

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

CONFIDENCE BUILDING BETWEEN LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND BASRA POLICE

August 9, 2009: Within the framework of a two-day workshop organized by UNDP Iraq in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and the Iraqi Police Services (IPS), a landmark event took place with the creation of the first ever civilian oversight mechanism in the Iraqi governorate of Basra.

Round-table discussions also focused on how a confidence building link could be established between the local communities and the IPS in Basra leading to enhanced protection of civilian human rights and increased accountability and transparency of the IPS - thus promoting a more positive public image of the police.

“This has been a great opportunity to initiate national dialogue on how to establish civilian oversight in Basra. This initiative can benefit the entire judiciary system in Iraq, if increased trust and cooperation of citizens with the police are achieved”, commented Laith Abdul Sammad Laftah, Higher Judiciary Council Judge of Basra. “If successful, it may be a model to be replicated elsewhere in Iraq”, he continued.

As an outcome of the *Charge of Knights* military operation during March and April of last year, the security situation in Basra governorate has improved significantly. As a result, the Ministry of Interior initiated a plan to consolidate recent gains into durable progress in the area of law enforcement. In this context, Parliament created a High Commission for Human Rights in November 2008, asserting the need for a dedicated, efficient complaint and investigation mechanism for police misconduct in Iraq.

“This workshop is an important step in the joint efforts of the government and UNDP in re-building the trust and confidence between the citizens and the Iraqi Police Services in Basra governorate. The expected outcomes of the workshop are likely to further the sense of security and contribute to the normalization of life in Basra, in particular through the introduction of a civilian oversight institution based on best international practice,” stated EIBalla Hagona, UNDP Iraq’s Deputy Country Director.

The forum for consultation brought together representatives from central and regional government as well as donor representatives and international experts in the area of human rights, community policing and civilian oversight.

This workshop was one component of a USD6M Government of Japan funded project and is being implemented jointly by UNDP and the provincial authorities. Its aim is to introduce community policing, assist in law enforcement capacity building activities, weapon registration and infrastructure developments in Basra.

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