since 2003, including the distribution of 18 million textbooks (benefiting 11 million school children), the rehabilitation of science laboratories in secondary schools and universities and improvement of technical and vocational training nationwide. UNESCO is also working with national partners to develop a non-formal education strategy within the framework of the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment.

UNICEF and UN-HABITAT have invested over US\$30 million nationwide – benefiting over 4.7 million children – in providing learning materials and school bags for primary school children, improving infrastructure, developing teaching practices and increasing parental engagement. As part of a US\$34 million investment programme starting in 2007, UNICEF continues to provide learning opportunities

to out-of-school children and adolescents through its Alternative Learning Programme, which now has 47,000 pupils enrolled.

In 2008-2009, WHO worked with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health to reactivate and strengthen the “health-promoting school” approach, addressing inadequacies in health education and school health, water and sanitation. UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Education in enhancing early childhood development (ECD) services through the establishment of an ECD national resource centre, distribution of ECD materials to 2,000 kindergartens, nurseries and primary schools, and training of 514 caretakers and ECD teachers. UNICEF is currently supporting the same Ministry with the development of an ECD framework and the revision of the ECD curriculum.

The UN has identified increased access to quality essential services as a priority for the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2011-2014. By 2014, the UN aims for an increase in the proportion of schools with a child-friendly learning environment from 2.5% to 30%.

The UN with the Government of Iraq and its partners will continue to provide its full support and commitment to increase access to quality education as a lifelong experience in accordance with Iraq’s development goals.

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(1) Acronyms

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF: United Nations Children’s Fund

UN-HABITAT: United Nations Human Settlements Programme

WHO: World Health Organization

ESCWA: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

ILO: International Labour Organization

UNOPS: the United Nations Office for Project Services

WFP: World Food Programme

IOM: International Organization for Migration

Detainees in Iraq offered free legal aid



Court case folders submitted to a Legal Defence Centre in Iraq. (Photo: UNOPS)

By Micaela Pasini, UNOPS

In April 2010, a three-day meeting between legal experts including lawyers, legal consultants, representatives of the Iraqi Bar Association and civil society convened in Amman, Jordan and agreed on a way forward to provide free legal defence services for detainees in Iraq.

Under a project funded by the European Union through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), 20 Legal Defence Centres (LDCs) were established in 16 governorates of Iraq late last year. These centres, each run by between 3 to 7 permanent and volunteer lawyers, provide free legal consultation and services - in person and over the phone - to beneficiaries with reduced access to legal representation due to their financial, gender or family status.

UNOPS Iraq Director, Mr. Gerhard Pansegrouw, notes that “we have provided these services to vulnerable individuals for about half a year now and the purpose of the meeting [in Amman] was to identify remaining challenges and to seek ways to reach out further to detainees that fall through the cracks in the legal system”.

During the first seven months of operation, over 600 cases of vulnerable individuals in need of legal defence services were referred to the LDCs by police, lawyers’ syndicates, courts, prisons, rehabilitation centres and shelters. Of these, 365 cases were eligible to receive free legal representation.

A lawyer from Babil governorate is optimistic that “the project strengthens the relationship between civil society organisations and legal and executive authorities, including the police and courts. This will open way for these organisations to spread a human rights culture in Iraq”.

Towards rebuilding Iraq

By Ozlem Eskiocak, UNIDO

Thirteen Iraqi entrepreneurs were supported by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in cooperation with the Italian Trade Commission, to attend the EDIL LEVANTE Construction Fair in Bari, Italy from 22-25 April 2010. The aim of the study tour was to support the Iraqi entrepreneurs in upgrading their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through international partnership, technology transfer, and equipment purchases.

“This presents a great opportunity for Iraqi construction companies to be exposed to up-to-date technologies, knowledge transfer, and to assist in rebuilding Iraq”, said Mr. Sinan Kadim Jasim Al-Saidi, Director-General of Industrial Development and Regulatory Directorate of Iraq’s Federal Ministry of Industry.

The Iraqi entrepreneurs visited over 140 exhibits and conducted 64 bilateral meetings with Italian entrepreneurs. They stressed that the Fair was a unique chance to introduce the Iraqi construction sector to firms abroad and learn about new machinery and technologies. “We are very happy to cooperate with foreign companies in rebuilding our beautiful country, and we hope to provide new technology, good quality, and modern style creations to the Iraqi community through partnerships built at this Fair,” said Mr. Sami Jaleel Mousawi, President of Al-Ansab Business Group.

