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Human Rights Report

1 November - 31 December 2006

Summary

1. During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq has continued its efforts aimed at strengthening the administration of justice and building up the rule of law in the country. However, Iraqi justice sector institutions, including prisons, police, the judiciary, and relevant ministries still have significant and urgent needs. Courts require adequate facilities, more investigative judges, computerized and integrated management systems and greater security for all judicial personnel. The Iraqi police, however trained, operate without clear standing orders or effective internal accountability systems. The prisons' administration faces multiple challenges, including the need for adequate physical structures, appropriately trained personnel and internal implementing regulations.

2. Urgent action is needed to strengthen rule of law institutions, in line with the new Constitution, the Government's priorities and Iraq's international obligations. This is central to creating conditions for re-establishing law and order in the country and ensuring the success and sustainability of security, national reconciliation and development efforts. In particular, the ability of new security plans to effect real change in Iraq will depend on a comprehensive reform program that can strengthen the rule of law and deliver justice for all Iraqis.

3. The Ministry of Human Rights has re-organized its internal structure and increased its cooperation and coordination with relevant Ministries, state entities and human rights NGOs. This should result in greater transparency with respect to the work of the Ministry as well as more effective follow up action by the Government in connection with recommendations on urgent human rights concerns, such as those relating to conditions of detention, as regularly made by the Ministry. For the Ministry of Human Rights to meet its responsibilities and fulfil the aspirations of the Iraqi people, it is essential that it enjoys the support of all Government Ministries as well as of civil society organizations, especially the independent national human rights commission which is to be established by the Council of Representatives.

4. Despite these efforts, enormous challenges remain, complicating or undermining the steps taken thus far by the Government to address the deteriorating human rights situation in Iraq. Action by terrorist groups and sectarian killings which are fuelled by the insurgency, continue to be the main source of violence in the country. The root causes of the sectarian violence lie in revenge killings and lack of accountability for past crimes as well as in the

growing sense of impunity for on-going human rights violations. This leads people to take the law into their hands and rely on action by militias or criminal gangs.

5. It is essential that the State and the Government of Iraq are seen as united in their efforts to contain and eventually eradicate sectarian violence, to ensure the rule of law and, through that, remove the popular basis of support for the perpetrators of this violence. Indeed, the greater the action in order to fight impunity and seek accountability for crimes, if necessary through criminal prosecution, the greater the ability to restore law and order and re-establish faith in the institutions of the state and in the rule of law. Justice on high visibility cases, such as Al Jadiriya and Site 4, would go a long way to act also as a powerful deterrent against new violations and thus reduce and eventually stop the on-going vicious cycle of violence and retaliatory-violence.

6. Without significant progress on the rule of law, sectarian violence will continue indefinitely and eventually spiral out of control thus thwarting efforts by the Government in the political, security or economic spheres. UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) has continued to receive information about a large number of indiscriminate and targeted killings. Unidentified bodies have appeared daily in Baghdad and other cities. According to information made available to UNAMI, 6,376 civilians were violently killed in November and December 2006, with no less than 4,731 in Baghdad, most of them as a result of gunshot wounds. Compared to the number killed in September and October, there has been a slight reduction. It is evident however that violence has not been contained but has continued to claim a very high number of innocent victims. During 2006, a total of 34,452 civilians have been violently killed and 36,685 wounded.

7. The civilian population remains the main victim of the prevailing security situation characterized by terrorist acts, action by armed groups, criminal gangs, religious extremists, militias, as well as operations by security and military forces. The resulting insecurity, sectarian prejudice, and terror negatively and comprehensively affect the enjoyment of basic rights and freedoms by the population at large. In addition, growing unemployment, poverty, various forms of discrimination and increasingly limited access to basic services, prevent most citizens from realizing their economic, social and cultural rights.

8. Law enforcement agencies do not provide effective protection to the population of Iraq and increasingly militias and criminal gangs act in collusion with, or have infiltrated the security forces. Operations by security and military forces, including by MNF I, continued to result in growing numbers of individuals detained and without access to judicial oversight. According to the Ministry of Human Rights, the total number of detainees for the entire country was 30,842 on 31 December of whom 14,534 in MNF I detention facilities.

9. Armed operations by MNF-I continued to restrict the enjoyment of human rights and to cause severe suffering to the local population. Continued limitations of freedom of movement and lack of access to basic services, such as health and education, are affecting a larger percentage of the population and depriving it of basic rights for extended periods of time. HRO reiterates its call to security and military forces to respect fully international law and to refrain from any excessive use of force.

10. Attacks on professional groups continued unabated during the reporting period. Freedom of expression has continued to be challenged as an increasing number of journalists and media workers were killed or threatened or otherwise intimidated with impunity simply because of their work. The condition of women has generally continued to deteriorate with erosion of their enjoyment of basic rights and freedoms and repeated instances of honour crimes. Minorities also continued to be targeted, with threats and attacks against Christians still on the rise. Armed groups or militias have continued to threaten and forcibly evict Palestinians from their homes and have repeatedly attacked them with mortars and armed fire.

11. The independence of the judiciary has been negatively affected by consistent attacks on and killings of judges and lawyers, often working in appalling security conditions, as well as by unresolved questions concerning the leadership of the Iraqi Bar Association.

12. Targeting of members of the security forces has continued. On 24 December, the Minister of Interior indicated that 12,000 police officers had been killed since 2003: that represents an average of 10 police officers killed every single day. The effect of violence has also affected education, with many schools and universities closed or with their schedules disrupted as educators, professors and students are unable to attend course and continue to leave the country.

13. At the same time, at least 470,094 people have been forcibly internally displaced since the bombing in Samarra on 22 February 2006. Baghdad alone has 38,766 displaced individuals. In its Emergency Assessment on 11 December 2006, IOM noted that extreme violence has prevented access to IDP communities and made the provision of aid assistance very difficult.¹ This takes place at a critical time with winter temperatures now increasingly affecting the health and well being of the most vulnerable IDPs.

14. The Iraqi High Tribunal (IHT) pronounced its verdict on the Dujail case on 5 November while the decision of the appeal court of the IHT to uphold the death sentence for Saddam Hussein and two other co-defendants was unveiled on 26 December. The execution of the head of the former regime took place on 30 December yet raised international and national concerns, highlighting the imperative need at all times for due process and full respect of the Constitution and international law.

15. Not all of Iraq, however, faces the same human rights situation. Certain areas in the South and the North, and the Region of Kurdistan in particular, are relatively safer and therefore record better human rights conditions. Nevertheless, minority and women rights, as well as administrative corruption are of concern in Kurdistan and in the rest of the country. The rise in religious extremism continues to affect education, women's and minority rights in the Southern and Central Iraq.

16. A major concern from a human rights point of view is the deterioration of the situation in Kirkuk, particularly with respect to the rights of minorities, both Arab and Turkmen. They face increasing threats, intimidations and detentions, often in KRG facilities

¹ IOM Emergency Assessment, 11 Dec 2006

run by Kurdish intelligence and security forces. This has particular implications for the overall stability of the city, especially in the course of 2007.

17. In the reporting period, HRO engaged Iraqi governmental and non-governmental partners as well as international donors in a series of activities in support of strengthening the rule of law and for the establishment of a strong and effective national human rights protection system. HRO supported activities by the Ministry of Human Rights also in connection with Human Rights Day on and around 10 December and continued with its support to the Rule of Law Sectoral Working Group Core Teams. HRO also ensured specialized training in the area of human rights for members of the Government, regional authorities and NGOs.

18. Monitoring human rights in Iraq remains challenging because the security situation makes it difficult to independently verify the allegations received, also in connection with individual cases. However, individual accounts received by UNAMI, as well as information obtained through the Authorities, reports by local human rights organizations, private security firms and the press, all provide indicators pointing to clear patterns.

