



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
5 August 2019

Original: English

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## Implementation of resolution [2470 \(2019\)](#)

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2470 \(2019\)](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Council every three months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of all the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since my previous report of 2 May 2019 ([S/2019/365](#)) and the briefing to the Security Council provided by my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI on 21 May 2019.

#### II. Summary of key political developments

##### A. Political situation

2. Following extensive consultations between the President, Barham Salih, the Prime Minister, Adil Abd Al-Mahdi, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mohamed al-Halbousi, and political leaders, progress has been made towards completing the filling of positions in the Government of Iraq. Three of the four outstanding vacant ministerial positions, namely the Minister of Defence, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Justice, have now been filled. Discussions continue over the post of Minister of Education.

3. The months-long deadlock between political blocs over nominations for those senior government roles was finally resolved following interventions at the highest level. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, in a sermon delivered by his representative, condemned the infighting over political positions and emphasized the importance of completing appointments to the Cabinet. He also criticized rampant corruption, the excessively bureaucratic Government, the lack of employment opportunities and the shortage of basic public services.

4. On 15 June, the Speaker announced that the finalization of appointments to the Cabinet and the replacement of acting senior officials with professional civil servants would remain on the agenda of every parliamentary sitting until such issues were resolved. On 24 June, the Council of Representatives voted in favour of the appointments of General Najah al-Shammari as Minister of Defence, Yasin al-Yasiri



as Minister of the Interior and Faruq al-Shawani as Minister of Justice. The nominee for the post of Minister of Education, Sufanah al-Hamadani, the only woman nominated for a ministerial post, failed to secure enough support for her candidacy. An alternative candidate, Zahidah al-Ubaydi, also a woman, similarly was not endorsed at a parliamentary session held on 27 June.

5. Progress has also been made on the election of chairs, deputy chairs and rapporteurs of parliamentary committees, including the important committees on foreign affairs, security and defence, the economy and investment, finance, and oil and gas. The chairs of 7 of the 22 parliamentary committees, including the Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the Government Programme, remain to be appointed. To date, only two positions are held by women.

6. On 2 July, the Council of Representatives decided to extend its legislative term by one month until 9 August to ensure the passage of key legislation amending the Federal Budget Law of 2019 and the Governorate Council Electoral Law. Those laws were subsequently passed on 8 and 22 July, respectively.

7. The Government has maintained its focus on combating corruption. The Supreme Council for Combating Corruption meets on a monthly basis and is chaired by the Prime Minister. Discussions have been focused on the shortage of judges competent to address corruption cases, corruption in the oil sector and the trade in illicit drugs.

8. During the reporting period, the Government also discussed ways to strengthen the environment for investment in Iraq. On 26 May, in a meeting, the Special Committee on the Preparation of the State Budget Strategy 2020–2022 discussed how to protect the investment environment from corruption, the necessity of developing the banking sector, restructuring banks and encouraging partnership with foreign banks.

9. On 12 June, the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers met representatives of relevant sectoral bodies, the public sector, local experts and investors. They agreed on the importance of adopting specific steps to attract investments to the country, the need to activate public and private sector partnerships and the necessity of reviewing and amending legislation and procedures to improve the environment for business and investment. Recommendations have been forwarded to the Council of Ministers for consideration.

10. On 1 July, the Government issued a report on the implementation of its programme for 2018–2022, covering the period from October 2018, when it came into office, to April 2019. In the report, the Government assessed the progress made in implementing its programme and identified obstacles that might impede the completion of projects, such as a lack of financial allocations and delays in the endorsement of project implementation plans. The report is the first of its kind issued by a Government of Iraq.

11. Meanwhile, on 5 May, after protracted negotiation, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) signed an agreement on the distribution of cabinet portfolios in the new Kurdistan Regional Government. KDP will hold the presidency and the prime ministership. PUK will fill the posts of Speaker of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, Second Vice-President and Deputy Prime Minister, as well as the position of Regional Minister for Baghdad-Erbil relations. Gorran will hold the position of First Vice-President.

12. On 28 May, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament elected Nechirvan Barzani as the new President of the Kurdistan Region, with 68 of the 81 votes cast by members in attendance. PUK boycotted the vote, alleging that KDP had failed to honour previous political agreements.

13. On 10 June, Mr. Barzani was installed as President of the Kurdistan Region. His inauguration was attended by Mr. Salih, on his first visit to Erbil as President of Iraq, Mr. Al-Halbousi and representatives of all the main Kurdish political parties, including the PUK leadership, as well as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. In his inauguration speech, Mr. Barzani highlighted the importance of a new road map for relations between Baghdad and Erbil, underlining that the Kurdistan Regional Government would work closely with the federal Government to find solutions to outstanding issues, within the framework of the Constitution of Iraq.

14. On 11 June, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament appointed Masrouf Barzani, the KDP nominee, as Prime Minister-designate of the Kurdistan Region. He received support from 87 of the 97 members attending the session, including PUK members. The President of the Kurdistan Region subsequently asked the Prime Minister-designate to form a cabinet within 30 days. On 10 July, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament held a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister-designate, his deputy, Qubad Talabani, of PUK and all of the 21 other proposed cabinet members, who were then immediately sworn in. Three of the ministers are women and hold the portfolios of labour and social affairs, agriculture and water resources, and regional affairs. The key post of Minister for Natural Resources remains vacant.

