



Under a project implemented by UNOPS and ICNL. The UNOPS project is funded by the European Union, the Government of Finland, and other donors through the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund. The ICNL project is funded by the US Department of State – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

PRESS RELEASE

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Building trust between police and civil society

Baghdad, 13 December 2011 All across the country, police and public authorities are getting together with NGOs for training sessions to improve their understanding of the new NGO law and to learn how they can work together in post-Saddam Iraq.

Iraq's new NGO law is hailed for the protection and space it offers Iraqi civil society, but in a country where NGOs are still a novelty, good legislation means little if it is not fully understood by the people who implement and abide by it.

Mr Fadhil Shakir Resan, Judge and Deputy Prosecutor at the Al Karrada Court, Baghdad comments, "there is some mistrust towards civil society as this is a new topic. The relations are like a sheet of white paper – they are waiting to be written."

Through trainings, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the International Center for Not for Profit Law (ICNL) are trying to build these relations and provide NGOs and police as well as other public authorities with opportunities to meet and gain a genuine understanding of what their respective roles can be in Iraq today.

The first series of workshops for trainers concluded today and now the 65 participants representing NGOs, police, the justice system, local authorities and the NGO Directorate, will together conduct trainings for their peers in all Iraqi governorates.

The trainings address several issues. To start with, knowledge of the new NGO law is relatively poor. The law formally recognises NGOs right to exist and work in Iraq and has given them a legal personality which both public authorities and NGOs themselves need to be aware of.

Other issues include the overall framework for interaction between NGOs and public authorities, how they can build constructive relations and even cooperate to help improve society.

Prison monitoring is one area where such cooperation could lead to mutual benefits for citizens and authorities alike. Independent prison monitoring by civil society is a way both to discover poor conditions and protect prisoners but also, if minimum standards are adhered to and this is confirmed by NGOs, it can be a way to build the public's trust in the authorities' treatment of prisoners.

Another example of NGO-authority cooperation from Lebanon given in the training is a collaboration between the Drugs division of the Internal Security Forces and three NGOs specialized in drug addiction: Oum el Nour, Skoun and JAD. Together they implemented an awareness campaign to keep high school and university students out of drug addiction.

Finally, the trainings in themselves are a part of the trust building process.

Anwar Dawood Salman, Director of the NGO Al Noor Media said that it felt like the trainings had given police and representatives of the justice system a chance to "discover' civil society." "It is difficult for NGOs to build up relationships

with police and judiciary so this kind of training is extremely important as it allows them to learn more about each other... and to break prejudices and barriers between the two sectors”.

Adam Styp-Rekowski, Programme Manager for Civil Society at the UNOPS Iraq office agrees, “When police and authorities get together with NGOs like this, they are already engaging in the behavior they are learning about, it is a first step to understanding the other.”

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The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the **International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)** have supported the multi-year process of developing the Iraqi NGO law as well as the NGO law of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Both organisations currently support the processes of implementation of the two laws. Part of the activities focus on awareness of the laws among various groups in society.

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