



General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 September 2013

English only

Human Rights Council

Twenty-fourth session

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Joint written statement* submitted by the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status, the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, the Union of Arab Jurists, the Arab Lawyers Union, the General Arab Women Federation, North-South XXI, the United Towns Agency for the North-South Cooperation, the Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the Asian Women's Human Rights Council, the Organisation pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de la Coopération Economique Internationale - OCAPROCE International, Human Rights Now, the International Federation of University Women, Organisation Mondiale des associations pour l'éducation prénatale, the World Wide Organization for Women, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status; the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, the Indian Council of South America, the World Peace Council, International Educational Development, Inc., non-governmental organizations on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 September 2013]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The impact of ten years of occupation on Iraqi children*

The impact of the war and ten years (2003-2013) of occupation by the US/UK-led coalition has resulted in a catastrophic situation for all Iraqi children. According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)¹ around 3.5 million children are living in poverty, 1.5 million under the age of five are undernourished and 100 infants die every day. Thousands of children were killed during the occupation and the invasion of Iraq.

This report focuses on the violations by the occupying forces and Iraqi authorities of the Fourth Geneva Convention² and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

On 19 September 2012, the Security Council adopted a resolution strongly condemning violations of international law against children in armed conflict, calling on States to bring persistent perpetrators of violations to justice and reiterating its readiness to take targeted and graduated measures against such perpetrators.³

Since the invasion in 2003, the US/UK occupying forces and the Iraqi authorities grossly failed to fulfil their basic duties towards the children of Iraq in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).⁴ They must be held fully accountable for the harm they have inflicted upon Iraqi children.

Psychological effects of the war

A report produced by a group of Harvard medical researchers concluded that the children of Iraq "were the most traumatized children of war ever described" and that "a majority of the children would suffer from severe psychological problems throughout their lives".⁵ Children were also the most negatively affected during the years of punitive economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after the first Gulf War (1990).⁶

Half of the population of approximately 30 million Iraqis are children and adolescents. In recent decades, wars, international sanctions, internal unrest and massive civilian displacements within and beyond its borders have dominated Iraq. Since the 2003 invasion, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens, including many children and youth, have died and hundreds of thousands more have suffered serious injuries. Kidnapping for ransom, loss of parents and displacement have undermined the fundamental security of Iraqi children;

* Please see last page for list of NGOs without consultative status, also sharing the views expressed in this statement.

¹ IRAQ: A bad place for children <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=93133>.

² Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/full/380>.

³ The report provides a global overview of violations perpetrated against children's rights in situations of armed conflict, as well as the measures taken to protect them. <http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/security-council-demands-end-to-grave-abuses-committed-against-children-in-conflict/>

⁴ The convention was ratified by 194 United Nations countries, except the USA and Somalia. Resolution 25/ Session 44, November 1989

⁵ Harvard Study Team. "Harvard Study Team Report: Public Health in Iraq after the Gulf War." Mimeo. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. May 1991

⁶ Cherian, J. (2012). Sectarian violence breaks out after the U.S. troops leave, and the government sees a plot to balkanise the country. Frontline. Retrieved from <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2902/stories/20120210290205300.htm>, Volume 29 - Issue 02, Jan. 28-Feb. 10. Lando, B. (2007, March 18). 4 Years Later: Dump Those Ungrateful, Vicious Iraqis. The Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barry-lando/4-years-later-dump-those-_b_43718.html.

impacting an estimated two million Iraqi child refugees. Reports of malnutrition, deterioration of education, a high and increased rate of truancy, child labor, trafficking of children and involvement of children with militia and insurgency groups threaten the wellbeing of Iraqi children.⁷

Children have been exposed to seeing parents, relatives and friends killed or severely injured, and have witnessed violence, death and other traumatizing actions of war and occupation for years on. Many children are growing up as a son or daughter to victims of severe human rights violations such as arbitrary detention, torture or rape. Most of today's parents have not had the possibility to mourn their losses and recover from their traumatic experiences due to a lack of rehabilitation services and social recognition. Children living in survivor families therefore frequently become victims of aggression, physical and emotional abuse, and neglect resulting from intergenerational conflict and dysfunctional family structures produced by collective trauma. Children are exposed to violence inside and outside their homes. As a consequence, they suffer from a wide range of behavioral disturbances and trauma-related stress reactions such as sleep disorders, agitated and hyperactive behavior, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, as well as developmental and eating disorders. As children often have to support their traumatized parents in various ways, their own development in becoming productive members of society is inhibited. Horrible images of torn dead bodies scattered in streets and the scenes of their fathers or relatives being killed in front of their eyes will remain firm in the children's minds for many years and will leave negative psychological stamps in their future behaviors.⁸

Children deprived of a family environment

The figures on Iraqi orphans vary considerably but some estimate that there are up to 4.5 million orphans in the country.⁹ According to a 2011 UNICEF survey, about five percent of children aged 0-17 years are orphans who have lost one or both parents and approximately 2 percent are not living with a biological parent. Older age groups have a higher percentage of orphans (up to 7 percent in some governorates). Eight percent of children aged 10-14 have lost at least one parent.