15. On 11 July, Rewaz Faiq, of PUK, was elected Speaker of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, the first woman to hold the post on a permanent basis. On the same day, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region announced an agenda for the Kurdistan Regional Government that would be focused on institutional reform, anti-corruption measures and improved relations between Baghdad and Erbil.

## **B. Relations between Baghdad and Erbil**

16. Efforts to improve relations between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government continued, despite ongoing disagreements over oil, revenue-sharing and security arrangements. On 28 April, a delegation comprising the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Planning, the Minister of Industry and Minerals and the Minister of Trade met officials of the Kurdistan Regional Government, in Erbil, to discuss trade and the abolition of internal customs checkpoints.

17. On 3 June, the Prime Minister of Iraq sent a congratulatory message to the new President of the Kurdistan Region, expressing the hope that relations between Baghdad and Erbil would improve further. After his inauguration, the President of the Kurdistan Region visited Baghdad, where he met Mr. Salih, Mr. Al-Mahdi and Mr. Al-Halbousi. He reaffirmed the wish of the Kurdistan Regional Government to overcome all differences with the federal Government.

18. However, disagreements over oil revenue sharing persist, the Kurdistan Regional Government having indicated that it would supply only 250,000 barrels of oil per day to the federal Government, as provided for under the Federal Budget Law of 2019, after agreement had been reached on addressing the region's outstanding debts. On 25 June, Mr. Al-Mahdi warned that the federal Government would deduct the value of the oil revenues from the budget allocated to the Kurdistan Regional Government if the 250,000 barrels of oil per day were not delivered. Discussions are ongoing.

## C. Security situation

19. Remnants of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continued to conduct frequent asymmetric attacks against the Iraqi people and security forces, in particular in the Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. In response, the Iraqi security forces continued a vigorous anti-terrorism campaign. They conducted large-scale clearance operations in the liberated areas, arresting or neutralizing terrorist fighters, defusing improvised explosive devices and exposing ISIL hideouts, tunnels and weapons caches. The international counter-ISIL coalition continued to support the Iraqi security forces.

20. On 1 July, the Prime Minister of Iraq issued Executive Order 237, bringing the popular mobilization forces exclusively under State control. The order contained warnings that armed groups operating outside State control were illegal and would be prosecuted. It was decreed that all factions of the popular mobilization forces must abandon individualized names used during the fight against ISIL and revert to simple descriptors such as “brigade”; that they must sever all ties with political entities; that factions not wishing to comply must disarm and convert into political parties, holding only the weapons required for the protection of personnel and premises; that locations held by such forces must be clearly demarcated, in the same way as other military sites; and that all checkpoints and economic offices of such forces must be closed. The order was welcomed across the political spectrum.

21. On 15 and 16 May, public demonstrations in support of anti-corruption measures within the Sadrist Movement were held in several southern governorates. On 15 May, attacks took place in Najaf against properties of several Sadrist officials accused of corruption, resulting in clashes with the Iraqi security forces, the deaths of 4 civilians and the wounding of 15 others.

22. During the reporting period, over 40,000 acres of cropland in 11 governorates were affected by fires. UNAMI has received over 320 reports of crops being burned. To date, 13 civilians have been killed in fire-related incidents, and another 19 injured. Local authorities have claimed that most fires were accidental, owing to extreme hot and dry weather conditions, but some were reported to be intentional, sometimes started by farmers to burn crop residues, as well as the result of protracted land disputes, community rivalries or attempts at extortion. ISIL was reported to be responsible for some of the fires, burning crops to punish farmers refusing to pay a tax on their harvest. On 11 June, 48 members of parliament requested that the federal Government investigate all allegations of arson and compensate affected farmers.

23. On 19 May, a Katyusha rocket landed in the former International Zone in Baghdad, causing limited material damage. On 14 June, another Katyusha rocket hit a house in the Jadriya neighbourhood of central Baghdad, without causing casualties. On the same day, three mortar shells landed inside the Balad airbase in the Salah al-Din Governorate, without causing casualties or any significant damage. On 17 June, three Katyusha rockets landed within the perimeter of the Camp Taji military base in the Salah al-Din Governorate, without causing casualties. On 18 June, a Katyusha rocket landed close to the Ninawa Operations Command site in Mosul, without causing casualties. On 19 June, a Katyusha rocket hit the joint headquarters of several oil companies in the Zubayr district of Basrah Governorate, wounding three persons. A second rocket landed near an oil facility in the Rumaylah area of Basrah Governorate, without causing casualties.

24. The National Security Council discussed those developments on 20 June. The Prime Minister directed the security and intelligence services to locate and prosecute those responsible for launching rockets. He noted that the Government was intensifying efforts to prevent the recurrence of criminal attacks aimed at

destabilizing the country. On 22 June, a government spokesperson announced that Iraqi security forces would provide additional security at Iraqi military bases to ensure the safety of military personnel and advisers and trainers of the international coalition.

