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## Ban calls for peaceful transfer of Iranian exiles from Iraqi camp

**Secretary-General** Ban Ki-moon today **urged** all parties to avoid violence and work together to peacefully conclude the transfer of the remaining Iranian exiles residing in a camp in Iraq.

In line with a memorandum of understanding signed in December by the UN and the Iraqi Government, some two-thirds of the residents, or nearly 2,000 people, have been relocated to a temporary transit location near Baghdad known as Camp Hurriya, where a process to determine refugee status is being carried out by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Close to 1,300 individuals - Iranian exiles, many of whom are members of a group known as the People's Mojahdeen of Iran - are still awaiting transfer from Camp New Iraq, formerly known as Camp Ashraf, to the transit centre.

Mr. Ban voiced his appreciation to the Iraqi Government for the spirit of cooperation it has shown over the past months, which has resulted in the peaceful transfer of 1,935 residents to the temporary transit location, and thanked the residents of Camp New Iraq for having cooperated in the first moves.

"He urges both sides to continue to work constructively in this regard with a view to peacefully concluding the transfer of the remaining residents as soon as possible," said a statement issued by his spokesperson.

The Secretary-General also urged the residents of Camp New Iraq to cooperate with the Government of Iraq and fully abide by the laws of the country, and urged the residents to "earnestly prepare" for their next transfer to Camp Hurriya, without further delay.

"He calls on the Government of Iraq to continue to meet its international humanitarian obligations and to exercise restraint," said the statement, adding that "violence should, at all costs, be avoided."

UNHCR is currently assessing individual protection needs of former residents of the camp, and those found to be in need of international protection may have the possibility of being resettled to another country.

Mr. Ban called again on Member States to accept for resettlement those residents who qualify as refugees.