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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

**Joint written statement\* submitted by the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, the Women's International Democratic Federation, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, the International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Union of Arab Jurists, the Arab Lawyers Union, the General Arab Women Federation, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, North-South XXI, the United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation, the Indian Movement “*Tupaj Amaru*”, the Asian Women Human Rights Council, the Organisation pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de la Coopération Economique Internationale - OCAPROCE International, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, the International Educational Development, Inc., a non-governmental organization on the roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 February 2012]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## The destruction of Iraq's education system\*\*

\*\* The BRussels Tribunal, Arab Lawyers Association-UK, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), The International League of Iraqi Academics (ILIA), The Iraqi Commission on Human Rights (ICHR), Women Will Association (WWA), Organization for Widows and Orphans (OWO), Ikraam Center for Human Rights, Belgian Peace Movement, Ligue camerounaise des droits de l'homme, Monitoring Net of Human Rights in Iraq (MHRI), Women Solidarity for an Independent and Unified Iraq, Geneva Global Media Centre, International Coalition against War Criminals (ICAWC), Medical Aid for the Third World, Association of Iraqi Diplomats (AID), The African Association of Human Rights (AAHR), Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World, Moroccan Association for the Right to a Fair Trial, Americans Against the War (France), General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), The International Action Center (IAC), American Worker, Association of Iraqi Intellectuals and Academics, The International Network of Arab Human Rights NGOs, America In Solidarity, Federacion De Mujeres Cubanas, Association of Victims of American Occupation Prisons, International Anti-Occupation Network (IAON), International Lawyers.org, International Society of Iraqi Scientists, The Perdana Global Peace Foundation, Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War, Spanish Campaign against the Occupation and for Iraq Sovereignty- CEOSI, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, El Taller International, World Courts of Women, Center for Development Studies- India, Wariscrime.org, Action Center for Justice, 1% A Peace Army.org, A Bigger Tent.org, Agir contre la guerre (France), American Voices Abroad (Berlin, Germany), American Voices Abroad Military Project (Europe), Anti War Fair, Arizona Christian Peacemakers, Armbands for Peace, Arms Against War, Artists Against the War, Backbone Campaign, Be the Change, Become Active, Bike for Peace (Germany), Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Bird Dogger Org., Children of Iraq Association (UK),Bloomington Peace Action Coalition (IN), Blue State News Only, Boston Mobilization, Bring Democracy Back, Bring Them Home, Butterfly Gardeners Association, Citizens for Accountability on Iraq, California for Democracy, Camp Casey Blog, Camp U.S. Strike for Peace Campaign, Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran, Canada Watch, Carolina Peace Resource Center (SC), Cartoon Free America, Catalysts of Hope, Central Colorado Coalition on the Iraq War, Chester County Peace Movement (PA), Cindy Sheehan Org., Cities for Peace, Citizens for Legitimate Government, Citizens for Peace & Justice, Human Rights for all-Morocco, Christian Clergy For Impeachment.com, Clothing of the American Mind, Coalition Against Election Fraud, Coalition for Impeachment Now (COIN), Code Pink, the Iraqi Association for Human Rights (IAHR), Al-Basa'er Media Association, Consumers for Peace.org, Dhafir Trial.org, DC Anti-War Network.org, Democracy Action, Democracy for America Meetup (Birmingham, AL), The Democratic Activist, Democracy Rising.org, Democratic Underground, Human Resources (Tbilisi, Georgia), Democratic Renewal, Democrats.com, Earth Day.org, Earth Island Institute, East Cobb Democratic Alliance (Cobb County, GA), Eastern Long Island Democracy for America (NY), ECU Peace and Justice NC, Election Solar Bus, Environmentalists Against War, Envision a New America, Foundation for the Development of Fox Valley Citizens for Peace and Justice (IL), Global Exchange.org, Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, Global Resistance Network, Gold Star Families for Peace, Grandmothers Against the War, Grandmothers for Peace, Grass Roots Impeachment, Grass Roots Impeachment Movement, Grassroots North shoreWI, Green Delaware, Hawaii CD-01 Impeachment Action Coalition, Historians Against the War, Honk to Impeach, Idriss Stelley Foundation, Impeach Bush Cheney, Independent Progressive Politics Network, Impeach Bush Coalition, Impeach Bush TV.org, Impeachbush-cheney.com, Impeach Central, Impeach for Peace - Marshall, TX, Impeachable Treason, Impeach Duh, Impeachment Sunday, Inform Progressive Virginia, International Socialist Organization, Impeach Bush Cheney Net, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Iraq Veterans Against the War - Kansas City, Justice Through Music, Lake Merritt Neighbours Organized for Peace (Oakland, CA), Latinos for America, Leader of the Free Word - a great screen saver, Liberal Democracy Alliance, Liberal Kids, LIBERTY TREE Foundation for the Democratic Revolution, Los Angeles National Impeachment Centre, Louisiana Activist Network, Marijuana Policy Project, Massachusetts Impeachment Coalition, Men's Project for Peace, Michael Moore Online.org, Michigan Peace Works, Military Families Against the War (UK),