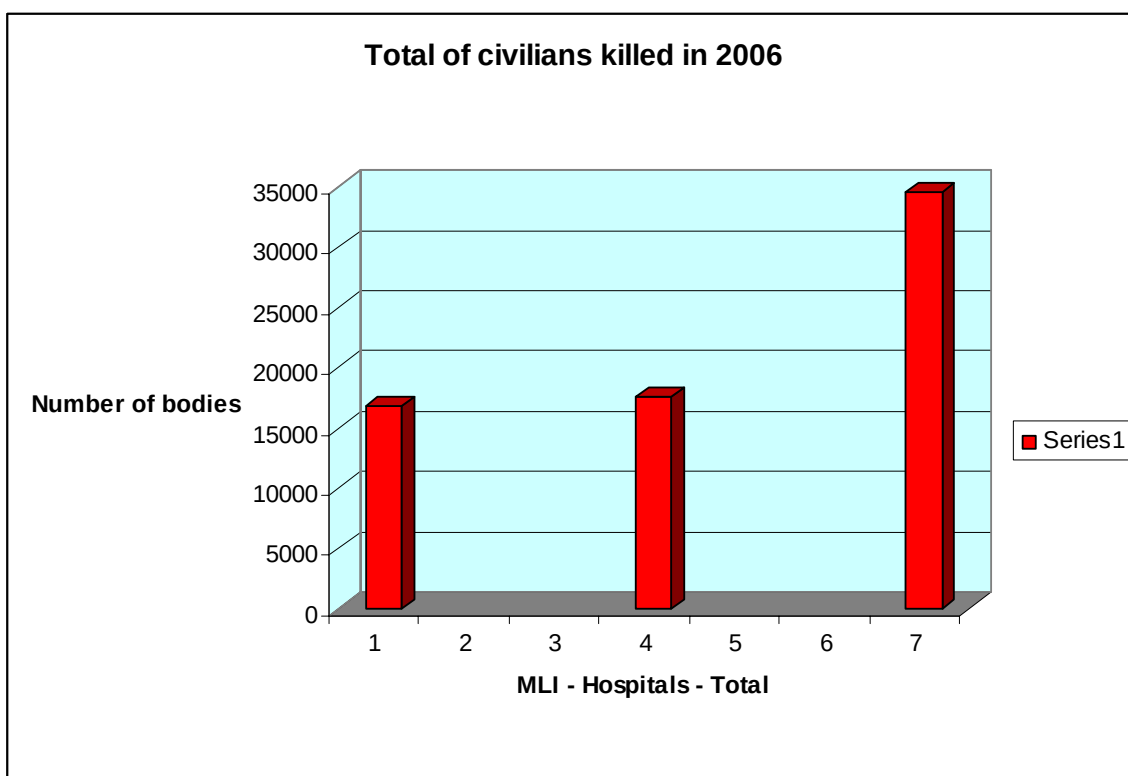
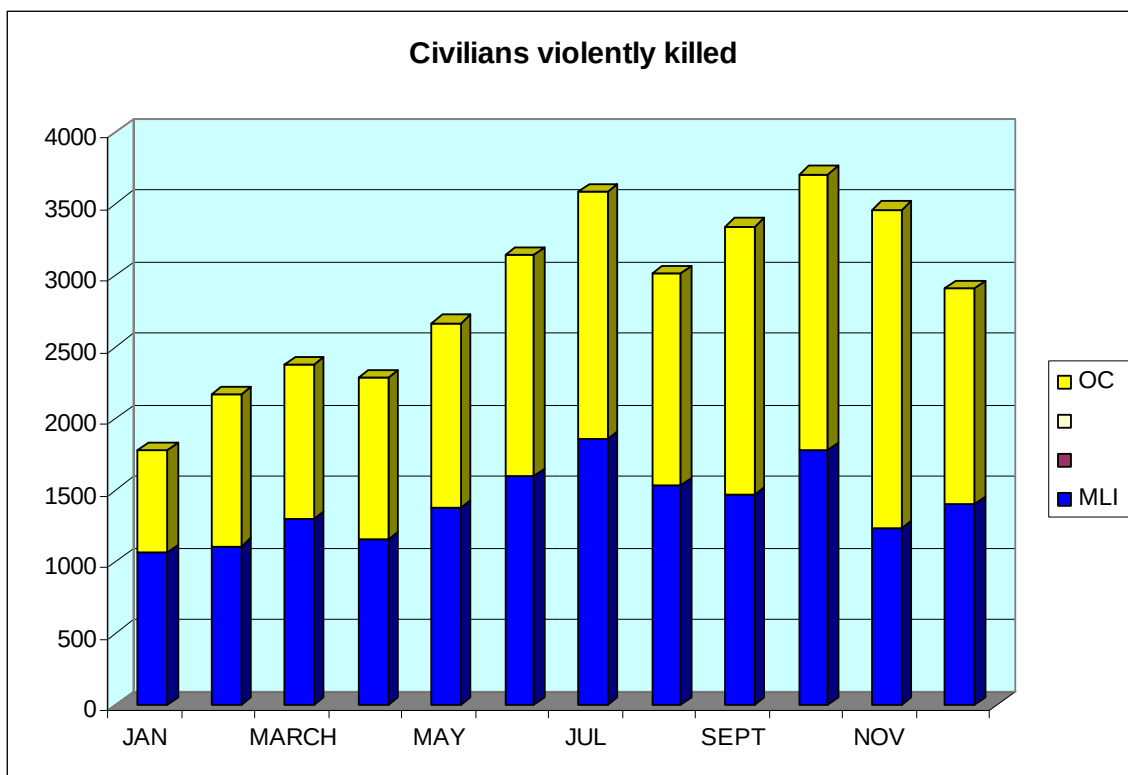
Protection of Human Rights

Extra-judicial executions, targeted and indiscriminate killings

19. Extra-judicial executions, rampant and indiscriminate killings of civilians went virtually unchecked during the months of November and December. The mortality figures for violent deaths are 3,462 for November and 2,914 for December, a decrease with respect to the previous report.² The number of wounded reached 3,755 in November; including 235 women and 97 children, and 3,120 in December; including 186 women and 38 children. As a way of comparison, the total figure of civilians killed in Iraq was 3,345 in September and 3,702 in October 2006. In Baghdad the total number of civilians violently killed in November and December was 4,731, a slightly less than in the previous two months (2,230 in November and 2,501 in December: among those the number of unidentified bodies was 1,229 in November and 1,397 in December). In September, there were 2,262 and in October 2,722 violently killed persons in Baghdad. An increase in violence in typically less restive Governorates, such as Mosul, is also illustrative of the overall deteriorating security situation across Iraq.

20. For 2006, the total number of civilians violently killed is 34,452: 16,867 from the Medical Legal Institute in Baghdad (unidentified bodies and 17,585 from hospitals (operation centres) throughout Iraq. The yearly average is 94 civilians killed every day. 36,685 civilians were also wounded in 2006, including 2,222 women and 777 children.

² Figures of civilians violently killed and wounded are based on the number of casualties compiled by the Ministry of Health from hospitals throughout the country and the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad. It should be noted that for the month of December, figures from some Governorates were not yet included in the total provided.



21. The situation is notably grave in Baghdad where unidentified bodies killed execution-style are found in large number daily. Victims' families are all too often reluctant to claim the bodies from the six Medico-Legal Institutes (MLIs) around the country for fear of reprisals. The deceased's families are required to obtain permission from the police station which brought the body to the MLI but many are too afraid and believe that police officers could be responsible for the disappearances and killings. According to sources, most of all killings and location of unidentified bodies in Baghdad fall within the area of responsibility of six police stations, three in Sunni areas; Bilal Al Shuhada' in Dora; Al Qudis in Rashdiyah and Al Adhamiya in Al Adhamiya city, the three located in Shiite areas are; Al Tahtheb in Sadr city; Al Khansa' in Baghdad Al Jadeedah and Alshu'la in Al Shu'la city.

22. Insurgents, including foreign terrorist groups, remain particularly active in central-western parts such as Baghdad in particular, Al Anbar and parts of Babylon, Diyala, Ninevah and Salahaddin Governorates. Large scale indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population are frequently recorded throughout the capital Baghdad, as well as in Mosul, Baquba and Hilla. Areas of gathering such as mosques, market places, places where daily labourers search for work or police recruitment centres have become routine targets. No religious and ethnic groups, including women and children, have been spared from the widespread cycle of violence which creates panic and disrupts the daily life of many Iraqi families, prompting parents to stop sending their children to school and severely limiting normal movement around the capital and outside. The violence is equally disruptive of the political process and it prevents progress in the functioning of new Iraqi state institutions.

23. Numerous violent acts fall in the category of general crimes committed by criminal elements taking advantage of the situation in Baghdad. This law and order vacuum has an encouraging effect on criminal groups of various affiliations, many of whom use the internet, mobile phone messaging system, videos and pamphlets to promote their criminal activities or further intimidate targeted groups. Their websites and videos frequently show the faces of perpetrators and their assumed names. These insurgency and terrorist groups are often known to the residents of the areas where they operate. To compensate for the absence of government-led authority and control, both the Shiite and Sunni populations have increasingly turned to militias or other armed groups for protection.

24. A number of large scale attacks in Iraq has been recorded these last two months, claiming dozens of innocent lives on each occasion. For example, on 1 November, a series of explosions across Baghdad killed at least 29 people: six people were killed by a roadside bomb in the Shurjah market of central Baghdad, five were killed and seven wounded by a car bomb at Uqba bin Nafi intersection in eastern Baghdad, three people were killed in a car bomb in the southwest Bayaa neighbourhood and 15 people, including 4 children, in an attack at a wedding in Baghdad's district of Ur.

25. A series of simultaneous attacks were again recorded on 7 November in Baghdad: in Al Adhamiyah, a suicide attack ripped through a local coffee shop killing 16 and wounding 22 civilians, and in Al Slaikh, one civilian died and six others were wounded when a car bomb detonated near Nida'a Al Islam mosque. On the same day, a roadside bomb targeting the MNF-I patrol in Hay Al Andalus in Fallujah killed three civilians and wounded 11 others

including five women. Attacks continued on a residential area of Al Adhamiyah the following day when 12 civilians were killed and 30 others wounded in mortar attacks. At least one more area of Baghdad was attacked by mortars on the same day: a number of mortar rounds fell on Hay Al Amin area wounding 8 civilians. On 16 November, gunmen killed 9 civilians working in a bakery shop in Baghdad. On 19 November, three civilians were killed and 21 others wounded in a suicide attack at a funeral ceremony in Ghernata area of Kirkuk.

26. A suicide attack occurred in Hilla, south of Baghdad, on 19 November 2006, when a suicide bomber stopped his minivan amidst a large group of labourers, pretending to offer them work, before he detonated an explosive device, killing 22 men and wounding 44. According to local media, Baghdad police reported arresting two Egyptians and an Iraqi suspected of involvement in the attack. A similar attack occurred in Baghdad on 12 December when a suicide bomber struck a crowd of mostly poor Shiites in Baghdad, killing at least 63 people and wounding more than 200 after luring construction workers to a pickup truck by offering them jobs as they were eating breakfast. On the same day, three car bombs exploded in a bus station in Baghdad's Mashtal neighbourhood, killing 10 and wounding 45 people. The following day in Baghdad, an attack on a crowded food market in Jamila area killed 3 and wounded 5 people. On 22 November, a car bomb in Al Meqdadiyah in Diyala killed 5 civilians including a woman.

27. One of the deadliest indiscriminate attacks happened in Sadr City on 23 November when five coordinated car bombs detonated at a busy market followed by two mortars rounds resulting in the deaths of 215 and wounding 250 more. SRSG Ashraf Qazi issued two public statements on 24 and 25 November, expressing outrage at the carnage in Sadr City. Mr. Qazi observed that these tragic incidents occurred in the context of an increasingly vicious cycle of sectarian revenge killings that was tearing apart the very political and social fabric of Iraq. A 24-hour curfew was declared in the city of Baghdad aimed at preventing vengeful responses as funeral processions carried victims from Sadr City to the holy Shiite city of Najaf for burial.

