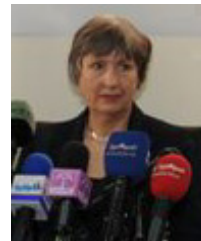




Message of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Christine McNab on World Humanitarian Day

Baghdad, 19 August 2010



Today, August 19th, 2010, we commemorate the World Humanitarian Day.

In December 2008, during its 62nd session, the United Nations General Assembly decided to make this date, a day to remember populations affected by natural disasters, epidemics and conflicts, to recognize humanitarian action and the women and men who dedicate their lives to assist these populations often at their own risk.

Since 2003, Iraq has been a dangerous and volatile operating environment for relief and humanitarian aid workers. Between 2003 and 2007, it is estimated that 94 aid workers lost their lives and 248 were injured while working in Iraq. This includes 22 UN staff members killed and over-100 injured following the bombing on 19 August 2003 of the former UN Headquarters in Baghdad at the Canal Hotel.

While security has improved since the height of the violence in 2007, aid workers are still exposed to considerable risks. In January 2010, a bomb devastated a hotel containing the offices of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Baghdad injuring several staff and destroying valuable assets.

Iraqi humanitarian aid workers live with the daily fear of being targeted by armed groups. Some keep their work hidden from their neighbours, friends and even their family.

Despite this highly insecure environment, humanitarian aid workers have continued to carry out their work according to the four humanitarian principles: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence. These principles provide the fundamental foundations for humanitarian action, are central to establishing and maintaining access to affected populations and should be respected by stakeholders.

I would like to use this date to remind all actors in Iraq of their obligation to protect civilian populations under their jurisdiction, to allow free movement of humanitarian assistance and to respect the integrity and life of these workers.

Finally, let me thank all of you working out there for your dedication, commitment and sacrifice. Your actions are contributing to the reduction and alleviation of the suffering of millions of people in need and are making a real difference.

Christine McNab
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