"The Education system in Iraq, prior to 1991, was one of the best in the region; with over 100% Gross Enrolment Rate for primary schooling and high levels of literacy, both of men and women. The Higher Education, especially the scientific and technological institutions, were of an international standard, staffed by high quality personnel". (UNESCO Fact Sheet, March 28, 2003)<sup>1</sup>

As a result of U.S. Invasion and occupation of Iraq, today Iraq is more illiterate than it was twenty-five years ago, because the occupying power began its occupation by destroying every aspect of Iraq's education.

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Military Free Zone, Stop the War Coalition (Bedford, UK), Million Musicians March, Mission Not Accomplished, Montgomery County Progressive Alliance (MD), Musicians and Fine Artists for World Peace, Muslims for Peace (Australia), National Lawyers Guild - Chicago chapter, National Lawyers Guild - Detroit & Michigan chapter, Northeast Impeachment Coalition, North Jersey Impeach Group (NJ), Northeast Georgia Peace Corner Group (Helen, GA), Northwest Ohio Peace Coalition, Northwest Progressive Institute (Pacific Northwest US), Not in Our Name.org, Not in Our Name (Aotearoa, New Zealand), Nyack Impeachment Initiative (NJ), Ohio Progressive Action Coalition, One Global Community, Olympia Citizens' Movement to Impeach Bush/Cheney (WA), One Million Reasons, Operation Cease Fire, Operation Impeachment, Orange County Grassroots (CA), Out of Iraq, Out of Iraq Bloggers Caucus, Patrick Henry Democratic Club, Patriotic Pulse, Patriots for Gore, Peace Action, Peace Action Wisconsin, Peace and Accountability, Peace Drum, Peace Majority, Peace Movement Aotearoa (New Zealand), Peace Reso.org, Peninsula Peace and Justice Center (Palo Alto, CA), People's Campaign for the Constitution, People Powered Impeachment, People's Email Network, People's Glorious Five Year Plan, Picnic to Impeach, Pixel4Peace.org, Playing in Traffic, PledgeToImpeach.org, Political Cooperative, Politics and Art, Progressive Action Alliance, Progressive Action Center, Progressive Avenues, Progressive Democrats of America, Progressive Democrats of Hawaii Project Filibuster, Project for the OLD American Century, Refusing to Kill.org, Rescue Our Democracy, Sacramento for Democracy (CA), St Pete for Peace (FL), Sampsonia Way, San Diego for Democracy, School of the Americas Watch, Sheehan for Congress, South Florida Impeachment Coalition, South Mountain Peace Action (Maplewood & South Orange, NJ), Springs Action Alliance (CO), Stop the War Coalition (UK), Students for Impeachment, Students Towards a New Direction (STAND), Summit County Progressive Democrats (OH), The Known UnKnowns, The Politically Incorrect Cabaret, The Rational Response Squad, Think Blue Dems, Time for Accountability, Plataforma Aturem la Guerra (Stop the War Catalonia), Toronto Coalition to Stop the War (Canada), Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International, True Blue Liberal.org, Trumansburg Impeachment (NY), Truth Empowered, Truthtelling Project, UC Nuclear, Underground Action Alliance, Unitarian Universalist Peace and Justice Group (Nantucket, MA), United Blue USA, United for Veterans (Wayne, MI), United Progressives, Upbeat Defiance, US Peace Memorial, US Tour of Duty: Iraq Veterans and Military Families Demand the Truth, Velvet Revolution, Vet Gulf March, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, Veterans for Peace, Chapter 27, Virginia Grassroots Coalition, Voters for Peace, We the People for Peace, We the People Network, We the People Now, We The People United Bangladesh.org, Peace Surge, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (WA), Stop the War (UK), U.S. Peace Council, World Can't Wait.org, World Prout Assembly, Komite Internacionalista- Basque, Asociación Paz, Igualdad y Solidaridad Internacional, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, Málaga, Spain, Stop Fascism Action Network, The Asian Jurists Centre, Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRDI), The African Center for Human Rights (ACHR), Veterans for Peace, Your Declaration of Independence.org, Arab Lawyers Network-UK, Conservative Centre of Environmental & Reserves in Fallujah (CCERF), Willie Nelson Peace Research Institute, Studies Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, The Iraqi Centre for Human Rights, Association Internationale des droits de l'homme, NGOs without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

