

Amid 'volatile' environment, UN mission chief urges Iraqi leaders to 'listen to the voice of the people'

Despite a myriad of “long-neglected social, economic and development needs”, the Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq ([UNAMI](#)) on Wednesday said progress had been made towards recovery and stability in the battle-scarred country, and called for Iraqi political leaders to continue to “work for national reconciliation” through “inclusive” solutions.

Briefing the Security Council, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, started by updating Members on the manual ballot recount completed on Monday, in response to “complaints and allegations of electoral fraud and mismanagement” following parliamentary elections on 12 May. Mr. Kubiš noted the monitoring and support role played by UNAMI, as well as the oversight and advice provided by the UN throughout the process.

“I welcome the orderly, transparent, credible and well-organised conduct of the recount,” he noted, applauding “the dedication and professionalism of all recount staff,” which, he said, “increased public confidence in the electoral process.”

As for the ongoing civil unrest that has broken out across Basra and various southern Governorates, and which resulted in the death of at least 18 persons with 519 injured in recent months, he commended the “major efforts to provide swift and tailored responses to legitimate popular demands, bringing a temporary relief to people living under strenuous conditions”.

“These measures, however, remain insufficient to address the depth of people’s needs and concerns,” he added, urging “political leaders to listen to the voice of the people, seize the opportunity and accelerate the process of formation of a patriotic, inclusive and non-sectarian national government that will put all the rich resources of Iraq at the disposal, and for the benefit, of its people.”

The Head of UNAMI insisted on the need to ensure that women in particular have access to “leadership positions in Iraq” so they are “not left behind in recovery and rebuilding efforts” and can “play key roles” in shaping the future of a country that “owes them a lot.”

In his briefing, the Special Representative mentioned that the country’s security and human rights situation remains “volatile” with sporadic terrorist attacks against civilians and government entities, and kidnappings.

“I note with concern that although the level of violence in Iraq has decreased since last year, armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continued to take a toll on civilians,” he said, adding that improvised

explosive devices remain the number one cause of civilian casualties.

He also mentioned as “unacceptable” the plight of over 3,100 Yazidis who remain in the hands of ISIL or Da’esh, including those simply missing since their region in northern Iraq was overrun by the terrorist group in August 2014.

As the humanitarian and protection situation remains dire, the Special Representative went on to highlight the major reconstruction efforts undertaken across the country, especially in Mosul’s old city, with the support of various UN agencies.

“I note with appreciation that one year after the liberation of Mosul, [UN] clearance teams have removed 43,700 explosive hazards in the city” from roads, bridges, schools, universities, hospitals, clinics, water treatment plants and municipal buildings, he told the Council.

He also commended the efforts made on health care provision and access to education, noting however the “funding remains a critical issue”. According to the UN’s [Financial Tracking Service](#), as of 8 August, a \$202 million (36 per cent) funding gap remains based on requirements laid out in the 2018 [Humanitarian Response Plan](#).

Mr. Kubiš urged the Members of the Security Council to continue to support Iraq in its path to stability and prosperity. “In tandem with our collective humanitarian and stabilization efforts, recovery and development efforts are critical to Iraq and Member States are requested to continue supporting them”, he said.

Among other things, in his briefing, the Special Representative also updated the Security Council on the National Government’s relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government, the continued presence of Turkish armed forces along the border in the north of Iraq, the plight of Syrian refugees living in the country, and the search for 625 Kuwaiti and third-country nationals who went missing after the 1990 conflict.