25. According to reports from the Turkish armed forces, the Turkish air force continued to launch regular air strikes against positions held by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. On 27 May, the Turkish armed forces launched Operation Claw, a combination of ground operations and air strikes, in the Hakurk area of northern Erbil Governorate. According to reports by the Ministry of National Defence of Turkey, a total of 43 PKK elements were captured or killed between 27 May and 10 June. On 26 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq publicly condemned recent air strikes in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, which, it claimed, killed four civilians and wounded four others. In its statement, the Ministry also called for respect of the sovereignty of Iraq and urged improved cooperation to ensure the security of the border between Iraq and Turkey. On 30 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey stated that it would continue cross-border operations against terrorists in Iraq.

26. On 17 July, shooters attacked a restaurant in Erbil, resulting in the killing of a Turkish diplomat and two Iraqi civilians. The perpetrators were not apprehended at the scene. Following the incident, security forces enforced checkpoints in the area and closed the roads between Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Kirkuk, and Erbil and Makhmur. The attack was widely condemned throughout Iraq and the region. A joint investigation was initiated by federal and Kurdistan regional authorities, along with those of Turkey, and two suspects were arrested on 20 July.

#### **D. Regional and international developments**

27. Senior Iraqi political figures have extensively discussed the impact of the current tensions between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the economic and security situation in Iraq. The President has produced a national framework document for a unified policy on Iraq, in which measures to protect and promote stability in the country and its interests in the region are set out. Measures to promote domestic stability include limiting the use of weapons to competent State institutions, fighting corruption and developing infrastructure. The document contains a reaffirmation that Iraq will not align itself with any country or group of countries; that its territory cannot be used for aggression against any neighbouring country; that it seeks to be a convening power, not a point of conflict; and that it intends to cooperate with other States on the basis of shared interests. The Prime Minister has repeatedly emphasized those points in his weekly press conferences.

28. During the reporting period, the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Ali Alhakim, engaged extensively with regional and other foreign partners to promote the reduction of tensions and to advance shared political, economic and security interests.

29. On 3 May, the Prime Minister visited France, where he met the President, Emmanuel Macron, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, the Minister of the Armed Forces, Florence Parly, and the Minister of the Economy and Finance, Bruno Le Maire. Mr. Macron highlighted the importance of bilateral cooperation against ISIL, the reconstruction of liberated areas and the maintenance of regional stability. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Iraq and France signed a strategic road map on relations between the two countries.

30. On 6 May, the President of Iraq and the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, discussed bilateral relations and regional tensions by

telephone. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif, subsequently visited Iraq on 25 and 26 May. During separate meetings with the President and the Prime Minister of Iraq, the need for constructive dialogue and the prevention of further escalation of tensions between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran were emphasized. Those intentions were reiterated on 22 July, when Mr. Al-Mahdi met Mr. Rouhani in Tehran, where they discussed bilateral relations, including the implementation of the agreements on bilateral cooperation reached during Mr. Rouhani's visit to Baghdad in March 2019. Mr. Al-Mahdi's delegation included the Deputy Prime Minister, as well as the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Oil, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Transport and the National Security Adviser.

31. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq visited Kuwait on 11 and 12 May for the seventh session of the Iraqi-Kuwaiti Joint Committee, which resulted in a number of memorandums of understanding, mainly on economic and trade issues. He also met the Emir, Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister, Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sabah Khalid Al Hamad Al Sabah. Afterwards, the Prime Minister of Iraq visited Kuwait on 22 May to discuss the regional situation. During meetings with the Emir, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kuwait, Marzouq al-Ghanim, he highlighted the need for regional cooperation to defuse tensions. The Emir visited Baghdad on 19 June, meeting with the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker. Discussions were focused on bilateral cooperation on trade, border crossings and energy, as well as the reconstruction of liberated areas in Iraq.

32. On 15 May, Mr. Al-Mahdi, accompanied by the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Oil, the Minister of Planning and the Minister of Water Resources, as well as the National Security Adviser, visited Ankara. Mr. Al-Mahdi and the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, discussed energy, water, borders and security, among other issues. On 28 May, the Presidents of Iraq and Turkey met in Istanbul to discuss regional developments. On 20 June, the Minister of Trade of Turkey, Ruhsar Pekcan, visited Baghdad to attend the Iraqi-Turkish Business Forum. She also met the President and the Prime Minister. The President of the Kurdistan Region visited Istanbul on 21 June, where he met Mr. Erdoğan to discuss a range of issues, including trade and security.

33. The President of Iraq held a meeting with the King of Jordan, Abdullah II, in Amman on 23 May, at which they reviewed regional developments. They also held a joint meeting with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas. That was followed by a visit to Amman on 28 May by Mr. Al-Halbousi, who also met the King to discuss regional security and stability.

34. On 29 May, Mr. Al-Mahdi was received by the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, with whom he discussed bilateral trade and investment, as well as regional developments.

