



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/46/612
4 November 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-sixth session
Agenda item 97 (b)

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES,
QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND
HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS: QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND
DISPLACED PERSONS

Humanitarian assistance to Iraqi refugees and
displaced persons

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The aftermath of the Persian Gulf war of January and February 1991 presented a scene of suffering and devastation compounded by ecological disasters of unprecedented magnitude and the collapse of the infrastructure essential to sustain life in today's human societies. In March and April, following the post-war civil conflict, the largest sudden refugee emergency of the past decade sent an estimated 450,000 persons to the Turkish border and approximately 1.4 million fleeing to the Islamic Republic of Iran.
2. On 9 April 1991, the Secretary-General appointed Sadruddin Aga Khan as his Executive Delegate for a United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme for Iraq, Kuwait and the Iraq/Turkey and Iraq/Iran Border Areas "to ensure a prompt and effective response to this situation". With the appointment of the Executive Delegate, an inter-agency humanitarian relief programme began to take shape that today covers the work of eight United Nations agencies, 18 non-governmental agencies, and a contingent of 500 United Nations guards. In total, approximately 1,000 international staff serve in Iraq under this programme.
3. A number of precedents were established which might well be of interest for future humanitarian efforts: the decision to aid the direct return of refugees to their homelands via a system of "blue routes", thereby avoiding the need to construct and administer refugee camps; the creation and deployment

of a United Nations guards contingent to protect United Nations personnel and property, to provide an element of security and stability and to serve as "moral witness" in the humanitarian sphere; and the development of a system whereby a country with sufficient resources could assume responsibility for the care of the vulnerable groups within its borders.

4. The humanitarian activities of the inter-agency programme in Iraq are governed by the Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed by the Foreign Minister of Iraq and the Executive Delegate at Baghdad on 18 April 1991. The programme's requirements, aims and structure are all detailed in the Consolidated Appeal for Urgent Humanitarian Action, which was issued by the Executive Delegate on 15 May 1991. A thorough assessment of Iraq's humanitarian needs was furnished in the 15 July report of the mission led by the Executive Delegate, which surveyed in particular the areas of water and sanitation, health, food supply and energy. The May appeal, updated in June to include a United Nations guards contingent, requested \$US 460.3 million, \$US 285.6 million of which has been received as at 29 October 1991. The most significant results of the programme are outlined below. The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/5 of 30 May 1991.

II. REFUGEES AND REPATRIATION

5. In April and May of this year, 1.5 million people fled Iraq for the Islamic Republic of Iran, and another 450,000 fled Iraq for Turkey. By the end of August, only five months later, all but 124,300 people had returned to their home regions, most of them utilizing the systems of humanitarian relief centres (UNHUCS), mobile stations, and blue routes designed and implemented by the United Nations, and encouraged by the "moral witness" and stability provided by the United Nations guards. Given the traditional plight of refugees throughout the world, who may spend years - even decades - in refugee camps far from their homes, this early, voluntary return was a major achievement.

6. From the onset of the emergency until the situation stabilized in June, the main objective was to sustain and support the refugees until they could return home. This was achieved by supplying blankets, tents, high protein food, and other material relief supplies, and by providing basic services (clean water, sanitation and health care). From April onward, a huge undertaking was launched by coalition military forces, by the Turkish and Iranian Governments and by private organizations, supplementing the efforts of the United Nations agencies, to save the lives of the refugees who fled.

7. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) activities since June have been devoted primarily to repatriation, protection, and implementation of short-term sanitation and water projects. In October, UNHCR began a winterization programme, the centrepiece of its current activity, to provide shelter to those remaining in the northern governorates of Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah.

8. For its part, the World Health Organization (WHO) has contributed to these efforts by dispatching technical missions to assess the health needs of the approximately 500,000 Kurdish refugees who fled to Turkey and to supervise the assistance given to them. These teams operated along the Iraqi-Turkish border, organizing training courses in emergency relief operations for local staff and coordinating the health component of the United Nations operations.

9. With the closing of all but one camp in Turkey, the priority focus shifted to areas within Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

10. In north-western Iraq, UNHCR assumed responsibility for all assistance activities from the departing coalition armed forces on 7 June. Working in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies, most notably the Office of the Executive Delegate, the World Food Programme (WFP), WHO, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other non-governmental organizations, UNHCR successfully assisted the reintegration of the returnee population.

11. An estimated 250,000 refugees are attempting to return to their ancestral villages along the border in Kurdish-controlled areas. Many are living in temporary shelters because they hesitate to return to government-controlled population centres. UNHCR, together with other United Nations and private agencies, has provided basic life-sustaining assistance to these people during the appeal period.

12. The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme has established a network of 34 warehouses, permanent and portable, in 13 different locations in Iraq, for the storage and distribution of emergency and relief material. This network has been supplied by air shipments transiting through Baghdad and by over-land shipments from or through Turkey and Jordan.

13. To meet the most immediate domestic necessities of people returning to Iraq from Iran and Turkey, UNHCR has developed and distributed a basic relief "package", consisting of jerry cans, cooking sets, water buckets and soap. Tents, blankets and plastic sheeting were distributed early in July to those returnees who possessed no shelter whatsoever.