The considerable number of Iraqi orphans has produced a social crisis in a country of less than 200 social workers and psychiatrists for a population of 30 million people. There are currently no child protection laws and officials say that desperately needed welfare legislation has been held hostage to sectarian squabbling in parliament.¹⁰ This situation makes the orphans of Iraq increasingly vulnerable to violence and criminals such as human traffickers and kidnappers, who taking advantage of the situation, sell children or force them into servitude, begging or prostitution. This is the crisis of an orphaned generation and many children still grow up in the shadow of violence. 600,000 orphans live on the street and they are usually the most affected by trafficking and kidnapping.

⁷ Abdul Kareem Al-Obaidi, B. B. (2010). Child and adolescent mental health in Iraq: current situation and scope for promotion of mental health policy? *Intervention, Volume 8, Number 1*, Page 40 - 51.

⁸ Dancewater. (2009, September 16). WWB: severe trauma to children. Retrieved from Dancewater: <http://dancewater.blogspot.be/2009/09/wwb-severe-trauma-to-children.html>

⁹ Orphans of Iraq <http://web.mit.edu/humancostiraq/> , <http://tv.globalresearch.ca/2011/02/45-million-orphans-iraq-protests-over-food-and-shelter>

¹⁰ Caroline Hawley. (2012, November 28). Iraq conflict: Crisis of an orphaned generation. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20461110>. BBC News Middle East

The impact on education

Before the 1990s, Iraq's education system statistically surpassed its neighbours in terms of access, literacy and gender equality. However, sanctions, wars and the occupation have pushed back those advances.¹¹

The destruction or the closing of many schools and universities has left a deep scar, transforming Iraq from one of the best educational systems in the region to an almost non-existent one. The deliberate targeting and killing of educators along with the exodus of others due to threats and violence left the country with a shortage of quality teachers. The educational system was left in shambles and it continues in this state. Schools have not been rebuilt and there is a lack of educational resources. The deterioration of the educational system has a huge impact on children and their development. A survey by the Tamuz Organization for Social Development carried out in the first half of 2011 found that schools were broken down; more than 20% of primary students, approximately four million children, drop out each year; and up to 65% of children in southern Iraq do not go to school. The main causes of the drop in numbers were the wars and sanctions that beset Iraq in the 1990s.¹²

Human trafficking, drugs and sexual abuse

Many children in Iraq are now victims of drug and sexual abuse. This is particularly true amongst orphans. Prior to the 2003 US-led invasion, drug addiction among children was practically non-existent according to Ameer Mohammad Bayat, a psychologist working with child addicts. In many cases children turn to drugs to ease the pain and sufferings inflicted by the war. The problem is worsened as the government neglects the chaotic situation children are living in.¹³

The years of war and instability after the invasion and the occupation of Iraq have also provided abundant opportunities for criminal elements to prosper, including human traffickers. The country experienced a breakdown of law and order with the war and occupation, resulting in a rise in kidnapping and trafficking.¹⁴

One NGO¹⁵ reports that recruiters rape women and girls on film and blackmail them into prostitution or recruit them in prisons by posting bail and then forcing them into prostitution via debt bondage. Some children are pressured into prostitution by family members to escape desperate economic circumstances, to pay debts, or to resolve disputes between families. NGOs report that these women and girls are often prostituted in private residences, brothels, restaurants, and places of entertainment. Some Iraqi parents have reportedly collaborated with traffickers to leave children at the Iraqi side of the border with Syria with the expectation that traffickers will arrange forged documents for them to enter Syria and find employment in a nightclub. Iraqi officials have uncovered networks of

¹¹ Jinan Hatem Issa, H. J. (2010). Overview of the Education System in Contemporary Iraq. Retrieved from http://www.eurojournals.com/ejss_14_3_02.pdf. Volume 14, Number 3 .

¹² Wing, J. (2012, april 4). Iraq's Struggling Education System. Retrieved from <http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/8/299972/>. Aknews.