35. On 30 and 31 May, the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq attended the summit of the League of Arab States and the fourteenth summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. In his speech, the President argued that the region must promote stability on the basis of the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs and the renunciation of violence and extremism.

36. During a telephone conversation with the Secretary of State of the United States, Michael Pompeo, on 14 June, the Prime Minister of Iraq urged the alleviation of tensions between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In mid-June, the United States granted Iraq a four-month extension to its exemption from United States sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, to enable the continuation of electricity

and gas imports from the Islamic Republic of Iran, which are critical to meeting the energy needs of Iraq.

37. The President of Iraq visited the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 25 to 29 June, accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The President met the Queen, Elizabeth II, the Prime Minister, Theresa May, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Jeremy Hunt, and the Lord Speaker, Norman Fowler. Discussions were focused on the continued support of the United Kingdom for the Iraqi security forces, the role of the United Kingdom in promoting stability in the Middle East and economic and trade relations. In a telephone conversation on 22 July, Mr. Al-Mahdi and the Secretary of State for Defence of the United Kingdom, Penny Mordaunt, stressed the urgent need for stability in the Gulf region and the Middle East, as well as the importance of respect for international law and free maritime navigation in the Gulf for all countries.

38. The Government of Iraq also welcomed several high-level visitors. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Heiko Maas, visited Baghdad on 8 June, pledging continued support for Iraq during meetings with the President and the Prime Minister. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman, Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, was received by the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker and the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 12 June, and their discussions were focused on bilateral trade, direct commercial flights and regional developments. The Government of Iraq welcomed the decision of Oman to open an embassy in Baghdad.

39. The Special Envoy to the Syrian Arab Republic of the President of the Russian Federation, Alexander Lavrentiev, visited Baghdad on 17 and 18 June. Separate meetings with the President, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs were focused on bilateral relations, the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and tensions between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

40. The Security Council visited Iraq on 29 June and held separate meetings with the following persons: the President; the Prime Minister; the Speaker and representatives of the parliamentary blocs in the Council of Representatives; the Minister for Foreign Affairs; representatives of the Kurdistan Region, including its President; and civil society actors, including representatives of women, young people and minorities. The Council delivered assurances of its continued support for Iraq in the post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation and development phase; endorsed the expanding engagement of Iraq with regional neighbours; expressed support for the country's continued efforts regarding Kuwaiti missing persons and property, including the national archives, and underscored the importance of the safe, dignified and voluntary return of all internally displaced persons affected by conflict, including in areas liberated by ISIL.

### **III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team**

#### **A. Political activities**

41. My Special Representative continued her engagement with representatives of the federal Government, leaders of political parties, parliamentarians, women's groups, civil society organizations and religious and community leaders on a wide range of issues, including national and local reconciliation (with a focus on the communities of Kirkuk and Sinjar), security sector reform, water management, the return of ISIL fighters and their family members, and oil revenue sharing.

42. In addition, my Special Representative held meetings with Iraqi political leaders, underlining the importance of the full completion of appointments to the Cabinet so that the Government can advance its programme without delay. She welcomed the appointments to three key ministerial posts on 24 June but expressed regret that the Cabinet did not include any women.

43. My Special Representative continued to offer mediation and her good offices to identify durable political solutions for both Kirkuk and Sinjar. In her discussions with the components as well as with the federal and regional Governments, she invited all sides to reach agreement on outstanding issues, such as power-sharing, mutual security, voter registration and land tenure, in a spirit of compromise and understanding.

44. On 30 April and 1 May, my Special Representative visited Dahuk and Ninawa Governorates, including Mount Sinjar, where she assessed the situation of internally displaced persons in protracted displacement and met local and governorate-level authorities, as well as community leaders, including from the Yazidi community. Reiterating the readiness of the United Nations system to assist in the reconstruction of affected areas, she warned that, without the establishment of a single administration and without the provision of security and public services, there was a growing risk that such areas would become breeding grounds for a new wave of radicalized violence and instability. She urged the federal and Kurdish authorities to consult local leaders in the Sinjar district and to establish, without delay, stable governance and security structures that would facilitate and accelerate the reconstruction of affected areas and the safe and sustainable return of displaced persons.

45. During the reporting period, my Special Representative visited Erbil on several occasions, engaging with Kurdish political leaders on issues related to the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government and national reconciliation. In her engagements with Kurdish leaders, she welcomed the start of a new road map for Baghdad-Erbil relations, on the basis of which both parties will work closely to find solutions to outstanding issues.

46. In line with the UNAMI mandate, my Special Representative carried out a number of regional visits related to Iraq. In Amman, she met the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ayman Safadi. In Tehran, she spoke with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Head of the Headquarters for Iran-Iraq Economic Relations, Hassan Danaeifar, and the Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Gholamhossein Dehghani, as well as other senior officials. On 24 June, she visited Ankara, where she met the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sedat Önal, and other senior officials. In all her meetings, she discussed key issues regarding relations between Iraq and its neighbouring countries, their support in the reconstruction of liberated areas and current political and security developments in Iraq and the wider region.