<sup>1</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/es/ev.php-URL\\_ID=11216&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/es/ev.php-URL_ID=11216&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

### **Destruction of educational institutes**

Iraq's education system, once vaunted as the most advantaged in the region, has suffered a patterned process of degradation and dismantling. Iraqi schools and universities were bombed and destroyed. Under the occupation, according to a report by the United Nations University International Leadership Institute in Jordan, some 84% of Iraq's institutions of higher education have been burned, looted, or destroyed<sup>2</sup>. Some 2,000 laboratories need to be re-equipped and 30,000 computers need to be procured and installed nationwide.<sup>3</sup>

"Buildings have been burnt and looted in what appears to be a random spree of violence aimed at Iraqi academia."<sup>4</sup>

### **Looting and burning of educational institutes**

Like most higher education institutions across Iraq, Baghdad University escaped almost unscathed from the bombing. In the subsequent looting and burning, 20 of the capital's colleges were destroyed. No institution escaped: the faculty of education in Waziriyya was raided daily for two weeks; the veterinary college in Abu Ghraib lost all its equipment; two buildings in the faculty of fine arts stand smoke-blackened against the skyline. In every college, in every classroom, you could write "education" in the dust on the tables.<sup>5</sup> "Looters began ransacking Mustansiriyah University on April 9, 2003, the day Hussein's government collapsed. By April 12, the campus of yellow-brick buildings and grassy courtyards was stripped of its books, computers, lab equipment and desks.<sup>6</sup> Since March 2003, more than 700 primary schools have been bombed, 200 have been burnt and over 3,000 looted.<sup>7</sup>

### **Occupation of educational institutes**

The US forces, the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police units occupied school buildings for military purposes. It occupied more than 70 school buildings for military purposes in the Diyala governorate alone, in clear violation of The Hague Conventions.

The origins of armed resistance in Fallujah can be traced almost precisely to April 28, 2003, when U.S. troops, who had arrived in the city five days earlier, massacred 17 apparently unarmed protesters. The April 28 protest had demanded an end to Fallujah's occupation and, more specifically, that U.S. troops vacate the al Qaid primary school, where classes had been scheduled to resume on April 29.<sup>8</sup>

### **Illiteracy on the rise**

A report published in March 2011 by UNESCO confirmed the urgency of the situation currently faced by Iraqi educators and students. According to UNESCO, several Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq, are unlikely to achieve the education-for-all Millennium Development Goals by 2015 due to insecurity and conflict. Decades of war, UN sanctions,

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.la.unu.edu/about\\_staff\\_reddy.asp](http://www.la.unu.edu/about_staff_reddy.asp)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4b7aa9df5.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/higher/iraqs-universities-are-in-meltdown-427316.html>

<sup>5</sup> Times Higher Education Supplement 2003, <http://www.brusseltribunal.org/academicsArticles.htm#weed-out>

<sup>6</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "An Educator Learns the Hard Way; Task of Rebuilding Universities Brings Frustration, Doubts and Danger," Washington Post June 21, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.islamic-relief.com/ecamp/orphans-iraq/education-iraq.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.worldpress.org/Mideast/2183.cfm> and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/mar/17/iraq.rorymccarthy>

insecurity and economic decline have adversely affected education in Iraq. Illiteracy levels have risen dramatically over the past years. According to data produced by the government and UNESCO in September 2010, at least five million of Iraq's almost 30 million people are illiterate.