Prior to the mission, the selected entrepreneurs received technical assistance from the UNIDO *Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion (EDIP)* project, funded by the Italian Cooperation for Development.



Mr. Sinan Al-Saidi speaking to the media at the opening ceremony of the EDIL LEVANTE Construction Fair. (Photo: UNIDO)

The project's objective is to contribute to the development of SMEs in Iraq and the creation of employment opportunities for Iraqis. EDIP established three Enterprise Development Units (EDUs) in the governorates of Baghdad, Erbil and Dhiqar, to provide enterprise development services to local entrepreneurs. The EDUs are composed of local institutional counterpart officials trained by UNIDO, who have to date provided trainings to 321 potential entrepreneurs and are currently supporting 235 SMEs through counseling services. The counselors supported the preparation of 99 business plans and upgrading plans which were reviewed by international consultants and which are ready to be presented to suitable financial institutions.

The EDIP Programme Coordinator, Mr. Cristiano Pasini, believes that it is crucial to focus on institutional capacity building in order to provide sustainable support to Iraqi entrepreneurs: "After the phase out of the project we would like to see the EDUs, which are headed by Iraqi governmental officials, continue providing quality services to the SMEs through a cost recovery mechanism", he said.

The project has so far trained 104 Iraqi officials on enterprise creation and upgrading, and project activities have resulted in the establishment and expansion of 40 businesses. The provision of an SME credit facility of US\$ 1 million was also included within the project to ensure that beneficiaries would have access to an appropriate financing scheme.

In order to further reinforce and complement UNIDO assistance to SMEs, the Italian Cooperation for Development has granted additional funds for two new projects - *Investment Promotion for Iraq* and *Enterprise Development through Information and Communication Technology* - which will focus on increasing the competitiveness of existing SMEs, and support the creation of new ones through provision of on-line training and tutoring. These projects will also



Viewing construction machinery exhibits at the Fair. (Photo: UNIDO)

increase the competitiveness of local institutions and build the capacity in investment promotion tools and methodologies.

For additional information on UNIDO and its programmes in Iraq, contact: OIC and Programme Coordinator, Cristiano Pasini at c.pasini@unido.org

Iraq launches first vaccination week, rewarding the unsung Health Heroes and putting children's health first



Implementing national vaccination week under Iraq's burning sun, using all types of transportation, and facing all challenges. (Photo: WHO)

By Hikmat Ruba, WHO

Between 20-30 April, for the first time ever, Iraq joined 21 other countries in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region in conducting the International Vaccination Week. The objective of this week was to revive the commitment and increase public awareness on the importance of immunisation through advocacy, education, household and community oriented communication.

Since the 1980s, with the support of WHO, UNICEF and the international community, the Government of Iraq has been working hard to implement the national immunisation programme with remarkable commitment. The fragile security situation and large population displacements over recent years have made it very difficult to organise effective and efficient programmes. However, through jointly pooling staff and assets and making available all required human and technical resources the week was very successful.



Mothers attend an awareness seminar during national vaccination week. (Photo: WHO)

Focusing on vaccination as an investment for a better life and on the responsibility and crucial role of the family and community in providing protection against diseases, the objective of the National Vaccination Week (NVW) was to improve communication and dissemination of information on the value of immunisation, increase community demand for immunisation and use a combination of innovative approaches and solutions to improve access to immunisation in Iraq. “Access to communities affected by violence or distance is a major obstacle for our work to vaccinate children”, said Dr. Muataz Abbas, WHO National Immunisation Programme Manager. “But we have seen that reaching out to all people and encouraging them to put the health of their children first can be something that all sides can agree on”, he added.

During the vaccination week, Departments of Health at all 18 Iraqi governorates participated in numerous awareness and health education activities, especially in low coverage areas. Activities included media events, workshops, training sessions, social mobilisation initiatives, round table discussions and exhibitions addressing a wide range of vaccine-related issues. They were designed to remind parents, caregivers, the media, religious leaders, decision makers and healthcare providers of the benefits and importance of routine physical visits to the nearest health centres to vaccinate and protect children from deadly disease.

