

English Supplement

Al-Muntada

of the Iraqi Association

www.iraqiassociation.org

IRAQI ASSOCIATION

PALINGSWICK HOUSE
241 KING STREET
HAMMERSMITH
LONDON W6 9LP
TEL: 020 8741 5491
FAX: 020 8748 9010

E-mail: info@iraqiassociation.org

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Vulnerable, Impoverished, and Discriminated Against



Children in Iraq are the most vulnerable people, and often they pay the cost of the violence. Iraqi children have been caught up in war for the third time in 26 years, the deteriorating conditions facing children is continuing in a country where almost half of the total population is under 18. Even before the conflict began in 2003, many children were highly vulnerable to disease and malnutrition. NGO groups and local humanitarian groups are working under extraordinarily difficult security circumstances. Beside that, the growing displacement of people is creating unimaginable misery to thousands of children, while the sectarian violence is continuing unabated. In June 2006, the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration had confirmed that around 40,000 Iraqi children have been displaced due to violence. Adding to the need is the lack of medical professional people that are fleeing the country because of the sectarian hate, for example in July 2006 Basra Hospital recorded the death of 90 children due to lack of treatment and medicine. Lack of regular official government statistics had led NGOs to record these deaths.

The Iraq Index, compiled by the Brookings Institution in Washington, released on 21 December 2006, estimated that up to 40 percent of Iraq's professionals have fled the country since 2003, with doctors and the pharmacists topping the list.

Lost an arm dismantling ordnance

Dismantles mortar shells is becoming a common cause of death and injuries. They try to get at the copper inside it so that they could sell it to scrap dealers or smugglers. During the process some will die on the spot, or lose an arm or an eye.

Deprived of going to school

The need of Iraqi children cascades further to the extent that violence is harming their schooling directly, recently the UK Save the Children reported that 43 million primary-age children worldwide are unable to go to school because of armed conflicts in their respective countries, in Iraq 818,000 children, that is equivalent to 22.2 percent of the total number of students in the country, are unable to go to school.

Attacks and kidnapping in schools have made parents

terrified, that the next victims would be their children. So they prefer to let them not have a proper education until the situation improves. Others require their children to start working early and earn some income because of poverty.

Parents are not the only people who are opting out of Iraq's deteriorating education system, with teachers being targeted and threatened by death squads and militias. The Wall Street Journal, who have recently reported that a child as young as five, has been allowed to go on patrol with Al-Sadr's Mehdi Army.

Violence, poor health, instability in the homes and schools along with the lack of work and food has given the Iraqi children's situation an emergency role. There is no government programme that focuses on the welfare of children and aids them. Coupled with that, the impact of the violence on children in Iraq must be the top priority as they are the future generation of the country.

Early intervention to help Iraqi children is vital because they are the future of the country. In the absence of that, the psychological effects on children could bring disastrous consequences to their present and future lives. We do not want a society that breeds extremism, hate and violence.

Precious lives can be saved if we act now

In response to the growing needs of Iraqi children, Iraqi Association, in consultation with local NGOs and concern medical staff in Baghdad and Basra, has setup 'IraqChild Appeal'. The main goal of the project is to provide help and assistance to Iraqi Children, those who have been affected by war and violence.



This project provides services through:

The creation of public awareness of the children's needs in Iraq, and to generate support to help those children by providing aid and welfare protection, social programmes protection, emergency aid and psychosocial treatment, with local non governmental organisations in Iraq.

The development of creative children's activities aimed at uniting children who have been driven apart because of sectarian violence and hate.

Our emergency appeal is to raise £250,000. It is time to help the most vulnerable people in the Iraqi society; they are growing up today without ever understanding what it means to share the joy of life. They are without hope and often without parents. Please give whatever you can.

Your contribution will make a difference to so many young lives that have been bombed to pieces. You can donate using our secure website www.iraqiassociation.org or post it to: **IraqChild Freepost NAT 21599 London W6 9BR.**

Yes, I am pleased to help Iraqi Children.