47. My Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance engaged with youth activists, civil society actors and senior local politicians in Anbar, Babil, Basrah, Karbala and Najaf Governorates, as part of an ongoing series of workshops organized by the UNAMI Office of Political Affairs. The workshops are aimed at supporting Iraqi youth in developing strategies to promote peace and reconciliation in their communities and in sharing their ideas with local politicians and decision makers. Each workshop proved to be a catalyst for vigorous and informed debate between young activists and their political representatives, and specific proposals emerged on issues such as the environment and youth unemployment.

## **B. Electoral assistance**

48. On 22 July, the Council of Representatives passed the first amendment to the Governorate Council Electoral Law of 2018. It paves the way for preparations to move forward in holding the delayed council elections, which are now set to be held on 1 April 2020, as provided for in the amended law.

49. The parliamentary Legal Committee consolidated drafts of proposed amendments by the Council of Ministers and the Independent High Electoral Commission, as well as individual proposals from members of the Council of Representatives, prior to submission for voting at a plenary session. On 16 June, the UNAMI Electoral Assistance Office shared with the parliamentary Legal Committee a written advisory in which options for amending the electoral law were outlined. On 17 June, the Speaker chaired a meeting attended by the heads of parliamentary blocs and committees, as well as the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission, to review the draft legislation. Amendments to the electoral law were put to a vote on 22 July and the law was passed on the same day. The major amendments included provisions on the formula for seat allocations among parties, reducing the number of Council seats, electronic vote counting, age and education criteria for candidates, biometric voters' cards as a mandatory requirement and voting provisions for internally displaced persons.

50. On 11 May, the Independent High Electoral Commission concluded a national voter registration process, which enabled eligible voters to review and, if necessary, update their voter registration records. On the advice of UNAMI, the Commission extended the deadline for the more complex registration of internally displaced persons to 11 July.

51. As at 18 July, the Commission had collected the biometric data of 13.9 million voters, or 56 per cent of the total of 24.9 million voters. With millions of Iraqi voters still not covered by biometric registration, the adoption of an amendment restricting the right to vote to those with biometric cards risks disenfranchising a significant percentage of the voting population, meaning that millions of Iraqi voters would potentially not be able to exercise their constitutional right. The amendments adopted on 22 July are still being analysed. Meanwhile, UNAMI has highlighted the importance of guaranteeing the right of universal suffrage, enshrined in the Constitution of Iraq, and will continue to do so. It also continued to emphasize the need for accountability mechanisms, such as parliamentary oversight of the Independent High Electoral Commission, which would be key for free, fair and credible elections.

52. My Deputy Special Representative met politicians and other stakeholders, including representatives of minority communities and displaced persons, to discuss preparations for the forthcoming governorate elections.

53. In addition, and in line with the recently launched United Nations strategy on hate speech, the UNAMI Electoral Assistance Office is assisting the Independent High Electoral Commission in reinforcing the provisions in the electoral regulations of Iraq to counter hostile and inflammatory campaign language.

54. My Deputy Special Representative also met members of the Board of Commissioners of the Kurdistan Region Independent High Electoral Commission on 9 June, to assure them of the continued engagement of UNAMI on the implementation of the recommendations of their post-election review. That includes training on voter registration, as well as expert advice for the Commission and the Legal Committee of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament in their review of electoral legislation.

### **C. Human rights and rule of law activities**

55. Between 1 April and 30 June, the UNAMI Human Rights Office documented 242 incidents involving 287 civilian casualties. Those casualties comprised 94 civilians killed, including 7 women and 5 children, and 193 injured, including 14 women and 31 children. The casualties were caused mainly by improvised explosive devices, including vehicle-borne devices, and standoff attacks and targeted killings perpetrated by remnants of ISIL and other unidentified armed groups, as well as air strikes carried out by pro-government forces. That marks a substantial reduction in civilian casualties compared with the same period in 2018, when UNAMI documented 612 civilian casualties in 340 incidents, and reflects the overall decline in civilian casualties since the military defeat of ISIL in December 2017.

56. UNAMI continued to observe trials and investigative hearings of ISIL defendants, including non-Iraqi fighters, and more than 160 trials were monitored during the reporting period. UNAMI observed a high volume of ISIL cases processed by courts in Baghdad and Ninawa Governorates, all of which proceeded in an orderly manner. The main concerns included the frequent reliance on evidence obtained from confessions, with many defendants alleging that such confessions were extracted under duress, and the use of statements of anonymous informants. UNAMI observed the presence of a defence counsel at almost every trial but noted with concern that the defence provided to defendants was minimal. It also noted the practice of prosecuting defendants for ISIL membership or association under anti-terrorism legislation, rather than holding them to account for specific acts. That practice may not sufficiently address the needs of victims or their families for justice, accountability and reparation.

57. UNAMI and the Government also discussed the future repatriation of ISIL fighters and their family members, both Iraqis and non-Iraqis, from the Syrian Arab Republic to Iraq. To date, there is no clarity on the numbers, start date, screening and security arrangements or hosting facilities upon return.