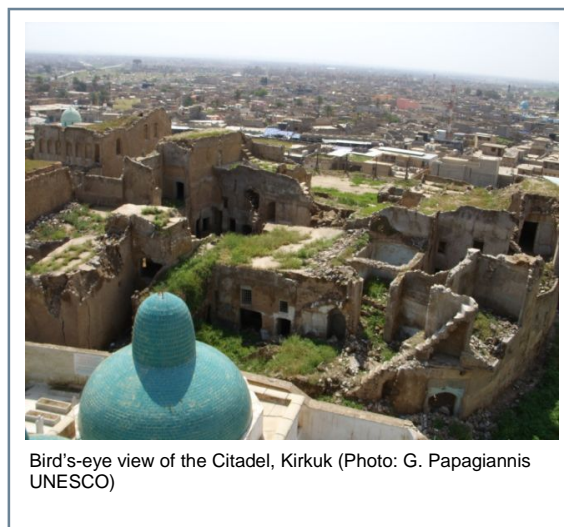
The communities’ and parents’ commitment to complete the routine immunisation programme which was based on the free services available at the primary health centres proved to be invaluable during immunisation week. Um Ahlam, a 28-year old mother, participated in one of the awareness seminars in Rashid Al Kitan Village, an area with low vaccination coverage. She shared her experiences from 2007 when the outreach vaccination teams knocked on her door in the middle of the most violent conflict to

vaccinate her little daughter as part of the national door-to-door immunisation campaign. She expressed her sincere gratitude to the brave health workers and said “they saved my children’s lives”. She further explained how hard the situation was at the time and “how every mother in Iraq is grateful for these heroes who risk their lives to reach and vaccinate Iraqi children”.

Keeping the country free of vaccine-preventable diseases is a testament to Iraq’s commitment to ensure every child and mother’s right to health. Maintaining a polio-free status since the year 2000, the improvement of immunisation rates coverage with four in five children receiving all recommended vaccinations by the age of 12 months, the steady coverage of infant measles vaccination which jumped from 70% in 2007 to 88% in 2008 and to above 90% in 2009, the eradication of smallpox in 1978, and utilising national immunisation programme as a platform to provide other life-saving health interventions such as vitamin A supplements, are milestones in Iraq’s national immunisation efforts.

The NVW was led by the Ministry of Health with the full support of WHO and UNICEF.

First Steps - Taking ‘inventory’ of Kirkuk’s Citadel



Bird’s-eye view of the Citadel, Kirkuk (Photo: G. Papagiannis UNESCO)

By George Papagiannis, UNESCO

In March 2010, representatives from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Iraq office and UNAMI visited Kirkuk’s renowned Citadel. The three-day visit was

organised in support of the local population's efforts to seek placement of the Citadel on the World Heritage List.

At the invitation of Governor Abdulrahman Fatah, the delegation was treated to a personalised tour of the site led by the Head of the Kirkuk Directorate of Antiquities, Ayad Hussein. Governor Fatah made special mention of the Citadel's 2,600-year history and its links to the residents of Kirkuk, thereby emphasising the need for UNESCO officials to consider the uniqueness of the site. He further informed the delegation that "the Citadel represents the peaceful co-existence of all ethnic groups in Kirkuk and includes sites of historical significance such as the burial place for Prophets Daniel, Haneen and Ozer".

In discussion with the Kirkuk authorities, UNESCO's Cultural Programme Specialist, Tamara Teneishvili, outlined an initial plan of action and encouraged the local authorities and experts to prepare for a process that could take several years. "No matter the outcome, the Citadel will benefit", said Ms. Teneishvili, "because the process requires the implementation of plans and procedures that should raise local efforts to protect the Citadel to an international standard".

Heeding advice from the UNESCO experts, Kirkuk local authorities are compiling documents to support the development of a comprehensive work plan, in collaboration with the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in Baghdad which has the overall authority in such matters.

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United Nations in Action: April 2010

- UNDP hosted an Anti-Corruption workshop focusing on the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Survey, which is being conducted by the Central Organisation for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) with support from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UNDP.
- Under its Public Sector Modernisation Programme, UNDP completed Scoping Studies in Education, Health, Water and Sanitation and Civil Service. The studies will be used for the upcoming Public Sector Modernisation Strategy of the Government of Iraq.