¹³ Understanding Islam. (2008, december 25). Iraq's Children Drug Addicts, Dealers.

¹⁴ Abouzeid, R. (2009 (b), April 13). Will Iraq Crack Down on Sex Trafficking? Time world. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1890728,00.html>.

¹⁵ United States Department of State. (2012). Trafficking in Persons Report - Iraq. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USDOS,,IRQ,,4fe30cbf32,0.html>. United States Department of State.

women involved in the trafficking and sale of girls and boys for the purpose of sexual exploitation.¹⁶

How much is a child worth?

In 2009, gangs operating within Iraq were offering between GBP 200 to 4,000 per child, which was then sold internationally.¹⁷ Women between the ages of 15 to 22 from Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Syria are sold to traffickers in Tikrit for the equivalent of \$1,000-5,000 and then replaced or sold again every two or three months.¹⁸ The younger the girl, the more lucrative the profits—the highest demand is for girls under the age of 16. Traffickers reportedly sell girls as young as 11 and 12 for as much as \$30,000, while older “used” girls and women can be bought for as little as \$2,000. The traffickers are aided by sophisticated criminal networks that are able to forge documents and pay corrupt officials to remove impediments. In some cases, women and girls request to remain in detention centres even after a sentence is complete, fearful that their families will kill them for having been involved in prostitution. The government has done little to combat trafficking in girls and women. There have been no successful prosecutions of criminals engaged in human trafficking; no comprehensive programs to tackle the problem; and negligible support for victims.¹⁹

Cancer and malformed newborns

Approximately 300 tons and 1,700 tons of depleted uranium were used in the first Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, respectively. This is equivalent to seventy grams of depleted uranium per Iraqi citizen.²⁰ White phosphorous was also widely used by the US, in violation of International Humanitarian Law. Years after the U.S. invasion of Fallujah, the most heavily bombarded city during the war, there are reports of an alarming rise in the rates of birth defects, cancer and infant mortality, but the crisis, and its possible connection to weapons deployed by the United States during the war, remains woefully under-examined.²¹ Documented cases show many heart defects in Fallujah to be 13 times the rates in Europe. Birth defects involving the nervous system were calculated to be 33 times higher than in Europe.²² Infant mortality was found to be 80 per 1,000 births compared to 19 in Egypt, 17 in Jordan and 9.7 in Kuwait. Numerous reports and studies have confirmed the post-war increase in congenital defects, cancer and other illnesses not previously prevalent in Iraq. The remarkable reduction in the sex ratio in the cohort born one year after the fighting in 2004 identifies that year as the time of the environmental contamination,²³ which is consistent with claims that the current situation is a direct consequence of the use

¹⁶ IBID

¹⁷ Lavender, L. (2012). *Human Trafficking in Iraq- 2003 and beyond*. Retrieved from. Civil-Military Fusion Centre (CFC).

¹⁸ United States Department of State. (2012). *Trafficking in Persons Report - Iraq*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USDOS,,IRQ,,4fe30cbf32,0.html>. United States Department of State.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch. (2010). *At a Crossroads - Human Rights in Iraq Eight Years after the US-Led Invasion*. Retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/02/21/crossroads>.

²⁰ Uruknet.info, "Nothing depleted about 'depleted uranium'", 22 January 2006

²¹ EurAsia Review, Hannah Gurman, 29 November 2011, "The under-examined story of Fallujah: alarming rise in birth defects- Analysis"

²² Four Polygamous Families with Congenital Birth Defects from Fallujah, Iraq, Samira Alaani, Mozghan Savabieasfahani, Mohammad Tafash, and Paola Manduca, <http://www.brusseltribunal.org/pdf/Fallujah040111.pdf>

²³ Cancer, Infant Mortality and Birth Sex-Ratio in Fallujah, Iraq 2005–2009 Chris Busby, Malak Hamdan and Entesar Ariabi *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2010, 7, 2828–2837 <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/7/7/2828>

of unlawful chemical weapons by the US. The medical situation has become so dire that it is being compared to the after effects of Hiroshima and the medical effects that exposure to radiation had on its population.

Millions of Iraqis have been affected by the war and occupation. Hundreds of thousands have died and those alive continue to suffer grave human rights violations. Children have been disproportionately affected and continue to be so. Justice is long overdue.