### **The solution according to the US occupying authorities**

John Agresto, in charge of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 2003-2004, initially believed that the looting of Iraq's universities was a positive act in that it would allow such institutions to begin again with a clean slate, with the newest equipment as well as a brand new curriculum. This curriculum removed any criticism to the US policy in the Middle East, as well as any reference to either the 1991 war or to Israeli policy in the occupied Palestinian territories.<sup>9</sup>

The American with final authority over their appeals, Andrew Erdmann, a 36 year-old who had earned his PhD in history three years earlier, had almost no experience as a professor, none at all as a university administrator, and spoke no Arabic. He was officially U.S. Senior advisor to the Ministry of Education but, since the Minister of Education was under arrest, was effectively Minister of Education in the early days of the occupation.<sup>10</sup> The freelance journalist Christina Asquith wrote about this situation: "Let's pause for a minute. Sit yourself down at the mahogany table with the 22 Iraqi university presidents. Men in there [sic] 50s and 60s, who all have PhD's from top universities in England, Scotland and America; erudite, accomplished intellectual men. Due to the US invasion, they had just lost their offices, libraries and research equipment. The textbooks were burned and stolen. US soldiers occupied the dormitories. The Ministry building itself was burned to the ground, along with every file, computer and desk. In May, Paul Bremer instituted the DeBaathification Policy, which forced the firing of all the top university administrators and professors because they were Baath Party members. Half of the intellectual leadership in academia was gone. Now, in a haphazard selection process, they were given 36-year old Drew Erdmann. He controlled the budgets, the staffing, the curriculum, and the physical renovation."<sup>11</sup>

The scale of the attacks on academic staff, the appointment of ignorant people and the total chaos created by the occupation authorities, the inhuman debaathification policy, together with the magnitude of the destruction of academic infrastructure—crimes that have occurred under the watchful eye of the US led Multi-National Forces—has no precedent in recent history and raises serious questions about the real intentions of the US occupiers, who should be held accountable for the total collapse of the Iraqi education sector.

### **Chaos and mismanagement**

Only in the first year of the occupation were elections held for the posts of dean and head of departments. Subsequently these posts were filled by government appointments of the ruling sectarian parties. As a result, al-Mustansriya University (to cite one example) now has three presidents (directors): one appointed by the previous minister; a second appointed by the present minister; and a third appointed by the prime minister himself. The three

<sup>9</sup> Nabil al-Tikriti in "Cultural Cleansing in Iraq" p 98, <http://www.plutobooks.com/display.asp?K=9780745328126&>

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Gusterson - [http://www.brussellstribunal.org/University\\_At\\_War.htm](http://www.brussellstribunal.org/University_At_War.htm)

<sup>11</sup> Christina Asquith, "What the U.S. Didn't do in Iraq Education," Education News July 28, 2004 <http://www.educationnews.org/articles/what-the-us-didnt-do-in-iraq-education.html>

perform their duties in the same campus and each has his personal office, team of bodyguards and secretariat.<sup>12</sup>

### **Killing of educators; threats against education staff; educators forced into exile**

Roughly 40 percent of Iraq's middle class is believed to have fled by the end of 2006, the U.N. said.<sup>13</sup>

In 2005, alone, 296 members of education staff were killed.<sup>14</sup> An estimated 331 schoolteachers were slain in the first four months of 2006, according to Human Rights Watch<sup>15</sup> and 180 teachers were killed between February and November 2006, according to the Brookings Institute in Washington.<sup>16</sup> According to the UN office for humanitarian affairs, up to 100 teachers have been kidnapped and over 3,250 have fled the country.

The International Medical Corps reports that populations of teachers in Baghdad have fallen by 80%. 467 Iraqi professors and lecturers have been assassinated since 2003, according to the BRussells Tribunal database.<sup>17</sup> The exodus of academics has dramatically lowered educational standards<sup>18</sup>. Most are fleeing systematic persecution and have no desire to return.

### **Insecurity prevents students from attending classes**

The rapidly deteriorating conditions and a complete failure to establish a functioning education system has produced a spiralling dropout rate of almost 50%.