- To undertake the fourth round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, UNICEF partnered with WHO and UNFPA and organized a meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Planning/COSIT and the Ministry of Health to discuss the questionnaire used at the survey.
- Attended by the Prime Minister of Kurdistan Regional Government, UNDP organized on 12-15 April a workshop in Erbil on Electronic Government in Iraq. The workshop was organized in cooperation with the federal Ministry of Science and Technology and the directorate of Information.
- UNHCR through its implementing partner the Danish Refugee Council completed a project aiming at constructing 180 shelter units for the most vulnerable refugee families, who returned from Iran to Missan governorate.
- Under the "Accelerated Learning Programme" for out-of-school children and adolescents UNICEF delivered the second batch of educational supplies in seven areas in Iraq. The supplies included stationery kits, drawing books, teacher kits and exercise books. Under the same programme UNICEF conducted three E-learning training courses for a total of 60 teachers at the ten schools chosen to be part of this programme in Erbil, and Sulaimaniya.
- Under the ILO/UNOPS project under the "Local Area Development Programme", the district development plans for two areas were finalized. The plan aims at providing support in six priority areas: education, health, economic recovery, water and sanitation, physical planning, and environment.
- Under the "Support to the Rule of Law and Justice in Iraq" Project, funded by the European Union, UNOPS supervised the implementation of the first three in-country training sessions targeting the middle management staff of three prisons, detention and rehabilitation centres in Baghdad.
- The IOM provided Non-Food-Items kits to 238 families affected by apartment bombings in Baghdad who suffered a great loss and damage to their property. The kits included gas cookers, mattresses, carpets, blankets, fans, plastic sheeting, and other goods. IOM assisted returnees and other vulnerable groups in 11 governorates (482 beneficiaries in total) with livestock, beekeeping, fishery, horticulture, irrigation systems and farming skills. While not part of the UN system, IOM maintains close working relations with UN bodies and operational agencies.

Quotes from Iraqis - April

- “You, the Sunnis of Iraq, joined hands with the Shiites to liberate our country. Do not let the (U.S.) occupation or any unjust law made by it deter you from doing that”, cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, read by aide Hazem al-Araji. 9 April 2010, *Reuters*.
- “Families in Abu-Ghraib are upset and angry because of the illegal acts committed against them by the Al-Muthanna Iraqi Army Brigade. The Iraqi government should intervene to end the crisis of Abu-Ghraib people”, Adil al-Zobae, a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), 24 April 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*.
- “We will not accept this election and its results if it continues like that. We will call for a new election ... under direct international observation and the U.N. will carry out this election”, senior Iraqiya member Osama al-Nujaifi. 26 April 2010, *Reuters*.
- “The takfirist Saddamist gangs perpetrated yet another crime against our innocent people in a new attempt to hurl Iraq into a whirlpool of violence. The Iraqi government has to take whatever necessary rapid measures to should its responsibility of protecting citizens’ lives and security”, Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC) chief Sayed Ammar al-Hakeem, 24 April, 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*.
- “The Commissioners’ council held on Monday a meeting with experts in the Commission and we think that the recount needs seven days. The recount process will include the general and special voting of all ballots cast in Baghdad”, Iyad al-Kenani, 19 April, 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*.
- “We will not stay silent in the face of what is happening in the Iraqi political arena with attempts to marginalize and exclude the Iraqiya list”, ex-premier Iyad Allawi, 28 April 2010, *Al-Sharqiya TV*.
- “Discussions between Iraqi and Saudi officials regarding the issue of forming the new Iraqi government are rejected. Pressures on Iraqi officials to make certain decisions cannot be accepted”, Al-Adeeb, 13 April, 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*.
- “There were 431 detainees, 100 of them were released, 20 of them were sent back to Mosul... and the rest were sent to Justice Ministry prisons. What matters to us is that three officers were detained for interrogation, the prison has been closed and it is now part of the past”,

Kamil Ameen, a spokesman for Iraq’s Human Rights ministry, 23 April 2010, *Reuters*.

- “I deny the existence of any secret prison under the authority of the (government) or... of any security force linked to the Prime Minister”, Human Rights Minister Wijdan Salim, 23 April 2010, *Reuters*.
- “Iraq needs a technocrat government led by a national figure able to change and reconstruct the country. All political blocs have to favour Iraq’s interests and to form a strong government capable of providing security to all citizens”, Iraq’s Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Abd Ziyab al-Ujeili, 7 April 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*.

Quotes compiled by Ali Abdul-Jalil, UNAMI PIO.

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