28. Defying the government curfew, militiamen stormed Sunni mosques in Baghdad the next day; shooting guards and burning down buildings in apparent retaliation. At least four mosques were targeted in Hurriya, a mixed neighbourhood in the capital, two of which were reportedly destroyed. At least 5 Sunnis were reportedly killed and 10 wounded in one attack. Another 4 Sunnis were allegedly burned alive. A prominent Sunni Arab group, The Association of Muslim Scholars, claimed 18 people were killed when one of the mosques was burned down. Shiite militia attacked the Abu Hanifa Sunni mosque in Adhamiya district with 20 Katyusha rockets killing 22 people and injuring 14. The Al-Mustafa Mosque was apparently saved from complete destruction only after the arrival of Iraqi police and MNF-I

29. On 24 November, 22 civilians were killed and 26 other wounded when two suicide attackers blew themselves up in a car park in Talafar, Ninevah Governorate. The following day, a suicide attack in Fallujah killed four and wounded eight civilians, including children. Attacks in Baghdad were recorded again on 26, 28 and 29 November claiming at least 10 lives and at least 35 wounded. Attacks were also recorded in Baquba on 26 November, Diyala on 27 and 30 November and, Basra and Mosul on 29 November. On 2 December, 61 civilians were killed and 121 others wounded when 3 car bombs detonated in Al Sadriya area in Al Wathba

and another 20 people were killed and 15 wounded when a truck slammed into a bus stop in Al Wahada, south of Baghdad. On 3 December, 6 civilians were wounded when a roadside bomb detonated near Al Sha'b field in Baghdad. On 26 December three coordinated car bombs detonated at Al Bayaa car market and station resulting in the death of 25 and injuring 70. Another car bomb was detonated in the mainly Sunni Arab district of Adhamiya killing 20 people and injuring 35. Two car bombs detonated one after another on 30 December in a religiously mixed neighbourhood in northwest Baghdad killing 37 civilians and wounding 76. The same day, 31 people were killed and 58 injured in Mainly Shiite town Kufa when a bomb placed on a minibus exploded in a fish market.

30. An unprecedented number of execution-style killings have taken place in Baghdad and other parts of the country, whereby bodies were routinely found dumped in the streets, in rivers and in mass graves- most bearing signs of torture with their hands and feet bound, and some were beheaded. This is the *modus operandi* used by both Sunni and Shiite armed groups, including insurgents and militias, who occasionally inform the authorities of the locations of the bodies. These killings also serve to intimidate the local population. At least two mass graves were recently unearthed, one in Najaf with at least four bodies and another one in Baquba, discovered on 29 November with 28 bodies belonging to members of al-Shammary tribe kidnapped and killed a few days earlier. The Najaf mass grave was reported to be shallow with bodies partially visible prompting one NGO to request local authorities to act because of the presence of children in the area. HRO has urged authorities to protect the site until the security situation allowed for the proper exhumation and forensic investigation. To date, the site remains unprotected. Another NGO reported several mass graves in the area adjacent to Sadr city from the east side called Wara El Sadda (behind the sand barrier) where many bodies are allegedly dumped in pre-prepared holes. The area is considered very dangerous and controlled by the militias. No one, including Iraqi security forces, can visit the area without the authorization of the militias.

31. Violence has also been perpetuated by ineffectual state law enforcement agencies. Iraqi law enforcement institutions are marred by corruption and increasing internal and sectarian divisions. Iraqi police are seen as having being infiltrated by or colluding with militias, insurgency and political parties, depending on the area where they operate.

32. Baghdad is at the centre of the sectarian violence. Sunni and Shiite armed groups are attempting to establish territorial control of Baghdad's many predominately mixed neighbourhoods by intimidating and killing civilian populations and forcing them into displacements to parts of the city inhabited or controlled by members of their ethnic group. Reports suggest the existence of large movements of populations primarily within the city boundaries, as the neighbourhoods become increasingly divided among Sunni and Shi'a armed groups, and are consequently grouped together based on their sect and ethnicity. This forced displacement has been achieved by means of large scale attacks targeting civilians, kidnappings, extra-judicial killings, dropping of threatening leaflets, destruction of properties, and intimidation. For instance, fighting between Sunni and Shiite armed groups were primarily recorded in December in Baghdad's neighbourhoods of Dora, Hurriyah, Al Adhamiyah, Khadimiyah, Ghazaliyah, Amariya and Qadisiyah.

33. On 9 December in Hurriya, Shi'ite militias torched Sunni homes causing more than 30 families to flee. The following day, some 30 armed gunmen killed nine members of two Shi'ite families in the western Jihad neighbourhood in Baghdad.

Kidnappings

34. Abductions have increased dramatically in the past months and have become a tool for armed groups to finance their activities, to intimidate and eliminate opponents, and to instil fear by targeting prominent personalities. Abductions have been used by both Sunni insurgents as well as by Shi'ite militias. Many victims were tortured and killed and some remained unidentified. The Baghdad Medico-Legal Institute is reported transporting some 200 unidentified bodies every week to cemeteries in Najaf and Karbala which relatives do not claim out of fear of reprisals. In addition, there are reports of bodies that end up buried in mass graves and are not recorded at the morgues.

35. According to various reports, Iraqi insurgency groups today are largely self-sustaining, raising tens of millions of dollars from oil smuggling, kidnapping, counterfeiting, corrupt charities and other crimes. Most of these crimes are inadequately investigated, if at all, leaving many perpetrators at large.

36. Even humanitarian organizations have not been spared. On 9 November, the Head of Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRSC) Administration, Dr. Anas Al Azawi, was kidnapped in front of his house by men reportedly wearing blue police uniforms. The price for his freedom was set at US\$750,000 although he was subsequently released after a ransom of a lesser amount was paid. On 17 December, armed men allegedly wearing Iraqi Army uniform stormed the office of Red Crescent in Baghdad in police cars and men in civilian clothes. Forty two male employees, visitors, volunteers and private security guards were abducted. A spokesman for IRSC said that 26 employees both Shi'ite and Sunnis were released. The IRSC has 100 offices in 18 governorates. The headquarters has 418 employees in addition to 400 employees in its 44 offices in Baghdad alone.

37. A blatant operation on 14 November involved the abduction of between 100 and 150 employees and visitors, both Sunni and Shi'ite at the Scholarship Department of the Ministry of Higher Education in the middle of the capital. The incident occurred on a day assigned for visits of teaching staff from the Governorates of Anbar, Salahaddin and Mosul. More than 90 applicants to scholarship from the Department were queuing when gunmen opened fire, injuring a female professor from Mosul University. They ordered the women into a room and seized about 100 men who were forced into pick-up trucks. The whole operation was said to have lasted about a quarter of an hour. The perpetrators wore what appeared official uniforms recently issued to officers and they had posed as interior ministry police intended to seal off the street and gain entry to the building. Nine people, all Shi'ite were released instantly on Palestine Street and the rest were taken towards Sadr City. On that day, the Director General of UNESCO called for the immediate release of the kidnapped employees. SRSG Ashraf Qazi, condemned in the strongest terms this kidnapping and warned on the dangerous effect that it could have on Iraq's development.

38. More than 70 were released after being tortured while other 70 are still missing, most of them of Sunni origin. The daylight abduction and the use of apparently genuine government vehicles and uniforms raised questions about possible official involvement in the operation. It has been reported that five senior police officers were later questioned. On 23 November the bodies of Dr. Abdil Salam Al Suwaydan, head of the Scholarship department and Abdil Hameed Hamadani, an expert at the same department, were found in Baghdad bearing signs of torture. Families of the kidnapped gathered on 20 December in front of the building of the Ministry of Higher Education asking the government to take action to save the lives of the kidnapped. A few days later, the Higher Education Minister resigned in protest against the mass abduction of his staff.

39. On 30 November, 14 civilians were reportedly kidnapped by gunmen at a fake check point between Qatoon and Baquba main road. Their whereabouts remain unknown. HRO also received information on the alleged disappearance of 80 Sunnis, reportedly kidnapped by Shia militias, and taken to Imam Ridha mosque in Almuwasalt neighbourhood, close to the fruits and vegetable market in Suq Omaima. The information suggests that the victims would be held there with their fate unknown. On 2 December, some 10 people were abducted at Site 4's detention centre front gate after visiting family members detained inside. Two days later, unknown gunmen kidnapped a Chaldean Priest Samai Abdulahad in Al-Sena'a Street, Baghdad. He was later released; it was not confirmed whether the Church paid a ransom.

40. At about 10 am, on 14 December, a convoy of about ten SUVs pulled into the auto-spares-parts section of the open-air Sinak wholesale market, a few hundred yards from the headquarters of Iraq's Defense Ministry and sealed the main roads. Gunmen in police uniforms fired their weapons into the air, seized cash from the shops, and bundled about 50 merchants, workers and customers into four delivery trucks and sped off towards eastern Baghdad. About 29 of them were subsequently released, all Shiite.

Freedom of expression

41. Freedom of the press remains a widely debated issue particularly in the North with independent media attempting to extend the limits of journalistic license to engender support for the right of expression. In other parts of Iraq, journalists and other media professionals faced restrictions including a ban on attending parliament sessions, physical threats and threats of legal action.

42. Independently owned media such as Hawlati daily and weekly Awene in Kurdistan have recently highlighted government corruption and questioned the conduct of officials. Their criticism included a recent Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) reform plans, recent elections, human rights, demonstrations, migration, and shortcomings in the education system. Hawlati has questioned the freedom of the media in Kurdistan and reiterated that journalists should be able to question officials because they "were elected for a limited period of time in order to serve the people."

43. On 14 November, the Mayor of Mosul refused to comply with an order by Mosul Provincial Council to close down the 'Civil Society Newspaper', a local newspaper, stressing that individuals are at liberty to express different views. In Erbil, a broadcaster with Zagros

Satellite alleged that he was temporarily arrested and detained by security forces because of his profession and demanded an investigation. In late December, in Sulaymania journalist Luqman Ghafur was arrested because police officers have filed a complaint against him for describing them as “gangs” in an article. In Erbil, police arrested journalists Shaho Khalid and Dilaman Salah for reporting a strike at a students’ house in Setaqan Quarter. After their release they demanded an apology from the police whom they alleged had assaulted them.

44. On 7 November, 5 employees of the Al Anwar Iraqi TV station were seriously wounded when gunmen attacked the station with explosives. It is reported that the attack was motivated by the station broadcasting reports on displaced families in Sabe’ Al Bour area for an extended period of time.

45. On 27 November, claiming that the Government was curbing sectarian violence, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives (COR), Mahmoud Al Mashhadani, declared that a “legal” act will be passed by the Council to “deal with the media and the corrupt media individuals”. Al Mashhadani added that the country was going through a state of emergency and that they have requested that the government use its powers under the emergency law to respond to elements in the media that have contributed to or incited sectarian tension. He announced that media outlets and agencies were not allowed to attend parliament session to protect national security. The ban on live coverage of the COR sessions was lifted on 6 December.

46. Several media outlets have used derogatory or hate language in broadcast and in some cases, incited violence. The Prime Minister has threatened to use the 2004 “anti-terrorism” law to close down stations that incite hate and violence such as Al Zawra station. Based on anti terrorism law, the Minister of Interior recently issued an order to close Al Zawra TV satellite channel in Baghdad and Salahaddin TV satellite channel in Salahaddin Governorate on the ground of the use of hate speech.