14. In order to ensure the quality of water in areas where returnees have settled, an extensive programme has been initiated to rehabilitate water systems. Planning for the purchase and installation of generators, pumps, and pipes, sufficient for at least 50 villages and town delivery systems, has been completed. Water testing kits have also been provided to water engineers working on rehabilitation projects.

15. To complement the supplies produced by UNICEF and WHO, UNHCR has conducted nutritional surveys and provided basic and emergency health kits to clinics established to render immediate medical care to returnees. Sera for the treatment of snake bites, scorpion stings and tetanus - endemic in the northern regions - were purchased jointly by WHO and UNHCR for distribution through local clinics. A non-governmental agency was engaged by UNHCR to distribute pharmaceuticals to needy populations in northern Iraq.

16. UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO have worked in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health to strengthen and extend the health-care systems in the governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Medicines and medical equipment have been distributed through clinics in communities where returnees have settled, and renovations in preparation for winter have begun in some 20 health facilities.

17. IOM has been assisting in the repatriation of displaced Iraqis in Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the transportation needs within Iraq from border areas to individuals' home areas, and the repatriation of third-country nationals. Since January, more than 500,000 such movements have been arranged.

III. EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN IRAQ

18. The general approach adopted in the water and sanitation sector has been to channel international contributions to assist Iraq in the rehabilitation of its existing water and sanitation systems.

19. In an effort to control diarrhoeal diseases, UNICEF has supplied over 8 million sachets of oral rehydration salts to health centres and hospitals throughout the country. In addition, workshops and orientation sessions have been conducted in various governorates for those involved in diarrhoeal disease control programmes. A trainers' training course on control of diarrhoeal diseases covering 30 trainers has also been concluded. Oral rehydration therapy/nutrition corners have been established in many health centres.

20. Throughout the appeal period, the emergency provision of essential drugs has been a top UNICEF and WHO priority. To date, UNICEF has provided essential drugs, as well as some 275 basic emergency health kits, each sufficient for 10,000 people for three months. Total medical supplies distributed have amounted to more than 1,000 tons. Drug shipments were dispatched to Baghdad and other governorates.

21. As a means to control communicable diseases, UNICEF has provided technical assistance in disease surveillance to local health officials. Programme interventions such as sentinel site surveillance and laboratory testing have been introduced to facilitate the early warning and control of communicable diseases. As a result, surveillance systems have been established in 11 Baghdad health centres. Programme interventions in other parts of the country are being planned.

22. In March 1991, the activities of the Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) recommenced in 81 centres in Baghdad; in the following weeks, the programme quickly expanded nationwide. At this point, UNICEF has provided over 2.5 million doses of DPT, BCG, polio, measles and tetanus vaccines, as well as supplies and equipment. Approximately 850 health centres across the country have been equipped to provide immunization services for a special immunization drive beginning in October 1991.

23. A total of 81 United Nations volunteers (UNV) specialists have been in various stages of recruitment and deployment during the appeal period. UNV was particularly effective in the rapid fielding of crucially needed manpower in the initial stages of the United Nations humanitarian emergency programme in Iraq. The bulk of the UNVs have served in Iraq itself, and, to a lesser degree, in Turkey, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan, working with WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, the Iraq Relief Coordination Unit (IRCU), IOM and WHO. UNV specialists have provided a total contribution of 273 man-months to the humanitarian programme.

IV. FOOD REQUIREMENTS

24. As at April 1991, emergency food allocations were made available through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (from stocks in Jordan) to war-affected vulnerable groups in Iraq. This programme has provided food to vulnerable populations through Iraqi institutions - orphanages, kindergartens, old-age homes, health-care centres - as well as to Iranian refugees in one refugee camp. In addition, WFP has provided food to the destitute within the Iraqi social welfare system and to displaced people in northern and southern Iraq.

The number of beneficiaries covered was:

Institutions	80 000
The destitute	600 000
Refugees	55 000
Displaced people	<u>500 000</u>
Total	<u>1 235 000</u>

25. WFP, in cooperation with UNHCR, has instituted emergency food assistance programmes along the Iranian border in the Kurdish region. Its ongoing programme, in place since April, initially targeted 1 million people in Iran's five border provinces, later reducing its caseload as refugees returned to Iraq. WFP has provided transport from May onward to extended delivery points in the northern provinces involved. In all, approximately 80 000 MT have been distributed under WFP's programmes.

26. In May 1991, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) arranged to have the wheat crop in northern Iraq sprayed against sunn pest. According to reports available from the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture, spraying was 90 per cent to 95 per cent effective in treated areas. The area covered by six helicopters in 10 days of FAO-monitored operations was some 90,000 hectares. In addition FAO/OSRO has formulated and implemented emergency relief assistance aimed at the urgent provision of staple vegetable seeds, veterinary drugs and vaccines, and plastic sheeting for greenhouse covers.

