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Implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013)

Thirtieth report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), covers developments pertaining to missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, since my previous report, dated 28 January 2021 (S/2021/93).

II. Recent activities with regard to the repatriation and return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains

2. Further progress was made in the identification of missing Kuwaiti persons during the reporting period. On 3 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait announced in a press statement that eight of the sets of human remains exhumed from the burial site in Samawah, Muthanna Governorate, in March 2019 and transferred from Iraq to Kuwait in August 2019 for DNA identification had been identified as Kuwaiti nationals who, according to the Kuwaiti official list of prisoners of war and missing persons, had been missing since 1991. In addition, a Saudi national was identified on the same occasion according to the Saudi Arabian official list of prisoners of war and missing persons. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also confirmed the identification of nine sets of human remains belonging to eight missing Kuwaiti persons and one third-country national in a joint statement issued on behalf of the Tripartite Commission on 6 March 2021.

3. In identical letters dated 12 April addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me, Kuwait presented the names of the eight identified missing Kuwaiti persons, noting that their families had been informed, and affirmed the continuation of the complex process of identifying the remains previously received from Iraq. In the letters, Kuwait underscored that the recent identification of the eight sets of human remains, announced on 3 March, had followed the identification of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals missing since 1991, which had been announced in November 2020 and January 2021. In the letters, Kuwait also thanked the Governments of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and France, members of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Subcommittee, ICRC and the United Nations



Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for their efforts and endeavours, which contributed to determining the fate of those missing, despite the restrictions due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

4. On 30 March, the remains of a missing Iraqi soldier that had been found on Bubiyan Island in February 2020 were handed over from Kuwait to Iraq. The handover ceremony was held at Kuwait International Airport under the supervision of ICRC, in the presence of the Undersecretary for Legal Affairs and Multilateral Relations of Iraq, Qahtan Al-Janabi, the Head of the National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs of Kuwait, Rabea Al-Adsani, and the Ambassador of Iraq to Kuwait, Al-Manhal Al-Safi. The remains were transported by an Iraqi military plane to Iraq on the same day. In identical letters dated 12 April addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me, Kuwait underscored that important development, which followed the previous repatriation of remains to Iraq, in 2013. In the letters, Kuwait noted that the search for burial sites of Iraqi soldiers inside Kuwait had started in 1999.

5. On 6 April, UNAMI attended, in its observer capacity, the 115th session of the Technical Subcommittee, which was held in a hybrid format with both in-person and online participation, owing to COVID-19 restrictions. The members of the Subcommittee welcomed the new head of the Iraqi delegation, Thaer Saad Abdullah, and conveyed their great appreciation to the former head of the Iraqi delegation, Major General Hazem Qasem Majeed, for his work and achievements during his five-year tenure.

6. In his briefing to the Technical Subcommittee, Mr. Abdullah informed the Subcommittee that, owing to COVID-19 restrictions, no new excavations had been carried out during the reporting period. He provided updates on the continued efforts of Iraq to locate potential witnesses with information about human remains in Samawah, Muthanna Governorate. He reaffirmed the commitment of Iraq to following all potential leads in Muthanna.

7. Concerning the Karbala' site, ICRC informed the Technical Subcommittee about the renewed request made by ICRC to a Subcommittee member for analysis of satellite imagery from the area. The requested analysis would assist in identifying further potential locations for excavation. The Kuwaiti representative emphasized the importance of thoroughly reviewing all potential information regarding the site, recalling that three of the four Karbala' sites had previously been explored and exhumed.

8. With regard to the Khamisiyah site, the Kuwaiti representative defined it as an equally significant site for further exploration and reiterated the importance of satellite imagery analysis to help to minimize the amount of time and effort invested in locating specific excavation areas within that large burial site. He also stressed the importance of continuing other exploration efforts in parallel. The Iraqi representative agreed and confirmed that a field visit to the Khamisiyah site would be conducted, with the participation of representatives of Kuwait, ICRC and UNAMI, as soon as the COVID-19 movement restrictions were lifted.