47. After the Iraqi government banned Al Zawra Sunni TV Station, their former employees became subject to threats and attacks by militias. A former female reporter for al Zawra TV station, who lived in Al Zafarania district, received a threat letter on 25 November 2006. On 1 December, gunmen in two cars came looking for her, but she had already moved out to another area.

Women

48. The plight of women in the northern governorates continues to be widely covered by the media and is a matter of great concern to human rights NGOs. The latest monthly report by the KRG Human Rights Ministry stated that 239 women had burned themselves in the first eight months of 2006. Authorities in Sulaimaniya have documented the highest number of monthly traumatic burn cases in November, with 13 cases of burns by fire and 24 cases of scalding involving women. A Sulaimaniya hospital source suspected that such cases are underreported because of fear of the social stigma, shame and culpable involvement of family members that are associated with honor crimes. Most cases have been investigated as “accidents” or suicide attempts.

49. Most victims of suspected honor crimes suffer horrific injuries which are unlikely to have been accidentally caused whilst cooking or refuelling oil heaters. For instance, on 25 November in Erbil, a 49-year old mother of four claimed that she accidentally set herself on fire whilst refuelling the oil heater and suffered 60% burns in her body. In another case at the Brayati Quarter, Erbil, 21-years old Qadria Mustafa claimed that her burns on 40% of her body were the result of a cooking accident. In December, at the Saidawa Quarter, in Erbil, a newly married 18 year old housewife claimed that she accidentally burned herself while boiling water. Since the incident apparently occurred in a bathroom and she suffered 40% burns in her body, the police commenced an investigation. In Shorija Q, Kirkuk, a 16-year-old teenager died after setting herself on fire because her brother demanded that she marry a suitor she disliked. In another case, in Zahko District, Dahuk, a 39-year-old woman claimed that she suffered 90% burn injuries because her cooker exploded in the kitchen. She did not file a complaint. It has been acknowledged by both government officials and civil society representatives that tribal traditions, a chauvinistic interpretation of Islam and unreasonable societal expectations of women, are some of the root-causes of honor crimes.

50. In the central and southern regions, women remain particularly vulnerable and their enjoyment of basic rights is being rapidly eroded. As previously reported,³ the security situation and the militancy of intolerant groups are increasingly limiting women's ability to move freely outside their homes while progressively restricting their access to health services and education as well as their ability to participate in public life. November and December witnessed an alarming shift towards more violent episodes. It is a challenge to obtain accurate female mortality rate and the cause(s) of death. Female corpses are usually abandoned at the morgue and remain unclaimed for fear of damaging the family honour. More than 140 bodies were unclaimed and buried in Najaf by the morgue during the reporting period.

51. Women are reportedly living with heightened levels of threats to their lives and physical integrity, and forced to conform to strict, arbitrarily imposed morality codes. HRO has received cases of young women abducted by armed militia and found days later sexually abused, tortured and murdered. HRO has also charted an increase in kidnapping and killing of women. In late December, three female students from Mustansiriya University were reportedly kidnapped by Shiite militias. Despite the payment of a ransom, their bodies were found at the morgue on 22 December bearing signs of rape and torture. Official sources denied the incident but students from the University confirmed it did take place.

52. Two other women were kidnapped on separate occasions from the Sunni Al Ghazaliya area during the month of December. The body of an elementary school teacher was found badly mutilated in Al Shula Shiite area and the fate of the second kidnap victim remains unknown. In a suspected honor crime case, a secondary school student was publicly hanged in east Baghdad by armed militia. Her brother was shot dead by the militia trying to rescue her. The impact of the conflict on women and girls and the absence of a functioning social service system are visible on the streets of Iraq. A four-year-old girl, hungry and exhausted was found on Baghdad streets on 20 December after running away from her mother who used her for soliciting. HRO arranged for her to be sheltered in a safe haven managed by Iraqi civil society. HRO has received information of children abducted and sold to armed militias and forced to

³ See UNAMI Human Rights Bi-Monthly Report, May-June 2006.

become supporters. Children are also trafficked outside Iraq to work as sex slaves, labourers, or unlawfully adopted by families abroad. Dozens of children are currently seeking shelter and protection in safe houses managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society organizations across the country.

53. In a country marred by violence, Iraqi widows struggle to fend for themselves and their families. Projects created to provide jobs for women were abandoned after the exodus of international NGOs from October 2005. Some support has been provided by the United Nations, the Iraqi Red Crescent, the Islamic Party, the Muslim Scholars Association and non-governmental organisations. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has started paying the equivalent of about 100 dollars per month to widows but this payment cannot support whole families. There is an urgent need for the international community to ensure projects aimed at job creation, especially for women, who now face a long struggle surviving and bringing up families on their own. The general breakdown in law and order and Islamic extremism have further entrenched the culture of violence within Iraqi society. It is inevitable that vulnerable groups such as women and children are bearing the devastating consequences of the prevailing situation in the country.

Minorities

54. Minorities in Iraq remain severely affected by the overall security situation, economic and social degradation and the existence of organized armed groups, militias and insurgents, all operating with near complete impunity. Minority groups feel marginalized from political participation and decision-making at the local and national levels. The Shabaks and Assyrians in the Nineveh Plains in particular have been pressured to convert to Islam. Of the 1.5 million Assyrians living in Iraq before 2003, half have left the country and the remaining 750,000 are said to be moving into “safe areas” in Zakho and North Nineveh. Considered to be foreign, non-Arab and of non-Iraqi origin, religious minorities, such as Sabeen-Mandean, frequently encounter intimidation by public and religious officials.

55. In November, there were significant attacks against the Christian community in Mosul and in December, 14 Kurdish farmers were killed by insurgent groups in the Sinjar area of the Ninewah plain. Inter-ethnic tensions between Arab, Turkoman and Kurdish communities are escalating in Kirkuk. The ethnic divide in Kirkuk was underscored when the Sunni Mosque of Ahmad Thiab al-Nu’aymi in the Terkhan area was blown up by extremists on 16 November. HRO received a video evidently showing the abuse and killing of an Arab, who was in the custody of local security officers, in the streets of Kirkuk. Kirkuk authorities have agreed to investigate the case upon HRO’s request.

56. On 19 November the KRG Parliament Speaker, Adnan Mufti, received a delegation from the Syrian Assyrian Democratic Organization to discuss Christian rights in Kurdistan and their demands for an autonomous region in the Ninewah Plains in response to the heightened violence against Christians. Four days later, gunmen brutally gunned down the leader of Iraq’s Christian Syrian community, Yashoo’a Majid Hadaya in an attack in Qaraqosh, northeast of Mosul.

57. On 3 December 2006, militiamen broke into the house of Taleb Salman Uraibi, assistant to one of the Mandeian religious Sheikhs, and abducted him from his house located in Hay Ur neighbourhood. The body of Uraibi was found with marks of torture later that day. On 11 December 2006, unidentified gunmen killed a Turkman family of five in the middle of the night in Yankaja village in Toz Khormato. In late December, two members of the Shabak community and one from the Yazidi community were murdered in Mosul. Police believed they were targeted simply because of their religious affiliation.

Various professional categories

58. HRO documented a worrying increase in targeted attacks and assassinations of professionals such as teachers, religious figures, barbers, police officers, artists, lawyers, ex-military officers, and politicians across Iraq including the northern cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. These attacks are typically perpetrated by extremists practising conformist ideology and by militant/terror groups intent on spreading fear and intimidation. Journalists and media workers are among the most frequently targeted group with at least 12 killed from November to December.

59. On 2 November, journalist Qussai Abass of Tareeq Al Shaab newspaper was gunned down with his driver as he was travelling to his office in Baghdad. Later that week, two gunmen burst into the home of freelance journalist Ali Al Hajiye in Baquba, smashing doors and windows and stealing personal effects. Hajiye had left the city after shots were fired at his home a few days earlier. On 15 November, a female journalist working for Al Dustour Newspaper, Luma Riyad, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in Baquba. On 22 November, Raad Jaafar Hammadi was killed in a Baghdad neighbourhood of Al-Washash by four gunmen. On 4 December, unidentified gunmen killed Nabil Ibrahim al-Dulaimi, news editor for Radio Dijla, shortly after he left his home in Baghdad for work. Nabil used to work for Al Zawra TV station, which was ordered to stop broadcasting by the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

60. In Mosul, Mohamed Al Ban, father of four and a cameraman with Al Sharqiya was killed by unidentified men outside his home on 13 November. That was followed two days later by the slaying of journalist Ms Fadia Mohamed Ali and her driver, as she was traveling to work. Speculations are rife on police involvement as Ms Fadia reported on police corruption and misconduct on several occasions in the weeks before her death, alleging that police stole valuables from houses during surprise raids. On 26 November, an employee of a Nineveh television station, Ms Fadila Abdel Karim, was shot dead in Mosul. On 10 December, Aswan Ahmed Lutfallah, 35, was gunned down by insurgents while filming clashes between Iraqi police and insurgents in the city's al-Karama neighborhood. The Committee to Protect Journalists commented that *"Like so many other journalists, he was targeted and killed simply for trying to provide the world with a glimpse of daily reality in Iraq."* Aswan is the second APN (Associate Press News agency) photographer killed since April 2005. On 25 December, Samir Ali Souod, co-editor of Sada Baghdad newspaper disappeared in Zayoona, an area east of Baghdad. His family believes he was kidnapped by an armed group.

61. On 19 November, Kurdish singer, Mesa'ud Goran, was killed in Mosul presumably because he was believed to support Mosul's assimilation into the Kurdistan region. On the

same day, comedian actor and TV director, Walid Hasan Ja'az, was assassinated by unknown gunmen in Al Yarmouk neighborhood in Baghdad..

62. On 29 November, armed group attacked famous performer and author Abdulwahab Aldayni, causing permanent facial injuries. Around mid December, the famous TV director, Hussien Al Tikriti was kidnapped and his body was found a few days later in Baghdad. Another well known actor, Mutashar Al Sudani, was kidnapped on 18 December at Haifa Street in Baghdad. His body was found next day in the same area. Several actors are considering moving abroad out of fear for their lives.