V. KUWAIT

27. A welcome milestone has recently been reached in the humanitarian programme in Kuwait with the closing of the Abdali camp, which had been set up by the League of Red Cross Societies to accommodate displaced persons, primarily Palestinians and Bedouins, in the wake of the Gulf war. At its height, Abdali harboured approximately 10,000 displaced persons. On 10 October the last 712 of its inhabitants departed; of these, 588 Bedouins were allowed to remain in Kuwait, 59 Iraqis and Jordanians returned voluntarily to their respective countries of origin, 43 Iraqis remained in Kuwait to join families there, and 22 refugees were resettled in Scandinavia by UNHCR. On 11 October, the camp was dismantled.

VI. UNITED NATIONS GUARDS CONTINGENT

28. The agreement to deploy the United Nations Guards Contingent in Iraq (UNGCI) was signed at Baghdad on 24 May 1991, and was incorporated, as an annex, in the Memorandum of Understanding. This agreement was crucial in ensuring the successful handover of humanitarian operations in the north from the coalition forces to the United Nations and in the subsequent establishment of a "climate of security" in northern Iraq. The full complement of 500 authorized guards, representing 35 nationalities, was deployed as of October 1991.

29. The United Nations Guards Contingent have been instrumental in providing protection to the staff involved in the inter-agency humanitarian programme, to United Nations property, to warehouses and offices, and, most recently, to the 1,500-truck UNHCR winterization convoys. Patrols are conducted on a 24-hour basis in areas of operations, and have covered some 400,000 kilometres. In addition to these functions, the Guards are mandated to report on any incident which may have an effect on the security situation and the effective implementation of the humanitarian programme. They thereby assure the continued attention of the international community and constitute an element of stability in a volatile situation. Indeed, their presence furnishes a form of "moral testimony"; on several occasions the Guards have helped to prevent clashes, conflicts and loss of human life.

30. The United Nations Guards Contingent is composed of its Headquarters, based in Baghdad, and four sectors in the north and south of Iraq. Each is "divided" into sectoral headquarters and subsectors, to which UNGCI staff are assigned on a rotational basis. In Baghdad, the UNGCI headquarters consists of 10 guards and incorporates the operations, administration/logistic support and movement control units. In northern Iraq, guards are posted in three sectors, as follows: Sulaymaniyah (Ranya, Said Sadiq and Kalar subsectors), Erbil (Sadiq subsector) and Dohuk (Amadia and Zhako subsector); in southern Iraq, guards are currently stationed in Basrah, and are being deployed in the Amara subsector.

VII. CONCLUSION

31. The mandate assigned to the Executive Delegate is of a purely humanitarian nature. In keeping with it, the inter-agency programme has consistently focused upon the needs of the most vulnerable groups throughout the country. This will continue to be its major priority.

32. In the light of both the number of humanitarian crises demanding the urgent attention of the international community and the very limited resources available to meet them, it is neither just nor practical to continue to request funding for a country that was - and is - capable of feeding its people and seeing that their needs are met. With this in mind, in the report of the mission he led, the Executive Delegate proposed that agreement be secured on a mechanism whereby Iraq's own resources could be used to fund essential civilian needs to the satisfaction of the international community. On 15 August, the Security Council adopted resolution 706 (1991) which permits the sale of \$US 1.6 billion worth of petroleum, roughly two thirds of which would go towards meeting humanitarian aid requirements within Iraq. The Government of Iraq has yet to indicate its willingness to proceed with the arrangements set out under this resolution.

33. The Memorandum of Understanding governing the activities of this programme expires on 31 December 1991. Under the agreement's concluding article, "Two weeks before the expiration of the said period, the principles and their operational modalities shall be reviewed with a view to assessing any further need for their operation".

ANNEX

Chronology of events relating to the Office of the
Executive Delegate

(1991)

- 9 April Appointment of Sadruddin Aga Khan as Executive Delegate for the United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme for Iraq, Kuwait and the Iraq/Turkey and Iraq/Iran Border Area
- 14-18 April Mission of the Executive Delegate of Baghdad
- 18 April Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding at Baghdad between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq
- 7-14 May Mission of the Executive Delegate to the region
- 15 May Launching of the Consolidated Appeal for Urgent Humanitarian Action
- 18 May Departure of the first contingent of United Nations guards
- 25 May Issuance of the Pour Mémoire establishing the United Nations Guards Contingent
- 12 June Updated and Consolidated Appeal for Urgent Humanitarian Action, Pledging Conference
- 12-13 June Meeting of Executive Heads of agencies involved in the inter-agency programme, chaired by the Secretary-General; decision to undertake the July assessment mission (ACC meeting)
- 29 June-
13 July Executive Delegate's Assessment Mission to the Region
- 15 July Executive Delegate's mission report made public
- 22 July Appearance of the Executive Delegate and other mission members before the Sanctions Committee
- 31 July Meeting on Kuwait of executive heads of agencies involved in the inter-agency programme
- 15 August Adoption of Security Council resolution 706 (1991)
- 1 September Publication of the Updated Plan of Action
- 4 September Submission of the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 1 of Security Council resolution 706 (1991)

19 September Adoption of Security Council resolution 712 (1991)
3 October Full deployment of 500 United Nations guards reached
15 December Renegotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding
(approx.)
31 December Expiration of the Memorandum of Understanding