The NGOs signatories to this statement call on the United Nations and the Human Rights Council to:

- Ensure that all human rights violations in Iraq during the sanctions, invasion and occupation be investigated by an international independent body
- Request that the Special Representative of UN Secretary General on violence against children, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography take the situation of the Iraqi children in account in their reports
- Appoint a Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights situation in Iraq
- Take all available measures to end the current state of impunity, both within Iraq and with regard to the culpability and responsibilities of the occupying powers, for all the human rights violations perpetuated against the children of Iraq
- Request that the High Commissioner for Human Rights present the Council with a detailed report on the Human Rights violations in Iraq since 2003 taking UNAMI and the civil society report findings into consideration

Notes

The following are NGOs without consultative status, who also share the views expressed in this statement: BRussels Tribunal, Arab Lawyers Association- UK, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), The International League of Iraqi Academics (ILIA), The Iraqi Commission on Human Rights (ICHR), Women Will Association (WWA), Organization for Widows and Orphans (OWO), Ikraam Center for Human Rights, Belgian Peace Movement, Ligue camerounaise des droits de l'homme, Monitoring Net of Human Rights in Iraq (MHRI), Women Solidarity for an Independent and Unified Iraq, Alliance to Renew Co-operation among Humankind, International Coalition against War Criminals (ICAWC), Medical Aid for the Third World, Association of Iraqi Diplomats (AID), The African Association of Human Rights (AAHR), Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World, Moroccan Association for the Right to a Fair Trial, Americans Against the War (France), General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), The International Action Center (IAC), American Worker, Association of Iraqi Intellectuals and Academics, The International Network of Arab Human Rights NGOs, America In Solidarity, Federacion De Mujeres Cubanas, Association of Victims of American Occupation Prisons, International Anti-Occupation Network (IAON), International Lawyers.org, International Society of Iraqi Scientists, The Perdana Global Peace Foundation, Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War, Spanish Campaign against the Occupation and for Iraq Sovereignty- CEOSI, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, El Taller International, World Courts of Women, Center for Development Studies- India, Wariscrime.org, Action Center for Justice, 1% A Peace Army.org, A Bigger Tent.org, Agir contre la guerre (France), American Voices Abroad (Berlin, Germany), American Voices Abroad Military Project (Europe), Anti War Fair, Arizona Christian Peacemakers, Armbands for Peace, Arms Against War, Artists Against the War, Backbone Campaign, Be the Change, Become Active, Bike for Peace (Germany), Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Bird Dogger Org., Children of Iraq Association (UK), Bloomington Peace Action Coalition (IN), Blue State News Only, Boston Mobilization, Bring Democracy Back, Bring Them Home, Butterfly Gardeners Association, Citizens for Accountability on Iraq, California for Democracy, Camp Casey Blog, Camp U.S. Strike for Peace Campaign, Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran, Canada Watch, Carolina Peace Resource Center (SC), Cartoon Free