63. The bullet-ridden body of Hadib Majhoul, the Shiite chairman of one of Iraq's leading soccer clubs called Talaba club, was found on 3 December in Baghdad, several days after he was kidnapped on his way to work. The Club suspended its work for 3 days in protest of the killing, according to Tariq Ahmad, a member of the Club. On 2 December, the International Olympic Committee President appealed for the release of Ahmed al-Hijiyah, the Chairman of Iraq's National Olympic Committee, who was kidnapped in July 2006 with at least 30 of his colleagues.

64. The health system is deteriorating and there are fewer and fewer medical personnel as an increasing number of medical staff are fleeing Iraq. On 19 November, the Deputy-Health Minister, Ammar al-Saffar, was kidnapped from his house in al-Adhamiya, a predominantly Sunni neighborhood, by 24 gunmen, some of whom were reportedly dressed in Iraqi police uniforms. On 21 November, the other Deputy-Health Minister, Hakim al Zamili escaped an assassination attempt while 3 mortars targeted the building of the Ministry in Bal Al Mu'tham. The attack in Sadr city on 23 November also coincided with an assault by dozens of gunmen against the Ministry of Health.

65. Judges and lawyers continued to be frequently targeted and intimidated and courthouses attacked. On 16 November, a car bomb exploded near Al Sadr City courthouse in Palestine Street, leaving two persons killed and five seriously injured. On 20 November at least one mortar shell landed on Al Ramadi's courthouse leaving three persons injured. On 30 December, a group of armed men bombed Al Karma courthouse in Al Anbar and destroyed it completely.

66. Judge Naim Al Akeli, the head of the Al Kharkh Criminal Court was killed on 15 November by a road side bomb, while driving along Al Jamhuria Bridge in Baghdad. On 19 November, Judge Muthafer Al Obaidy, who also worked with the Council of Ministers, was kidnapped by unidentified gunmen from his house in Al Khadra area in Baghdad. On 23 November, the director of legal affairs in the Council of Ministers, Ali Muthafar Abdel Wahhab, was shot dead by gunmen in front of his house in Hay Al Dawoudi in Al Mansour area in Baghdad. On 10 December, lawyer Nawfel Al Chalabi was kidnapped in front of the New Baghdad Courthouse.

67. On 4 November, Kirkuk police reported the killing of the Imam of Al-Hajah Sabriyah Mosque in south Kirkuk and in Mosul, a member of the Mosul Fatwa Committee was

assassinated. A few days later, insurgents murdered the head of KDP's Mandali Committee, Talib Mahmud Ayna on the Naftkhana-Mandali Road.

68. Two members of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution were assassinated on 20 November: Ali Flaih Al-Ghrani was assassinated in Jbalah district, and Dr. Ali Al-Adhath, Member of Parliament from United Iraqi Alliance block, and his wife, were killed in Hilla. A member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, Sheikh Salih Naji Al-Messudi, was kidnapped on 24 November and his body found two days later. The body of an Iraqi leader from Al Wifaq Front, Abdel Karim Al Obaidi was found on 20 November. A member of the Islamic Party in Al Karkh branch, Jawad Ahmad Al Falahi, was assassinated on 4 December in Al Amiriya by gunmen as he was leaving his house. In late December at the Jirn village, Mosul, an unknown armed group assassinated Mr. Hussein Himod, the Head of Hatra Provisional Council along with his body guard. In Qudis Quarter, Mosul, unknown gunmen shot dead ambulance driver Awad Mohammed Khalif Sab'awi while he was on duty.

69. HRO has also received reports to the effect that several barbers were killed in Kirkuk in the reporting period, probable targets of Islamic extremists advocating conformist Islamic practices such as outlawing shaving for Muslim men. For instance, on 9 December, a "terrorist group" assassinated Qasm Hassan, a barber at the Al-Wasiti Quarter, south Kirkuk.

70. Iraq's academics are increasingly fleeing the country in the face of the violence and are frequent targets across Iraq. Academics have apparently been singled out for their relatively respected public status, vulnerability and views on controversial issues in a climate of deepening Islamic extremism. According to the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education, at least 155 education professionals have been killed since 2003.

71. On 20 November, the University of Diyala warned that it would suspend classes unless the Government pledged to protect staff, following an increased wave of attacks against employees. Many schools in Baghdad continue to be closed, in particular in Doura, Adhamia, Altalbia, Al-Binuk and Al-Shaab. Universities in Baghdad, Dyala and Al-Anbar are also often closed. On 20 November, insurgents killed the President of the Scientific Department of Mosul University and the Director of Registration Department of the College of Education in Kirkuk University. On 5 December, the Director of the Psychological and Research Department in Baghdad University, Dr. Harith Abdel Hamid, was assassinated when driving to work. On the same day, a professor in the Physical Education Faculty of one of Baghdad's universities, Dr. Mohammad Haidar Sulaiman, was assassinated by unknown gunmen. On 11 December, gunmen kidnapped 5 teachers of one primary school near Al-Dijeel village.

72. The intimidation campaign against educational institutes persisted and on 11 December, a car bomb exploded in a car park of Al-Ma'amoon College in Al-Iskan district in Baghdad, killing one person and injuring four. One student was killed and another 6 injured in a roadside bomb explosion on the same morning in front of the Al-Mustansiriya University. On 21 December, Dr. Muntather Mohammad Al Hamadani, the assistant dean at the Faculty of Law at Al Mustansiriya University and Dr. Ali Jassam, were assassinated by unknown gunmen in Al Slaikh area. On the same day, gunmen kidnapped Dr. Anas Khalil Anjad Al Jamili, a professor at Al Nahrain University and a licensed doctor in Al Kadhimiya Hospital and

demanding a ransom. Although the victim's father delivered the ransom, the kidnappers killed both of them after taking the money. Their bodies were found later at the Medico-Legal Institute.

Displacement

73. According to IOM, the total number of families displaced since the Samarra bombing of 22 February is 78,349 or approximately 470,094 individuals. Displacement is occurring on a continuous basis as a result of terrorist acts, sectarian violence, threats, abductions and a generalized breakdown of law and order.

74. The majority of the displaced are moving in with friends and host families, placing new burdens on the resources and services of their host communities. Others are moving into abandoned buildings, such as factories, schools, unoccupied military facilities and other improvised dwellings. IOM estimates that about 3% of the recently-displaced IDPs are moving into camps set up by either MoDM or the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS). Some of these camps are transitory, inhabited by IDPs intending to move to other locations. However, other camps seem to have acquired a more permanent character.

75. One of the primary concerns for IDPs, beside that of access to sanitation and shelter, is food. The food distribution system seems to have deteriorated due to the security situation, especially in Al Anbar, causing many displaced persons to receive either only a portion of the food rations or not receive any rations at all. The number of families displaced from Al Anbar during 2006 is 10,105, the highest among all Governorates, followed by Kerbala with 7,570, Baghdad and Dohuk with 7,000 each.

76. Although all Governorates are affected by the influx of IDPs, Baghdad in particular seems to be particularly burdened by internal city displacement, i.e., displacement of people from one neighbourhood to another within the city limits, and IDPs from outside the city, i.e., from Diyala, Anbar, Salahaddin, Wassit, Babel, Kirkuk and Ninevah Governorates. IDPs in Baghdad are both Shiite and Sunni, and a few families are Aizideis.

77. As the security conditions in south and central Iraq progressively worsen, the influx of IDPs into the northern region continues to swell. Although the KRG authorities have received IDPs of all ethnicities in all three Governorates, recent entry regulations have restricted the movement of IDPs to reside and seek employment in the region. The lack of a unified approach in all three Governorates has led to inconsistent policies and practices regarding IDPs. The assistance provided by KRG authorities favours Kurdish IDPs, while Arab IDPs have been given the least support because of security fears.

78. HRO has offered its support to the authorities in KRG in the formulation of regulations regarding IDPs consistent with human rights standards. However, government officials in Erbil have recently provided conflicting statements to the media and to HRO on the conditions for entry by IDPs, particularly in regard to the issuance of residence permits. There are approximately 119,270 IDP families in the Kurdistan Region, from before 2003 and as a result of the most recent violence in the south and centre of the country. A small number of

these some 1,963 families, are of Arab background, and, according to information received by HRO, are liable to receive discriminatory and unfair treatment.

79. On 3 November, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that Iraq was facing “an even larger humanitarian crisis than we had initially prepared for in 2002 to 2003. There are now 1,664,502 displaced people, almost triple the 600,000 refugees planned for three years ago”.

Rule of Law

Detention

80. According to the Ministry of Human Rights, the total number of detainees for the entire country, at the end of December, was 29715, which constitutes a slight increase from the 29,562 reported at the end of November. The numbers of detainees reported in the last bimonthly were 30,104 in September and 29,256 in October.

Detention Jurisdiction	November	December
MNF – I	13407	14534
MOJ	8353	8500
MOI	3715	4034
MOD	1214	1220
MOLSA	456	456
Total except KRG	27145	28744
Total in Kurdistan	2417	2098
Total all over Iraq	29,562	30,842

81. The number of detainees held in the country continues to remain high and a source of discontent of large sways of the population since that the great majority is Sunni. Massive release plans from MNF-I have been put on hold pending further discussion and legislative action on a draft Amnesty Law. The latter, along with other reconciliation initiatives has been put on hold waiting for a consensus to emerge among the various political groups.

82. Conditions of detention, including overcrowding and poorly run facilities, as well as lack of judicial oversight remain the main human rights concerns. Many detainees, especially in the south, are kept in facilities that are reportedly not fit for human use. Furthermore, the current number of detainees that need to be brought before a judge continues to far outstrip the capacity of the Iraqi criminal courts to adjudicate cases. HRO recognizes the enormous challenges faced by the Iraqi judiciary, especially in the current security context. The work of the judiciary is further hampered by the repeated disregard of judicial orders by the police and by the constant threats and the actual killings of judges which calls into question the independence of the judiciary and the genuine commitment by the authorities to develop a State based on the rule of law.

83. HRO encourages the work of the Combined Release and Review Board (CRRB) to continue processing lists for the administrative release of detainees held by MNF-I, now that the participation of the various Iraqi Ministries has resumed (the CRRB is composed of representatives of MNF-I, Ministries of Justice, Interior and Human Rights). The Ministry of Human Rights continues to visit Camps Bucca and Cropper (MNF-I run detention facilities) on a periodic basis and UNAMI welcomes the channel of communication developed between MNF I and the Ministry in order to address specific cases or possible grievances.