9. The Iraqi representative informed the Technical Subcommittee that the Ministry of Defence continued to follow up on information regarding the Salman Pak and Mahawil sites in Iraq, as well as the naval base in Kuwait. He also reiterated the Ministry's commitment to broadcasting calls for witnesses through the media on a quarterly basis.

10. On 18 March, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, who assumed her official functions on 7 March 2021, met the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq,

Mr. Al-Janabi. They discussed the continued progress in the search for missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, as well as the current status of missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. The Deputy Special Representative emphasized the priority given by UNAMI to the file on missing Kuwaiti persons and Kuwaiti property and reaffirmed her continued support. The Undersecretary reiterated his Government's commitment to resolving outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait.

11. On 22 March, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance met the Ambassador of Kuwait to Iraq, Salem al-Zamanan. The Ambassador noted that Kuwaiti forensic experts and identification specialists were continuing the complex process of identifying the human remains exhumed from grave sites in Samawah in March 2019 and January 2020, which had been handed over by Iraq to Kuwait in August 2019 and September 2020, respectively. The Ambassador underscored the importance of increased efforts towards the recovery of further missing Kuwaiti persons, including through the identification of potential burial sites, as well as a more sustained focus on locating missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. The UNAMI senior leadership remains committed to continuing active in-person engagement with Kuwait on the file and plans to conduct an official visit to Kuwait as soon as the COVID-19 situation permits.

12. Planned UNAMI training for staff of the Ministry of Defence of Iraq on the use of ground-penetrating radar in the search for burial sites, which had been postponed in 2020 owing to COVID-19 and the associated movement restrictions, is now scheduled for the second half of 2021. Logistical preparations are under way in cooperation with the specialized training department of the Service for Geospatial, Information and Telecommunications Technologies at the Global Service Centre at Brindisi, Italy.

III. Recent activities with regard to the return of Kuwaiti property

13. Progress was also made with regard to the return of Kuwaiti property. On 28 March, Mr. Al-Janabi, leading a delegation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, officially handed over to the Government of Kuwait a consignment of Kuwaiti property comprising books belonging to Kuwaiti colleges and institutes, and large numbers of videotapes belonging to the Ministry of Information. The handover was conducted at the Sheikh Saud Al-Nasser Institute for Diplomatic Studies in Kuwait City, in the presence of the Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations of Kuwait, Nasser Al-Hein, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Tariq Al-Sheikh, representing UNAMI.

IV. Observations

14. The identification of the human remains of an additional eight missing Kuwaiti persons and one third-country national was another positive step in advancing this important humanitarian file. The handover of the remains of the Iraqi soldier by Kuwait to Iraq is the first of its kind since 2013. I extend my deepest condolences to the families of the missing persons, which have long awaited information about the fate of their loved ones.

15. I commend the diligent efforts of the Kuwaiti forensic team in carrying out the complex process of identification of human remains. It is my hope that the meticulous and persistent efforts of the Kuwaiti forensic teams will yield further positive

identifications of human remains in order to bring some relief to the families of Kuwaiti persons still missing. Progress on this important humanitarian file relies on dedicated cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait, with the strong support of the Tripartite Commission and ICRC. I commend the Commission's members for their ongoing assistance, guidance and commitment under the able leadership of ICRC.

16. The handover by the Government of Iraq, in March, of a large number of books from Kuwaiti educational institutes and videotapes from the Ministry of Information represents an important step forward in the recovery and return of Kuwaiti property. The return of the Kuwaiti national archives remains a high priority, given their symbolic and historical importance. I encourage the Government of Iraq to dedicate more resources and efforts to the advancement of the file by expanding the search nationwide for missing Kuwaiti items, including the national archives, with a view to achieving more concrete results.

17. I reiterate the unwavering commitment of the United Nations and UNAMI to continuing to promote, support and facilitate the efforts of the Government of Iraq regarding the file on missing Kuwaiti persons and Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.