58. UNAMI began monitoring the work of family protection units located within the Iraqi Federal Police, following the approval granted by the Ministry of the Interior in April 2019. Those units receive and investigate cases of gender-based violence. Such monitoring is intended to document cases of gender-based violence, in close cooperation with the units, and take note of the response of the authorities. So far, UNAMI has visited four units in Baghdad and Kirkuk.

59. In close coordination with the United Nations country team, UNAMI continued to advocate the finalization of the draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law.

60. UNAMI supported the efforts of the Government of Iraq to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. With respect to the Committee's recommendation to reinstate citizenship for Faili Kurds, UNAMI organized a round-table discussion on 29 May to bring together members of the Faili Kurdish community, government representatives and members of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights and civil society, in order to provide a structured forum for advocacy on the issue. The participants proposed a number of measures, including legal reform, the creation of an electronic database for Faili Kurd census records and the creation of a committee within the Ministry of the Interior dedicated to accelerating the process of reinstating Faili Kurd citizenship. UNAMI will continue its advocacy with stakeholders to encourage the implementation of such measures.

61. As part of its film festivals on human rights and minorities across Iraq, UNAMI conducted 12 screenings of short films in 10 governorates. Each screening was

accompanied by a panel discussion involving local government representatives, community leaders, civil society, human rights activists and representatives of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights. Panellists discussed wide-ranging human rights and minorities issues, including the protection of journalists, discrimination against minority community members, early marriage, access to education and challenges faced by women with respect to access to employment.

62. On 29 April, the Office of the President announced that it had submitted a draft Yazidi Survivors Law to the Council of Representatives. The draft bill is aimed at recognizing and responding to the suffering of Yazidi women who were held in captivity by ISIL. Measures proposed in the bill include the rehabilitation, reintegration and economic empowerment of survivors, as well as symbolic recognition of the atrocities committed against Yazidis. Issues surrounding the legal status of children born of women held in captivity by ISIL are identified, and the establishment of a specialized court in Sinjar that would address the civil status claims of such children is foreseen. The bill underwent its first reading in the Council of Representatives on 2 July and will now be referred to the relevant parliamentary committees for further review.

63. The Department of Yazidi Affairs of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs of the Kurdistan Region reported that, as at 3 June 2019, of 6,417 Yazidi abductees, 3,476 individuals (1,184 women, 337 men, 1,020 girls and 935 boys) had been rescued or had managed to escape from ISIL captivity since 2014.

64. UNAMI continues to receive reports of limitations to the freedom of expression of journalists and human rights defenders, including incidents of harassment and intimidation. For example, on 28 May, a well-known journalist in Baghdad received a death threat over the telephone following the publication of an article on alleged corruption involving members of a political party.

65. During the reporting period, demonstrations were held in Baghdad, Basrah, Najaf and Dhi Qar Governorates, and protesters called for employment opportunities and the delivery of essential services, including water and electricity, as well as freedom of expression, good governance, the protection of journalists and investigations into alleged corruption. In Basrah, protesters were arrested but were later released conditionally.

66. On 19 and 26 June, respectively, the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Government of Iraq commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. Speaking at an event in Baghdad, my Deputy Special Representative urged the Government to implement a survivor-centred approach in its response to conflict-related sexual violence, in line with Security Council resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#).

67. The Women Advisory Group for Politics and National Reconciliation in Iraq continued to lobby the Government on specific concerns. On 27 June, the Group met staff of the United Nations system in Iraq to discuss challenges faced by displaced women, in particular those with a perceived affiliation with ISIL, in finding economic opportunities and obtaining civil documentation.

#### **D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development**

68. During the reporting period, of the 1.75 million Iraqis targeted, 633,356 received some form of humanitarian assistance provided by 109 partners operating in 840 locations across the country. However, halfway through the year, funding for the humanitarian response plan for 2019 is already perilously low, with only \$208 million received as at 30 June of the \$701 million needed to implement humanitarian

programming for the approximately 1.7 million internally displaced persons, as well as other vulnerable communities. The funding shortfall has already resulted in the scaling down or termination of several priority projects. For example, education projects in 17 displacement camps in Ninawa Governorate were discontinued in June, and learning centres in those camps will close entirely in August, unless additional funds are secured.

69. Despite the funding shortage and predictable seasonal hardships of the hot summer months, intention surveys recently carried out in displacement camps found that 88 per cent of camp residents prefer to remain displaced for the short to medium term rather than return to their areas of origin, because of serious security concerns and the absence of basic services.

70. The ability of humanitarian organizations to gain access to and operate in areas previously affected by conflict in the central and northern governorates of Iraq continues to deteriorate, in particular in the Sinjar and Makhmur districts of the Ninawa Governorate. In several governorates, the movement of humanitarian organizations has been increasingly restricted, and local authorities disregard the nationally agreed procedures for obtaining access letters. Both military actors and civilian authorities are demanding that additional approvals be obtained locally. Adding to the obstacles caused by uncoordinated security entities at checkpoints in sensitive areas or disputed territories, there are now persistent and increasing bureaucratic impediments at the district and subdistrict levels.