Please return to: Iraqi Association Freepost NAT21599 London W6 9BR

I would like to make a donation of: £15 £30 £50 £75 £150 £500 other amount £ _____

Thank you for your generosity

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The Shackles of Sectarianism



By Jabbar Hasan

Sectarianism is not ingrained in poverty stricken communities of Baghdad but fostered by the politics of bigotry and intimidation. It is not the result of 'community division' that we hear everyday from Iraq and media commentators. The emphasis should not be on accommodating or compromising with the demands of sectarian intimidation. But the economic and social inequalities that gave this division a vicious edge to continue this carnage which is fuelled by extremists and freedom haters.

The venom of this violence is not only murdering people in Iraq, but as I write this piece many members of Iraqi community in Britain have been affected by the carnage. It is the most tragic conflict when it comes to movements of people. So far it has produced thousands of internally displaced people and led over a million people to flee to Jordan and Syria.

Adding to that many of our community members in this country have lost family members, friends or relatives. Recently I received a call from Ahmad, he lives in Hounslow west London, he told me that his son Dyar was murdered by militia men. Dyar was shot dead in Athamia district of Baghdad while on his way to work, he was 38 married with three children. Dyar was a Sunni working for Baghdad Municipal Office as an engineer. His wife Naema is a Shia. Prior his death, Dyar had received death warning to vacate his house, a deadly common militia practice to spread fear and intimidation. Dyar wanted to protect his family, so he was moved into another district with his wife and three children, he thought a mixed marriage will keep him safe. But sadly he was murdered by the venom of sadistic militia men and their masters.

The truth is that throughout most of Islam's 14 centuries, the Shia-Sunni divide has been relatively peaceful. Locations, for one thing, largely separate the sects. Both the far west and east of the Muslim world are solidly Sunni. Tunisian

or Indonesians hardly know what the conflict between Shia and Sunni is all about. In Iraq people suffers from a willingness to define incidents in terms favourable to the extremists, to accept the sectarian logic of the bigots, and to collude with and make concessions to bigotry, with the end result that sectarian arrangements are built into every level of the Iraqi structure.

Even before the invasion four years ago, there were warnings that the shock of violent change could fragment Iraq into sectarian parts. Most Iraqis have tended to ignore such fears.

But now Iraq is becoming a theatre for violent spectre that is reminiscent of the French wars of religion in 1562. The sectarian power struggle in Iraq can be traced back to 1632 when Shia lost Baghdad to Ottoman Empire, and that rule continued until the Ottomans were driven from much of the area by the British during World War One.

Then Iraq was cobbled together as an odd hybrid of colony and monarchy in 1921 by the British Empire for its own purposes, with no attention to the desires of its inhabitants. Like many states established by colonial powers, Iraq was ethnically diverse, encompassing Shia and Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Jews, Assyrian, Turkmen, and Christians. The Occupier suppressed the resistance with combined forces of arms and lethal weapons much to relief of the largely Sunni dominated government in Baghdad.

Nowadays Iraq is not the only one of alarming hostility between the two sects. However, other places around the world suffer from the pain of sectarianism but in different forms. In Northern Ireland, sectarianism has been part of the fabric of life since 1921, although its roots go much further back in history. It continues to be kept alive by ancestral voices which speak to each community of past atrocities and hurts. Even Irish immigrants to Scotland experienced various levels of antagonism from the local Scottish population due to the reaction of Protestant Scots who demonstrated their anti-Catholic sentiments. Other form of antagonism was

due to racism and xenophobia towards new comers who were perceived to be less equal and a threat to local harmony and jobs. Irish Catholic immigrants were faced with double discrimination, based on religion and ethnicity. Some Irish Catholics internalised the racism they were encountering and the phrase 'Sandy reaps what Paddy sows' exemplifies this reaction.

But there was some positive welcome from Scots, e.g. churches working together in the Temperance movement and the common cause forged between workers within the labour movement. The contribution of the Labour movement for overcoming sectarian divisions was critical in providing routes to full citizenship, to power locally and later nationally as a means by which dilemmas and tensions were addressed at local levels. It was also the route by which ideas

of emancipation came to be accepted in both Protestant and Catholic communities alike. Not to mention today's football sectarianism which often violence erupts between Glasgow rivals Celtic and Rangers, as Scotland's two biggest football clubs stand proxy for the local Catholic and Protestant populations.