Violence since the U.S.-led invasion has driven thousands of students away, with enrolment off by more than half at some universities in 2006 alone, officials said. Universities in other parts of the country are open, but have become deserted. (Washington Post 18/01/2007)

"Education in my area is collapsing," said on 05 October 2006 a teacher from a high school in Amariya who quit four months earlier. "Children can't get to school because of road blocks. The parents of others have simply withdrawn them from the school because of the fear of kidnapping.

### **Corruption in Iraqi education**

The effort to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure, including schools and higher education institutions, have been plagued by shoddy construction, corruption and diverting funds to "security".

Hundreds of health, education and infrastructure projects have been delayed because of corruption and the smuggling of oil. Education and health projects are the most affected, as hundreds of schools require repair and hospitals are hit by shortages of equipment and medicines, said the Electronic Iraq article.<sup>19</sup> Complaints of government corruption put the ministry of education among the worst offenders.<sup>20</sup> "Haramia," or "thieves," is the new

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<sup>12</sup> DrSaadNajiJawad. <http://www.brusselstribunal.org/Seminar/texts/en/13.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1072793.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.topsy.org/IraqiAcademics.doc>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/01/16/MNG2MNBIS1.DTL>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.brusselstribunal.org/ArticlesOnIraq.htm#doctors>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.brusselstribunal.org/academicsList.htm>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=62983>

<sup>19</sup> <http://electroniciraq.net/news/2760.shtml>

<sup>20</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8055776.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8055776.stm)

name given to local contractors who receive money to fix up schools, then allegedly do such a poor job that they can put most of the money in their pockets.<sup>21</sup>

### **Financial hardships**

In March 2010, two deans of different science colleges and one head of department, told of their academic sufferings. They reported that there had been no new financial allocation or any increase in the budgets of higher education. As a result, university laboratories had not been able to procure new equipment and supplies since 2003 (this, of course, coming on top of the already dramatic situation that existed during the sanctions), while classrooms and libraries were lacking in new books and computers. This situation is further exacerbated by the lack of electricity and other services.

More affected were the students. Even under sanctions, the vast majority of them were housed in lodgings rented by the government, and all of them were provided with suitable clothes. Those pursuing higher studies were provided with a salary. With the onset of occupation, all these things were either stopped or cut to less than half.

As the monthly food ration disappeared or shrunk, market prices more than quadrupled. In the end the educators salaries were only enough to keep them alive. Those who had suffered under sanctions suffered even more under occupation. As insecurity poisoned the atmosphere of university campuses, the spectre of bribery raised its ugly head. Corruption increased because of economic need and the lack of any supervision or disciplinary actions.

### **Collapse of Iraq's universities**

Iraqi academic institutions, once leaders among universities and research centres in the rest of the Arab World, were instrumental in creating a strong Iraqi national identity after years of colonization. The virtual collapse of Iraq's educational infrastructure has gutted the vehicle that has served to cement a unifying history in the public mind.

The results of the policies of the occupying authorities are disastrous. Iraq's universities are now probably the worst in the Arab region, Asia and the world. The Ranking Web of World Universities is published twice a year (January and July), covering more than 20,000 Higher Education Institutions worldwide.<sup>22</sup> On the Arab level only 3 Iraqi universities are in the top 100 of Arab universities in the ranking of January 2011. On the global level only 8 Iraqi universities figure in the top 12,000. The showpiece of Iraq: Baghdad University, doesn't even figure in the top 12,000.

The facts on the ground in Iraq show that there is no reconstruction whatsoever in Iraq's education system, there is only destruction, corruption and decline. It is well known that the destruction of the Iraqi education system is part of the plan to culturally and ethnically cleanse Iraq, to "end the state" as Paul Wolfowitz declared in 2003.

### **The NGOs signatories to this statement call on the United Nations in general and the Human Rights Council in particular to:**

- Ensure that all human rights violations in Iraq during the sanction and the invasion and occupation be investigated by an international independent body.
- All measures must be taken to end the current state of impunity, both within Iraq, and with regard to the culpability and responsibilities of the occupying powers in particular.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.parapundit.com/archives/002699.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.webometrics.info/index.html>

- Appoint a UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights situation in Iraq.
  - Request the High Commissioner to present to the Council a detailed report on the Human Rights violations in Iraq since 2003 according to UNAMI and the civil society reports.
  - Request the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, to focus on this matter in the future reports.
-