84. HRO encourages also early action on the transfer of detainees/internees from MNF I to Iraqi jurisdiction and to ensure that this process is carried out in accordance with international human rights standards, keeping in mind due process and the need to ensure judicial oversight within the shortest possible period of time. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced, on 30 November 2006, that it was close to an agreement with the Iraqi authorities which would allow its delegates to visit Iraqi run detention centres, including those where allegations of torture and mistreatment have been systematically reported. ICRC already regularly visits 14,000 prisoners including 12,000 held by US and UK troops and 2,000 by Kurdish authorities in the North of the country.

85. During the last months, HRO has continued to receive information pointing to torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment in detention centres administered by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) or security forces throughout Iraq. In this connection, HRO welcomes the revival in December of MNF-Iraqi joint inspections of places of detention under the control of the Ministry of Interior, Defence and Special Forces throughout the country. HRO encourages this process and calls for the reports resulting from those inspections to be made public and for the Minister of Human Rights to follow up on the recommendations made with other concerned Ministries or State entities.

86. Despite concrete acknowledgement by the KRG of the arrest of individuals by PUK or KDP intelligence and security forces and their detention at unofficial detention facilities, there appears to be little impetus by the authorities to effectively address this pervasive and serious human rights concern. There has been little official denial of the existence and sometimes locations of secret and illegal detention cells in Suleimaniya and Erbil which are often no more than rooms in private houses and government buildings.

87. In December, 120 detainees at the Salam Barracks Prison in Suleymania went on a hunger strike to protest the delays in processing their cases, despite long periods of detention. According to family members, most were arrested on terror-related allegations, and officials claimed that most of those arrests were supported by court orders. On 31 December, a prisoner was killed and 3 others wounded amid clashes between prison guards and prisoners in Badosh Prison in Mosul. Some prisoners were protesting the execution of Saddam Hussein.

88. In a further push to acknowledge regional government accountability, on 9 November, the Legal and Women Affairs Committees of the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) announced that they will advocate for a provision in the Kurdistan Constitution to provide compensation for victims of torture in detention facilities. The Legal Committee will

also present a list of 106 detainees to the Kurdistan President to request for their release. On 14 November, the KNA discussed commuting the sentences of prisoners, excluding “terrorists, murderers and spies”. There are at present 3 regional prisons in Kurdistan with a total of 1052 detainees in the Suleymania prison, 793 in Erbil and 572 in Dahuk. The amnesty however would only apply to convicted prisoners and not to those detained for security reasons.

89. Officials usually justify prolonged detention without trial on suspicion of terrorism and other security concerns but detainees are usually not informed of allegations against them and given no opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention. According to information received by HRO, the suspects arrested in Mosul have been transferred to detention cells in Akree, Erbil and Shaqlawa, Kurdistan. There have been attempts, however, on the part of high-level KRG officials to intervene or request that a “disappeared” detainee be produced before a court of law. HRO reiterates its opposition to arbitrary and unlawful deprivations of liberty and condemn exposing detainees to any form of ill-treatment or torture.

Al-Jadiriya and Site 4

90. One year after the discovery of the illegal detention centre of “Al-Jadiriya’s bunker in Baghdad, on 13 November 2005, where 168 detainees were unlawfully detained and abused, the United Nations and other international NGO’s, such as Amnesty International in a public statement on 10 November, continue to request that the Government of Iraq publish the findings on the investigation on this illegal detention. It may be recalled that a Joint-Inspection Committee was established after the discovery of the Al-Jadiriya’s bunker in November 2005, in order to establish the general conditions of detention. The existence of the bunker was revealed after a raid of the Ministry of Interior’s bunker by MNF I/Iraqi forces.

91. The Iraqi Government should start a judicial investigation into human rights violations in Al-Jadiriya. The failure to publish the Al-Jadiriya report, as well as other investigations carried out by the Government regarding conditions of detention in the country, remains a matter of serious concern and affects Iraq’s commitment to establish a new system based on the respect of human rights and the rule of law.

92. On 30 May, a joint inspection led by the Deputy-Prime Minister and MNF-I, in a prison known as “Site 4” revealed the existence of 1,431 detainees presenting systematic evidence of physical and psychological abuse. Related to alleged abuses committed at “Site 4,” a probe by 3 separate investigative committees was set up. After two and a half months, the probe concluded that 57 employees, including high-ranking officers, of the Ministry of Interior were involved in degrading treatment of prisoners. Arrests warrants against them were allegedly issued, but no arrests have reportedly yet taken place. HRO stressed the need for accountability in such high visibility instances of human rights violations by officials. In addition to serving the urgent need for justice of the victims, accountability for these crimes would also act as a deterrent vis à vis future violations. Lack of criminal proceedings for those responsible will only reinforce the sense of growing impunity and thus undermine efforts at establishing the rule of law in Iraq.

Emergency powers

93. On 28 November, the state of emergency was extended in all parts of Iraq, except Kurdistan, for another 30 days. Emergency laws were adopted by Prime Minister Allawi on 6 July 2004. Under these provisions, curfews, cordon off towns and cities, search operations, can be imposed. The latest example was the curfew imposed by the Government after the multiple attacks on Sadr city on 23 November. The state of emergency has been extended by the Council of Representatives (CoR) on a monthly basis yet CoR must act again in order to continue it beyond 31 December. It is important to recall that threats to national security may, under very specific conditions, lead to a state of emergency under which certain rights are subject to derogation (suspension). However, even in a state of emergency, it is unlawful to suspend some rights, such as the right to life, the prohibition of torture, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Iraqi High Tribunal (IHT)

94. As already indicated in the last Bimonthly report, Mr. Saddam Hussein was sentenced to death by the IHT in the Dujail trial on 5 November. On that day, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, called on the Iraqi authorities to observe a moratorium on executions, citing a credible appeals process as “an essential part of fair-trial guarantees.” On 28 November, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions called on the Iraqi and United States Governments to redress “serious procedural shortcomings” in the trial of ousted president Saddam Hussein and urged the Iraqis not to carry out the death sentence “imposed in a proceeding, which does not meet applicable basic standards of a fair trial.” In a statement issued in Geneva, the Working Group recommended to the two Governments that the serious procedural shortcomings be redressed and that the situation of Mr. Hussein be brought in conformity with the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and with the provisions of the ICCPR,” it said, referring to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a binding treaty to which both Iraq and the US are parties.

95. On 26 December, the Appeals Court of the IHT unanimously dismissed the appeals of Saddam and his co-defendants and upheld the sentence of death imposed on Saddam for the Dujail killings. The Appeals Court explained that the trial judgment was supported by sufficient evidence. First, evidence shows that because of his position of authority, Saddam knew about the destruction of orchards in Dujail by his security forces and the fate of the Dujail residents after the failed assassination attempt. He also had command responsibility over perpetrators who had carried out the crimes. Second, it rejected arguments that the IHT was illegal as it was lawfully enacted by an act of parliament in 2005 before the trial commenced. Third, Saddam was not entitled to immunity as he was stripped of privileges when deposed and in any case, immunity is inapplicable to crimes against humanity. Lastly, all claims of unfair trial were rejected as Saddam was provided adequate defense, aware of the charges against him, was able to examine witnesses and had the right to remain silent and make submissions.

96. UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Mr. Leandro Despouy, issued a statement on 27 December expressing concern that the panel’s decision did

not address the grave shortcomings of the trial and urged the Iraqi Government not to carry out the death sentence imposed on the defendants following what appears to have been a procedurally flawed legal process. On 28 December, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, called for restraint by the Iraqi Authorities and reiterated her concerns about the appeal process as well as the fairness of the original trial, following her statement on 5 November when the verdict was pronounced. Saddam Hussein, however, was executed just after 0600 on 30 December. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ashraf Qazi, indicated on that day that "the United Nations stands firmly against impunity, and understands the desire for justice felt by the many Iraqis. Based on the principle of respect for the right to life, however, the United Nations remains opposed to capital punishment, even in the case of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide." A video of the execution of Saddam Hussein was released through the internet on 31 December, showing inappropriate conduct on the part of guards at the facility used for the hanging. The video sparked an outcry of criticism nationally and internationally.

97. Two days after the 5 November verdict, the IHT continued with the al-Anfal genocide trial. Saddam and six former Ba'athist members have pleaded not guilty to charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for their role in the military offensive against the Kurds between 1987-88.

98. During the seven trial sessions held during November and December, witnesses described the mass execution of Kurds by Iraqi forces. According to witness, villagers were persuaded to leave their homes with promises of safety, the men were separated from women and children, lined up and executed. Others described how their villages were attacked with chemical weapons – "*I could see birds falling and liquids coming out of people's noses*" a witness testified. A number of survivors were rounded up and taken to detention centres such as the Nugrat Salman camp where more deaths occurred as a result of disease, starvation and mistreatment. A witness told the court that his wife and infant were sent to Nugrat Salman where the infant died because of the hardship conditions at the camp. Another witness was taken to Kirkuk where he was imprisoned in a "hall" and "severely tortured" along with other prisoners.

99. The prosecution called several expert witnesses to prove the use of chemical attacks on civilians. To disprove genocidal intent, the defence attempted to establish that the campaign was to flush out insurgents and rebel groups waging a war against the government and that civilian Kurds were not slated for destruction but instead relocated and given land and homes in collective towns. During the trial, defendant and former military intelligence chief Sabir Douri accused the Kurds of spying for Iran, who had fought an 8-year war with Iraq. During the proceedings, Saddam Hussein called on all Iraqis to "forgive, reconcile and shake hands." On 18 December Prosecutors submitted documentary evidence purportedly linking defendants to the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in 1988 in a memo from Saddam's office to Iraqi military intelligence ordering a strike with "special ammunition and possibly implemented by means of the air force, air aviation and artillery". The trial was then adjourned to 8 January 2007.

Iraq Bar Association (IBA)

100. On 16 November, the elections of the president of the Iraqi Bar Association (IBA), were won by Daa Al Saadi with reportedly some 70% of all votes. His election was annulled however by the De-Ba'athification Commission because of his past membership in the Ba'ath party. HRO has called for the establishment of clear investigative powers of the Commission that would allow it to make decisions on individual suitability to hold public posts. The De-Ba'athification Commission was also reported to have removed Mazahem al Jbori and Sami al Khatib from the IBA Board of Directors. HRO supports efforts to reform the De-Ba'athification process and new legislation, developed by the De-Ba'athification Commission, contains certain improvements in the application of the de-Ba'athification of appointees. A main concern has been, however, and remains that the legislation may allow for the intrusive powers of the Commission to review, and therefore annul, also appointments at the level of civil society.