71. The United Nations continued to support stabilization and rehabilitation efforts in Iraq. The Funding Facility for Stabilization completed 139 projects in the five liberated governorates during the past three months, including the rehabilitation of 32 schools, universities and educational institutions. Among them is Ninawa University, which will welcome more than 5,000 students during the 2019–2020 academic year. In the health sector, the Facility rehabilitated the largest hospital in the Ninawa Governorate, Qayyarah Hospital, which serves a population of 200,000 people. The funding deficit for the Facility remains at \$325 million out of a total requirement of \$1,380 million. The Facility urgently requires funds for the key areas of Mosul, Bayji, Hawijah and western Anbar and Ninawa Governorates. Funding shortages will have a significant impact on the ability of displaced Iraqis to return to their homes.

72. In partnership with the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continued to improve access to civil documentation for displaced persons, issuing approximately 7,400 identity cards (nationality certificates and civil identity cards) to displaced persons in Erbil and Dahuk by the end of June. UNHCR organized a workshop with the participation of senior representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Judicial Council and other government institutions, aimed at formulating recommendations on addressing the legal and policy challenges for persons at risk of statelessness, including children born in areas formerly under the control of ISIL, in acquiring Iraqi nationality.

73. The Mine Action Service continued to support the Government of Iraq on the coordination of an effective explosive hazard response. On 29 May, the Mine Action Service and the Directorate of Mine Action signed a task order process agreement, enabling mine action actors to implement survey and clearance operations more efficiently, which represents an important step in better collaboration towards mitigating explosive hazards in the country. In a significant effort to increase the participation of women in the traditionally male-dominated mine action sector, women high-risk searchers were recruited and trained for Mine Action Service operations in Sinjar, Ninawa Governorate, and teams now have an equal composition of women and men.

74. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations assisted 3,000 vulnerable people in farming families, including women and young people, in Ninawa, Anbar, Salah al-Din and Kirkuk Governorates, by providing 290 households with training and equipment sets for greenhouses and agricultural inputs, including seeds, tools and fertilizers, in addition to providing 210 households with backyard gardening kits that included seeds, fertilizers and gardening tools. Such activities have increased the social stability of host communities and returnees, who have been affected by years of war and economic and social decline.

75. To improve the conditions for the sustainable economic and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals and communities, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided livelihood support to 2,170 people in areas with severe living conditions and a high number of returnees. It also provided grants to 71 businesses to create jobs for demobilized young people and to contribute to their reintegration into communities. In coordination with the Government of Iraq and partners, IOM supported 630 Iraqis who chose to return home from abroad in re-establishing themselves in their communities. More than 3,500 people from local communities were involved in the design and planning of, and participated in, community-based social cohesion activities in eight governorates throughout Iraq. Such activities were aimed at bringing people together and fostering positive interaction, on the basis of the principle that restored trust and enhanced social cohesion will promote community resilience in the face of crises.

76. As part of its support for community policing efforts in Iraq, which contribute to peace and security and prevent the drivers of irregular migration, IOM helped communities and local police forces to establish and operate community policing forums. The forums are open and inclusive platforms in which security issues affecting the community can be discussed with the aim of rebuilding trust between the population and law enforcement officials, which is particularly vital in the current context of displacement and return in Iraq. During the reporting period, 11 such forums were established in Anbar, Basrah, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. The total number of forums established since 2015 is now 112, in 11 governorates.

77. One of the priorities of the national poverty reduction strategy of Iraq, on which the World Food Programme and the Ministry of Trade are working together, is a technical assistance initiative aimed at digitalizing the public distribution system. The aim of the digitalization project is to replace the current paper-based system with an electronic platform, promoting better management of daily entitlements and system operations.

78. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Environment and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, is working on a plan to establish a national network of protected areas in Iraq and to support the country in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other related commitments. Between 17 and 20 June, UNEP, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Environment, organized workshops on the management of chemicals for 60 participants from Iraqi ministries and departments. The workshops are part of a project in support of the development of the national implementation plan of Iraq for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Initial Assessment for the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Iraq.

79. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime continued its work on preventing and countering terrorism in Iraq, including by making suggestions on the new draft Counter-Terrorism Law, developing a strategy that is aimed at preventing

the misuse of chemicals in improvised explosive devices and establishing an association of victims of terrorism.

80. On 5 July, Babylon was inscribed by the World Heritage Committee on the World Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at its forty-third session, held in Baku. The UNESCO office in Iraq and the World Heritage Centre continue to provide support to the Iraqi authorities on the maintenance and sustainable management of the site. Other UNESCO activities included a range of educational projects for Iraqi nationals and Syrian refugees at various levels and in various age groups, such as technical and vocational training, enrolment projects to improve access to quality and inclusive education with gender equity, and teacher mentoring.

81. In addition, UNESCO continued its efforts relating to the safety of journalists. On 20 June, it organized a meeting with the Culture and Media Committee and the Human Rights Committee of the Council of Representatives, as well as the Media Adviser to the Prime Minister, on the National Committee on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

## **E. Security and operational issues**

82. On 4 June, the Prime Minister announced that the former International Zone would be accessible 24 hours a day. The Department of Safety and Security of the United Nations has since recommended a series of robust security risk mitigation measures to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and assets, while enabling the delivery of programmes and activities.