In Iraq, it is vital not to give up, but it is critical to encourage the establishment of local peace movements and empower and strengthen local non-governmental organisations, to provide humanitarian work and to promote reconciliation initiatives. The difficult task of building trust could start with local peace movements, sharing and listening to each other's pain can help heal the wounds of the past. In time, Muslims of both sects may find that the common ground of secular politics is a better place to contest their rights.

Forced removal is alarming, given scale of refugee crisis in Iraq

The Refugee Council issued a press release on 22 January 2007 deploring plans by the British government for the forced removal of Iraqis at a time when aid agencies are reporting a refugee crisis in countries neighbouring Iraq.

Reports showed that more than 2 million Iraqi refugees, fleeing conflict in Iraq, are being supported in neighbouring countries including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, which are struggling to cope with the exodus. Some countries are preventing refugees from crossing their borders, contrary to international law, and prompting international aid agencies to warn of a humanitarian crisis.

The UK should be taking a lead in dealing with this worsening situation, but instead of helping to relieve the burden on Iraq's neighbours and giving sanctuary to Iraqi refugees in the UK, the government is taking steps to remove the few Iraqis who have made it here.

Home Office figures show that only around eight thousand Iraqis have claimed asylum in the UK since the war started in 2003. The vast majority will be refused. At the same time, official figures show that in the first nine months of last year, fifteen hundred Iraqis were returned – more than twice as many as arrived. Most of

those have gone on voluntary schemes, but a small number – fewer than 50 – have been forcibly returned. Now more Iraqis have been detained and flights to Northern Iraq is feared to be chartered for the purpose.

The Acting Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, Anna Reisenberger said:

"We are alarmed at reports coming from Iraqi exile groups that another flight back to Iraq is scheduled this month. We have grave reservations about how the previous flights were handled. There were mass round ups, people were held in detention without proper access to lawyers, the returnees were put into handcuffs and military uniforms and flown out in military planes. Since those flights, it has been difficult to establish what happened to those who were returned. There have been reports of people being mistreated and going missing."

"Given the scale of the refugee crisis developing in Iraq, we believe the UK government should be taking steps to relieve the burden on Iraq and its neighbours by allowing more refugees to come here. But at the very least, we should not be returning anybody to any part of Iraq for the time being as this will put more people's lives at risk and can only worsen the humanitarian situation."

IRAQI ASSOCIATION (IA)



Iraqi Association is a non-profit organisation that exists to enable Iraqis to settle and integrate in this country with rights to express their cultural identities. Our work aimed at Iraqis, by providing volunteerism, advice, public health support, counselling, training, employment guidance, information

services, and organising cultural events. It is also our mission to raise awareness about relevant events in Iraq and the integration process in this country."

Our Aims and Methods:

We provide the following services to

our clients regardless of their race, ethnic origin, language, and gender, religious or political background.

- Face-to-face support session
- Group empowerment session
- Workshop advice session
- Training session
- Outreach work
- Client-led information



Saif lost his leg in a gunfire on his way to hospital

In the meantime...

The sectarian violence is continuing to cause deaths and injuries among Iraqi children in a country where almost half of the population is under eighteen. Injured children continue to suffer the effects of the conflict, and have become more vulnerable to chronic diseases and lack of assistance. Serious injuries can lead to loss of limbs, hearing, or sight; brain damage; paralysis; and other debilitating conditions.

In the meantime...

We must help and keep them alive! After what they have been through, we can't let them die too. We must give them means to rebuild their shattered lives. Don't fail them in the hour of their greatest need. Our emergency campaign is to raise £250,000 to help Iraqi children, those who have been affected by war and violence. Donate now using our secure Website www.iraqiassociation.org or send your donation to our Freepost address.

Iraqi Association, IraqChild Appeal, Freepost NAT 21599 London W6 9BR
Charity No.: 1101109

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