Kirkuk

101. HRO has received several consistent reports from various NGOs and other sources on the deteriorating human rights situation in Kirkuk and is particularly concerned by such developments. Key concerns include the rights of minorities living in Kirkuk and their ability to effectively participate in its political, economic and social development. Additional concerns relate to the use of security forces and the power of detention, including in KRG facilities by the authorities so as to intimidate and prevent minority groups from playing a significant role in the city's affairs. Such violations may well be the prelude of a looming crisis in Kirkuk in the coming months.

102. HRO plans to establish a significant presence in UNAMI sub-office in Kirkuk as soon as possible. It should be recalled that in January 2005, shortly before the general elections, a Kirkuk Normalisation Committee was established by Diayad Allawi's government. However, neither funds nor staff were made available. The Committee did not start work. On 4 July 2006, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki replaced Hamid Majid Mousa with Ali Mahdi (Turkoman/Shia from Kirkuk, a CoR member on SCIRI list). This appointment was rejected by the Kurdistan Alliance.

103. On 9 August 2006, Prime Minister Maliki announced the formation of the 'Article 140 Implementation Committee', replacing the Kirkuk Normalisation Committee. It was announced that Hashim Abdulrahman, Iraq Minister of Justice would chair it. Apart from the Chairman, the Committee will have eight members: three ministers from Baghdad central government, three members of Kirkuk Governorate Council, the KRG representative and one representative of Kirkuk Christian community. However, to date, the KRG government has not accepted these appointments. The Prime Ministers decree allocates \$200 million to the Committee to perform its task.

104. Also in August 2006, the Iraqi Turkoman Front stated that it would obstruct the 2007 referendum to determine Kirkuk's future. The Front also demanded that the UN should observe the holding of a census in Kirkuk. It may be noted that the mandate provided to

UNAMI in Security Council resolution 1546 of 2004 includes assisting the Government of Iraq in the eventual conduct of a comprehensive census. Most Iraqi Turkoman groups claim that Kirkuk was their historical, economic and cultural centre. Kirkuk is heavily controlled by security forces and Kurdish militias. Kurdish militias (Peshmerga) exercise to a large degree effective control of the city; most senior official positions are occupied by Kurds or their allies from other ethnicities.

105. HRO officials met recently the Kirkuk Governor, Chief of Police, Chief of Army, judges and lawyers, political party representatives, and civil society representatives. Human rights violations are reportedly committed by security forces at detention centers. In many cases the arrest and detention of people is carried out by Kurdish militias. Detainees are often transferred directly to the Kurdistan Region without notifying the governorate or the police. Officials in Kirkuk are aware of such practices, yet no significant effort has been made to stop them. Even though violence is not on the same level as in Baghdad, on-going human rights violations and the surge of violent acts which have significantly increased since 2003 are widely believed to be the doing of perpetrators and instigators from inside and outside Iraq and Kirkuk. Lately and due to the continuing insecurity, ethnic groups have moved closer to their own communities for protection.

106. Women status has not been affected in terms of personal freedom and rights of education and work. Yet the increasing violence and tension among major ethnic groups has resulted in a real setback for women within society. The number of widows without any reliable source of income has reached alarming rate in the city. As a result, the overall economic situation of the affected families is declining due to an high unemployment rate and lack of new work opportunities. Kidnappings of women and honour killings have not been properly addressed by the authorities. The current situation has equally affected the education system. Arabic was the primary official language for schools. At present, schools use the language of the major ethnic group where schools are located: this is having an impact on minority groups within those communities.

Mosul

107. Violence in Mosul, although less frequent than that engulfing south and central Iraq, has intensified. Mosul officials state that terror attacks by armed groups are significantly contained. Recently, however local authorities reported that 40 civilians and police officers have been killed on average each week in violent incidents. According to information and reports received by HRO, arbitrary arrest and detention of predominantly “terror suspects” form an inescapable feature of civilian life in Mosul. MNF-I and ISF house raids have allegedly resulted in damaged or stolen property and contributed to an atmosphere of fear and mistrust. Government officials have acknowledged the problem in recent meetings with HRO and have attempted to resolve some of these cases. For instance, the Head of Human Rights Committee of the Governing Council attended to 360 detention cases since 2005 and secured the release of 341 detainees as only 19 were eventually charged and convicted in Court. The Governor’s Office has also processed claims for compensation from the central Government for affected inhabitants but it is usually inadequate to cover property loss.

108. While professionals, politicians and religious figures fall victim to the violence, attacks are largely oriented against security forces. According to the Mosul Governor, no ethnic group has been spared but despite that, the community and religious leaders of all faiths have refused to be divided and have remained united in advocating peace. During 2006, 12 journalists were assassinated in Mosul. Shiite families have received threatening letters and have been killed by foreign fighters. Members of political parties have been kidnapped and killed. Universities have remained largely unaffected by curfews and violence and education has been uninterrupted. On 11 December, the Iraqi Union of Students and Youth received information that a leaflet was distributed demanding that female students wear the *Hijab* (headscarf).

109. However, Talafar district, a mixed Turkoman, Kurdish and Sunni Arab area, remains an exception with a higher degree of sectarian violence and socio-economic disruption. Terror attacks targeting security forces have often also killed civilians. Mosul has also seen an exodus of inhabitants of all ethnicities to the safer northern region. According to a Governorate source, 50,000 residents would have left since 2004 and there would be approximately 6000-8000 Kurds living in temporary shelters between Mosul and Erbil. Most Christian IDPs have fled to Dohuk and to villages in the outskirts of Mosul. In both Mosul city and in the Talafar district, medical facilities and health care have badly deteriorated because of lack of medicine, medical equipment and lack of security for medical professionals.

Palestinian refugees

110. Killings, threats, intimidations, and kidnappings are becoming the norm for Palestinians in Iraq. Many of these actions are reportedly carried out by the militias wearing police or special forces uniform. Most of the victims are found dead or simply disappear. Sixteen Palestinians were kidnapped and 9 killed during the reporting period. HRO received unconfirmed reports that many victims were interrogated and killed in illegal detention centres run by militias. Many residents have reported receiving threatening letters demanding they evacuate their houses and many of the abandoned houses were later occupied allegedly by members of militias or their affiliates.

111. On 2 November, two individuals were killed in front of their parents by the Iraqi National Guard in Al Fadil area in Baghdad. On 27 November, the body of 72-year-old Tawfiq Abdul Khaliq was found bearing signs of torture. On 13 November, unidentified gunmen killed a female Palestinian in Al Mashtel area in Baghdad. Her house was occupied by militias and when she asked MNF-I for help, the militia torched her house before departing. Other Palestinians were targeted and kidnapped for ransom and then released or killed. On 30 November, a taxi driver, was kidnapped at the Al Habibia area and then released. A shopkeeper was taken from his shop in Al Mashtel area on 2 December. The kidnappers came in one police and three civilian cars. His body was found on 7 December at the Baghdad morgue.

112. Attacks on the Palestinian compound in Baladiyat in Baghdad for instance are frequent in order to compel Palestinians to leave their dwellings and their belongings. Baladiyat is located in the midst of a Shiite area and threats are usually followed by small arms

fire and mortar attacks. In the past two months, at least six incidents of organized attacks on the Palestinian compound have been recorded, such as on 26 November, when a group of gunmen stormed the quarter and demanded Palestinians leave or be shot. On 9 December, three mortar shells landed in Al Baladiyat wounding ten. On 13 December, mortar attacks continued to rain on the compound for three hours, killing up to 11 and injuring more. There were reports that the area was cordoned off by police, according to some accounts, and by militias according to others, thus preventing injured Palestinians to reach hospitals.

113. HRO and UNHCR maintain regular contacts and continue to monitor the situation of Palestinians. On at least two occasions in December, UNAMI had to call upon MNF-I to intervene while the Palestinian compound was being attacked. The police and MNF-I were reported to have arrived after the attacks had ended, and briefly patrolled the area. UNHCR reported that 350 Palestinians from Iraq (who recently left Baghdad) remain near the Al Tanf border crossing between Iraq and Syria in a makeshift refugee camp located in the no man's land between both borders. They have been denied entry by the Syrian government and they refused to return to Iraq. As a result, they have been living in increasingly desperate circumstances for the past six months. There are 131 Palestinians still within Iraq near Al Tanf border. Similarly, at the border with Jordan, 7 Palestinians remain between the Jordanian and the Iraqi border.

Sexual Orientation

114. Even though homosexuality is not condoned in Iraqi society, homosexuals are protected under Iraqi law. Attacks on homosexuals and intolerance of homosexual practices have long existed yet they have escalated in the past year. The current environment of impunity and lawlessness invites a heightened level of insecurity for homosexuals in Iraq. Armed Islamic groups and militias have been known to be particularly hostile towards homosexuals, frequently and openly engaging in violent campaigns against them. There have been a number of assassinations of homosexuals in Iraq. At least five homosexual males were reported to have been kidnapped from Shaab area in the first week of December by one of the main militias. Their personal documents and information contained in computers were also confiscated. The mutilated body of Amjad, one of the kidnapped, appeared in the same area after a few days. HRO was also alerted to the existence of religious courts, supervised by clerics, where homosexuals allegedly would be “tried,” “sentenced” to death and then executed.⁴

115. According to the Iraqi LGBT society, twenty-six of their members have been killed since 2003. This include the murders in 2006 of two minors, eleven-year-old Ameer and fourteen-year-old Ahmed, because of their alleged sexual orientation even though both were reportedly forced into child prostitution. Another two young women were murdered in Najaf

⁴ According to the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, “the trials, presided over by young inexperienced clerics, are held (...) in ordinary halls. Gays and rapists face anything from 40 lashes to the death penalty.(...) One of the self-appointed judges in Sadr City, believes that homosexuality is on the wane in Iraq. “Most [gays] have been killed and others have fled,” he said. Indeed, the number who've sought asylum in the UK has risen noticeably over the last few months. (...) He insists the religious courts have a lot to be proud of, “We now represent a society that asked us to protect it not only from thieves and terrorists but also from these [bad] deeds.” Institute for War and Peace Reporting: Baghdad Gays Fear for Their Lives (20 October 2006), (<http://www.iwpr.net>)

also because of their allegedly sexual orientation. Allegedly, three Fatwas would have been issued by Islamic clerics authorising “good Muslims” to hunt and kill homosexuals.