83. During the reporting period, the Department of Safety and Security supported an average of 50 field missions per day, ranging from medium- to high-risk missions, and maintained close coordination with the Government of Iraq for security support, which is fundamental for its operations across the country.

84. Construction work has started on the UNAMI field office in Mosul. Prefabricated units, materials and blast walls have been shipped to a location allocated by the Government of Iraq. By mid-July, basic infrastructure installations had been completed, including water and sanitation, communication connectivity, power and fuel storage, to provide accommodation and office space for up to 10 staff members.

85. UNAMI and the United Nations country team have initiated a project for the integration of United Nations air transportation assets and operations in Iraq, which is expected to increase seating capacity, while reducing travel costs, for individual United Nations entities in Iraq.

## **IV. Observations**

86. The recent appointments to the key roles of Minister of the Interior, Minister of Defence and Minister of Justice will further strengthen the ability of the Government to implement its programme aimed at improving the lives of all Iraqis. I encourage Iraqi political leaders to build on this positive momentum, overcome their differences and complete appointments to the Government with the appointment of a Minister of Education. Within that context, I reiterate my call to appoint women to senior decision-making positions and to ensure inclusive and effective governance.

87. I welcome the continued focus of the Government on combating corruption and enhancing transparency, for example by publicly reporting on the implementation of its programme. Equally important are the ongoing discussions on how to improve the

business environment in Iraq and attract foreign investments. The translation of such discussions into specific and tangible actions will be crucial, including through the modernization of the financial sector.

88. Progress on the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government, including the appointment of three women ministers, marks a positive development. I encourage political leaders of the Kurdistan Region to now move forward with the appointment of the Minister of Natural Resources and of the Chancellor of the Security Council, and to focus on implementing the priorities of the Regional Government, as well as further improving its relations with Baghdad.

89. Key appointments to the positions of Deputy Minister, Directors General and chairs of parliamentary committees are central to augmenting the ability of the Government to deliver much-needed services to its citizens and to implementing its priorities, certainly in the current period of post-conflict recovery. Their speedy finalization, while taking into account the need for the representation of women, will be key.

90. The statement by the Prime Minister on 18 June, in which he reaffirmed that armed groups operating outside State control would be held accountable in accordance with Iraqi law, is commendable. Similarly, the Executive Order of 1 July on the popular mobilization forces deserves wide political support. The upcoming period will demonstrate the extent to which the order will be executed and whether the implementation measures will have the desired effect.

91. Continued improvement in Baghdad-Erbil relations will help Iraq to consolidate its security and economic gains. A closer partnership between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government is key to addressing outstanding issues. My Special Representative will continue to offer her good offices to promote an open and transparent dialogue on all matters of mutual concern. Holding inclusive and credible elections, as well as enhancing public trust in the electoral process, will be crucial.

92. I am concerned about increasing reports of harassment and intimidation of journalists and human rights defenders. The Government of Iraq must increase its efforts to protect freedom of speech and protect the safety of journalists and human rights defenders throughout the country.

93. Sustained and active efforts by Iraq to strengthen its relations with neighbouring countries are laudable. The country's leaders have successfully highlighted their commitment to improving security and stability within Iraq and the region. However, ongoing regional tensions remain a source of serious concern, including in terms of their potential impact on Iraq. I encourage Iraq, its neighbours and international partners to take concrete steps and further address existing concerns and disputes in the region, through dialogue and in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.

94. Regarding the return of ISIL fighters and their family members, both Iraqis and non-Iraqis, from the Syrian Arab Republic to Iraq, it must be clear that, if the issue is not appropriately addressed, it has a potential impact not only on Iraq but also on the wider region and far beyond. Moreover, issues of due process and accountability cannot be limited to the courtroom. A structural dialogue is of the utmost importance to give clarity regarding the assistance that the United Nations may or can provide in this regard.

95. To sufficiently address the needs of victims and their families for justice, accountability and reparation, I reiterate the need for fair trials, in line with the domestic legal framework of Iraq and its obligations under international law.

96. Humanitarian and stabilization efforts remain underfinanced. Funding for the humanitarian response plan for 2019 remains at \$194 million of the \$701 million

needed to implement humanitarian programming. The Funding Facility for Stabilization remains seriously underfunded, at \$335 million. I call upon the international community to continue its support for United Nations humanitarian and stabilization efforts. Iraq needs continued and sustained assistance to help to rebuild itself and overcome the toxic and destructive legacy of ISIL.

97. The visit of the Security Council to Iraq on 29 June was welcome. I am pleased that the Council conveyed strong messages of its continued support for Iraq at a time when the country's Government and people are working hard to overcome the legacies of the past and build a peaceful, stable and prosperous future.

98. Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my Special Representative, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and to United Nations staff in Iraq for their continued efforts and dedication to implementing the Organization's mandate under challenging circumstances.

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