America, Catalysts of Hope, Central Colorado Coalition on the Iraq War, Chester County Peace Movement (PA), Cindy Sheehan Org., Cities for Peace, Citizens for Legitimate Government, Citizens for Peace & Justice, Human Rights for all-Morocco, Christian Clergy For Impeachment.com, Clothing of the American Mind, Coalition Against Election Fraud, Coalition for Impeachment Now (COIN), Code Pink, the Iraqi Association for Human Rights (IAHR), Al-Basa'er Media Association, Consumers for Peace.org, Dhafir Trial.org, DC Anti-War Network.org, Democracy Action, Democracy for America Meetup (Birmingham, AL), The Democratic Activist, Democracy Rising.org, Democratic Underground, Human Resources (Tbilisi, Georgia), Democratic Renewal, Democrats.com, Earth Day.org, Earth Island Institute, East Cobb Democratic Alliance (Cobb County, GA), Eastern Long Island Democracy for America (NY), ECU Peace and Justice NC, Election Solar Bus, Environmentalists Against War, Envision a New America, Foundation for the Development of Fox Valley Citizens for Peace and Justice (IL), Global Exchange.org, Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, Global Resistance Network, Gold Star Families for Peace, Grandmothers Against the War, Grandmothers for Peace, Grass Roots Impeachment, Grass Roots Impeachment Movement, Grassroots North shoreWI, Green Delaware, Hawaii CD-01 Impeachment Action Coalition, Historians Against the War, Honk to Impeach, Idriss Stelley Foundation, Impeach Bush Cheney, Independent Progressive Politics Network, Impeach Bush Coalition, Impeach Bush TV.org, Impeachbush-cheney.com, Impeach Central, Impeach for Peace - Marshall, TX, Impeachable Treason, Impeach Duh, Impeachment Sunday, Inform Progressive Virginia, International Socialist Organization, Impeach Bush Cheney Net, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Iraq Veterans Against the War - Kansas City, Justice Through Music, Lake Merritt Neighbours Organized for Peace (Oakland, CA), Latinos for America, Leader of the Free Word - a great screen saver, Liberal Democracy Alliance, Liberal Kids, LIBERTY TREE Foundation for the Democratic Revolution, Los Angeles National Impeachment Centre, Louisiana Activist Network, Marijuana Policy Project, Massachusetts Impeachment Coalition, Men's Project for Peace, Michael Moore Online.org, Michigan Peace Works, Military Families Against the War (UK), Military Free Zone, Stop the War Coalition (Bedford, UK), Plataforma Aturem la Guerra (Stop the War Catalonia), Million Musicians March, Mission Not Accomplished, Montgomery County Progressive Alliance (MD), Musicians and Fine Artists for World Peace, Muslims for Peace (Australia), National Lawyers Guild - Chicago chapter, National Lawyers Guild - Detroit & Michigan chapter, Northeast Impeachment Coalition, North Jersey Impeach Group (NJ), Northeast Georgia Peace Corner Group (Helen, GA), Northwest Ohio Peace Coalition, Northwest Progressive Institute (Pacific Northwest US), Not in Our Name.org, Not in Our Name (Aotearoa, New Zealand), Nyack Impeachment Initiative (NJ), Ohio Progressive Action Coalition, One Global Community, Olympia Citizens' Movement to Impeach Bush/Cheney (WA), One Million Reasons, Operation Cease Fire, Operation Impeachment, Orange County Grassroots (CA), Out of Iraq, Out of Iraq Bloggers Caucus, Patrick Henry Democratic Club, Patriotic Pulse, Patriots for Gore, Peace Action, Peace Action Wisconsin, Peace and Accountability, Peace Drum, Peace Majority, Peace Movement Aotearoa (New Zealand), Peace Reso.org, Peninsula Peace and Justice Center (Palo Alto, CA), People's Campaign for the Constitution, People Powered Impeachment, People's Email Network, People's Glorious Five Year Plan, Picnic to Impeach, Pixel4Peace.org, Playing in Traffic, PledgeToImpeach.org, Political Cooperative, Politics and Art, Progressive Action Alliance, Progressive Action Center, Progressive Avenues, Progressive Democrats of America, Progressive Democrats of Hawaii Project Filibuster, Project for the OLD American Century, Refusing to Kill.org, Rescue Our Democracy, Sacramento for Democracy (CA), St Pete for Peace (FL), Sampsonia Way, San Diego for Democracy, School of the Americas Watch, Sheehan for Congress, South Florida Impeachment Coalition, South Mountain Peace Action (Maplewood & South Orange, NJ), Springs Action Alliance (CO), Stop the War Coalition (UK), Students for Impeachment, Students Towards a New Direction (STAND), Summit County Progressive Democrats (OH), The Known UnKnowns, The Politically Incorrect Cabaret, The Rational Response Squad, Think Blue Dems, Time for Accountability, Toronto Coalition to Stop the War (Canada), Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International, True Blue Liberal.org, Trumansburg Impeachment (NY), Truth Empowered, Truthtelling Project, UC Nuclear, Underground Action Alliance, Unitarian Universalist Peace and Justice Group (Nantucket, MA), United Blue USA, United for Veterans (Wayne, MI), United Progressives, Upbeat Defiance, US Peace Memorial, US Tour of Duty: Iraq Veterans and Military Families Demand the Truth, Velvet Revolution, Vet Gulf March, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, Veterans for Peace, Chapter 27, Virginia Grassroots Coalition, Voters for Peace, We the People for Peace, We the People Network, We the People Now, We The People United Bangladesh.org, Peace Surge, Peace and

Justice Action League of Spokane (WA), Stop the War (UK), U.S. Peace Council, World Can't Wait.org, World Prout Assembly, Komite Internazionale- Basque, Asociación Paz, Igualdad y Solidaridad Internacional, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, Málaga, Spain, Stop Fascism Action Network, The Asian Jurists Centre, Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRDI), The African Center for Human Rights (ACHR), Veterans for Peace, Your Declaration of Independence.org , Arab Lawyers Network-UK, Conservative Centre of Environmental & Reserves in Fallujah (CCERF), Willie Nelson Peace Research Institute, Studies Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, The Iraqi Centre for Human Rights, Association internationale des droits de l'homme.