MNF-I operations and investigation of allegations of human rights violations

116. In November, HRO submitted an official memorandum to MNF-I Chief of Staff, Major General Thomas L. Moore, Jr., requesting more detailed information on a number of incidents involving MNF-I activities in Ramadi and Fallujah. These included also the use of facilities protected by the Geneva Conventions, such as hospitals and schools, as military bases. HRO would like to stress the importance of MNF-I investigating and reporting on allegations of violations of human rights and humanitarian laws.

117. Military operations continued in Al Anbar Governorate, in particular Ramadi, Fallujah and Heet. Ramadi and Fallujah have seen relatively constant fighting between MNF-I and insurgents in some districts, completely disrupting the functioning of social services and resulting in a high degree of displacement and casualties. In Ramadi, for instance, MNF-I is alleged to have bombed Ramadi electric power station with fighter jets on 27 November, wounding one engineer and two technicians, and leaving the city without electricity for a number of days.

118. In Ramadi, about 200 families were reported to have left their houses in November. According to the Ramadi General Hospital, during the first week of November, MNF-I snipers were reported as having allegedly killed 13 civilians. The General Hospital staff reported a severe shortage of medicines, staff and equipment. For several months now, patients have refrained from using the hospital for fear of snipers allegedly placed on the hospital roof, in addition to the military occupation of the hospital garden. No school attendance was reported in Ramadi, except for a limited number of schools with few students on the outskirts of the city. The MNF-I and Iraqi Forces had allegedly occupied 11 public schools in Katana, Aziziya, Al-Mu'alimeen and Al-Jameea districts. In addition, Anbar University was not functioning due to threats by insurgents.

119. HRO has received reports to the effect that on 5 November, around 21:00, MNF I units gathered Iraqi citizens near the General Hospital building in Heet. Allegedly, seven men were killed and ten wounded in this operation. Among the dead, there was Sabti Jumaa Hayan, who was reportedly sick and in bed at the time.

120. HRO received information that between 7-8 December, MNF-I Air Force raided two houses in Jazera area of Al-Eshaqi sub-district of Salahaddin Governorate resulting in the deaths of 37 civilians residing in two farm houses. A source in Tikrit Hospital informed HRO that most of the victims were already dead even before the air raids. They bore execution-style gun-shot wounds. He claimed to have seen 17 victims - 5 females, 6 children, 2 elderly men, and 4 adult male with these wounds. Amer Alwan, Al Esshaqi District Commissioner also announced that all 17 bodies bore bullet marks and were apparently killed before the air-raids. MNF I has reportedly claimed that the air strikes were an anti terror operation and in response to shootings coming from the houses. On 19 December, HRO requested MNF-I for more information regarding this raid.

121. One of four U.S. soldiers accused of raping a 14-year-old Iraqi girl before killing her and her family was conditionally sentenced, on 10 November, in Fort Campbell, Ky, USA, to 90 years in prison with the possibility of parole. The sentence -- which is subject to review by a higher military authority and could be reduced -- was imposed on Specialist James Barker after a two-day court-martial. He had pleaded guilty to rape and murder and agreed to testify against others charged in the case in exchange for escaping the death penalty.

122. On 22 December, at Camp Pendleton, Calif., USA, eight Marines were charged in the killings of 24 Iraqi civilians last year during a military operation in the town of Haditha. Four of the Marines -- all enlisted men -- were charged with unpremeditated murder. The other four were officers accused of failures in investigating and reporting the deaths. The most serious charges were brought against Staff Sgt. Frank Wuterich, a 26-year-old squad leader accused of murdering 12 civilians and ordering the murders of six more. With respect to Mahmudiya: 5 soldiers have been charged in the rape and murder of a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and the murder of her family. So far, 1 soldier pleaded guilty to avoid a death sentence. Another soldier was discharged.

Promotion of Human Rights

123. Complementing the efforts of the International Compact for Iraq, the Rule of Law Sector Working Group (ROLSWG) continues to lead consultations on the justice and rule of law reforms in Iraq and provides an opportunity for meaningful engagement between the High Judicial Council, and the Ministries of Human Rights, Interior, Justice, and Defence. Consultations within the framework of the ROLSWG continued with the first meeting of the Core Team of the Ministry of Interior on 23 November. Core teams were formed in order to facilitate discussions at the practical level and to articulate short term needs of key Iraqi rule of law institutions.

124. A draft Assistance Framework was developed by HRO based on the needs of Ministry of Interior as expressed by the Ministry early in 2006 in the unified work paper presented by Chief Justice Mr. Medhat Mahmoud on behalf of the High Judicial Council (HJC) as well as the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Human Rights, Defence and Planning and Development Cooperation. A conference on the Rule of Law is planned to take place in Baghdad, in mid January 2007 and will offer a real prospect for the HJC and the Government of Iraq to assume a leading role and a meaningful engagement in the development and reform of Iraq's justice sector institutions. The conference, which would be chaired by the Chief Justice, with the support and participation of other Ministries, the UN and the donor community, would discuss short- and long-term needs in the rule of law sector. Main outcome of the conference would be an Iraqi overall strategic framework in the rule of law sector, and thus key elements for a justice reform program. The work of the various core teams would constitute the point of departure for this exercise and be presented by the various Ministries and the HJC and then be organically integrated with the overall strategic framework for the rule of law. The outcome of the meeting will contribute to the International Compact for Iraq and inform further action by the Government of Iraq and the international community in the rule of law sector over the next few years.

125. During the reporting period, HRO has carried out a number of activities within the framework of its “Human Rights Project for Iraq 2006-2007”. Based on the belief that creating open channels of communication and exchange of information between the MoHR and other key rule of law Ministries is crucial to the process of developing a culture of human rights in Iraq, HRO organized a meeting in Baghdad entitled “Strengthening of Human Rights Protection in Iraq: The Role of the Ministry of Human Rights” on 13-15 November, 2006. The event was organized so as to give the MoHR the opportunity to present its new structure and core functions to officials from other key Iraqi Ministries as well as the Human Rights Committee of the Council of Representatives. The event resulted in specific recommendations for action by the MoHR and further provided a platform for intensive discussions on how best to improve human rights protection as well as cooperation, share information, and especially coordinate follow up action on human rights within the government structure and with other State institutions.

126. As part of the commemoration of International Human Rights Day, on 10 December, 2006, the Ministry of Human Rights, with the support of HRO, held a meeting with 32 representatives of Iraqi national media entities, who discussed with the Minister for Human Rights ways of enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights and supporting the work of the Ministry. On 11 December 2006, UNAMI hosted a meeting of the Minister of Human Rights, with Ambassadors representing different countries in order to discuss ways and means to support the activities of the MoHR for the promotion and protection of human rights. On 12 December 2006, MoHR, with the support of HRO, met with representatives of 47 Iraqi non-governmental organizations working in the field of human rights throughout Iraq. The meeting provided an opportunity to strengthen communication between the Ministry and the Iraqi civil society, and to define ways of cooperating in order to achieve common objectives with regard to improving the human rights situation in Iraq.

127. In line with the objectives of the Human Rights Project for Iraq 2006-2007, UNAMI/HRO has continued to provide support for the establishment of well equipped and well functioning human rights libraries in various Ministries, in the Council of Representatives, and in Iraqi Universities. A shipment of OHCHR publications is being distributed in Baghdad, Erbil and Basra to the various Ministries and rule of law institutions. As a further means of assistance to enhance access to human rights documentation in governmental and public libraries, HRO and OHCHR, with the help of UNOPS, and in partnership with the Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems International (HURIDOCs), organized a 10-day training course for 14 Iraqi personnel working in legal and human rights libraries on modern information management techniques. The training took place from 27 November to 8 December 2006, in Geneva, Switzerland.

128. In order to sustain the work of the independent National Human Rights Commission once established by the Council of Representatives a three years comprehensive project has been developed by HRO for possible funding by a number of interested donors countries and the United Nations. The project covers all basic aspects of the work of the Commission, including training and security for the Commissioners.

129. In line with the conviction that women's rights are an integral and inseparable part of human rights, HRO has started a study on the situation of rights of minority women in Iraq. The study is carried out in partnership with UNIFEM, Minority Rights Group International, and the Iraqi Minorities Council. The study will not only document the situation of minority women but will provide an informative basis that can be effectively used for any programs and policies aiming at supporting and improving the situation of minority women. In connection with Human Rights Day, on 10-11 December 2006, HRO, with the assistance of UNOPS, and in cooperation with UNIFEM organized in Amman, Jordan, a preparatory meeting for the implementation of the study. The meeting brought together the different partner organizations and the research team. Also as part of Human Rights Week activities in Iraq, HRO has supported the MoHR in the launching a poster competition for elementary and secondary schools throughout Iraq. The competition is used as a tool to raise awareness among school children on the importance of promoting human rights. The competition will be carried out by the MoHR and the Iraqi Ministry of Education.

Basra

130. In Basra, HRO, and in coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Human Rights, successfully completed a three-seminar training of "Basra Leadership and Human Rights Awareness" that had started on 20 October and concluded on 6 December 2006. The training targeted around 85 high-level officials, religious leaders, members of the political parties, members of the provincial council, regional ministries representatives and non-governmental organizations and tribal sheikhs in which several human rights concerns and recommendations were discussed, including raising awareness on human rights in general, woman and children rights, rule of law and the international and Arabic standards, transitional justice and national reconciliation.

Erbil

131. HRO Erbil celebrated Human Rights Day by distributing to NGOs, universities, government agencies and Ministries a HRO-designed poster to commemorate the event and a special edition CD-Rom containing major HR instruments and HRO materials in both English and Arabic languages. HRO met with various NGOs, governorate and parliamentary officials and Ministers from the three governorates in the reporting period to discuss issues of protection and promotion of human rights. HRO organized its first in-house half-day seminar entitled "*Monitoring and Reporting Violations of Women's Rights*" at UNAMI premises on 18 December. 14 participants from UN, NGOs from the three Governorates and representatives from Ministries and Parliament attended. This is the first of a series of monthly in-house seminars for small groups of participants focusing on thematic human rights issues and technical skills training such as report writing.
