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Iraq: United Nations and Humanitarian Aid Organizations

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Iraq: United Nations and Humanitarian Aid Organizations

Summary

The possibility of a war with Iraq may contribute to a large number of displaced Iraqi civilians, either within Iraq or in neighboring countries, who would be dependent on international assistance for food, shelter, basic health care, and other forms of support. This report provides an annotated list of United Nations (U.N.) agencies that currently have programs in Iraq, key U.S. government agencies, and a sample list of major international and U.S.-based aid organizations that may provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq in the event of war. Internet links of the U.N. agencies and humanitarian aid organizations are also provided. For further reading, see the section on “Humanitarian Issues” in CRS Report RL31715, *Iraq War? Current Situation and Issues for Congress*. This report will be updated as events warrant.

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Iraq: United Nations and Humanitarian Aid Organizations

Introduction

According to news articles,¹ the United Nations (U.N.) estimates 10 million Iraqi civilians would be dependent on emergency assistance and close to one million may become refugees in neighboring countries, if a war occurs in Iraq. At the present time, there are few humanitarian efforts ongoing in Iraq due to sanctions placed against Iraq. Currently, the U.N.'s Office of the Iraq Programme Oil-for-Food and UNICEF (U.N. Children's Fund) and other U.N. agencies have programs in Iraq. U.N. agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP) and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees are putting together contingency plans to address the potential consequences of war, and are also stockpiling food, blankets, tents, and other equipment in warehouses in Iran and other countries along Iraq's border.²

U.N. Agencies Currently Involved in Iraq

Following is a list of U.N. agencies currently providing humanitarian assistance to Iraq. Internet addresses of the U.N. agencies as well as their Web pages on Iraq (if available) are provided.

Office of the Iraq Programme Oil-for-Food

[<http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/>]

Oil-for-Food is a unique program, established by the U.N. Security Council as a temporary measure to provide for the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people.

Mine Action Programme for Northern Iraq

[<http://www.unops.org/textimageflash/default.asp?pmode=3&pno=142>]

The U.N. Mine Action Services program in Northern Iraq was established in 1997 to locate and remove mines and resolve mine related problems such as raising

¹Colum Lynch, "Iraq War Could Put 10 Million In Need of Aid, U.N. Reports," *Washington Post*, Jan. 7, 2003, p. A12.

See also Confidential U.N. Document Predicts Humanitarian Emergency in Event of War on Iraq. Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq (CASI), Jan. 7, 2003, online at [<http://www.casi.org.uk/pr/pr030107undoc.html>].

²Ibid.

public awareness, providing medical, rehabilitation and vocational services to mine victims.

UNICEF Programs in South and Central Iraq

[<http://www.unicef.org/noteworthy/iraq/>]

UNICEF (U.N. Children's Fund) [<http://www.unicef.org/>] is an advocate for the protection of children's rights and is tasked to help children living in poverty, reduce childhood death and illness in developing countries, and to protect children in the midst of war and natural disasters.

U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq

[<http://www.iq.undp.org/>]

UNDP [<http://www.undp.org/>] is the U.N.'s global development network that helps countries build solutions to the challenges of democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, energy and environment, information and communications technology, and HIV/AIDS. The United Nations Development Programme has been present in Iraq since 1976.

The UNDP's Electricity Network Rehabilitation Programme in Northern Iraq (ENRP)

[<http://www.enrp.undp.org/>]

The ENRP's overall objectives are primarily the rehabilitation, installation, and development of the electricity network in the three northern governorates of Dohuk, Erbil, and Suleimaniyah in Iraq.

World Food Programme (WFP) Country Involvement—Iraq

[http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=368]

The WFP [<http://www.wfp.org/index2.html>] was set up in 1963 and is the U.N. agency that combats global hunger and supports economic and social development in countries of need.

World Health Organization (WHO) Iraq Country Page

[<http://www.who.int/country/irq/en/>]

WHO [<http://www.who.int/en/>] is the United Nations specialized agency for health.

Other U.N. Agencies—Iraq

Following is a list of U.N. agencies which would likely be involved in humanitarian efforts in Iraq in the event of a war.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

[http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/index.html]

The OCHA works with governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), U.N. agencies and individuals, and helps them mobilize and coordinate their efforts in responding to disasters, emergencies or a humanitarian crisis around the world.

U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP)

[<http://www.unep.org/>]

The UNEP works to promote the future of the earth's environment. Its activities cover a wide range of environmental issues, including the promotion of environmental science and information and dealing with environmental disasters and emergencies. The UNEP in 1993 issued a report on the environmental effects of oil spills as a result of the 1991 Iraq-Kuwait conflict.³

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

[<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>]

The agency's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, and coordinates efforts to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.

See Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Iraq at [<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/+8wwBmeiSJ69wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwFqwqFqwmFqwnFqwhFqwtFqnfGw3rFqwoFqwzFqwaFqqejhrmFmmDFqm7y-dFqt2lygZf3zmtwwwwww/rsddocview.pdf>].

Following are two relevant U.N. Web sites that provide background information and major documents pertaining to Iraq, and current news and information concerning U.N. and other humanitarian efforts.

ReliefWeb Iraq

[<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/ByCountry/Iraq?OpenDocument&StartKey=Iraq&Expandview>]

This page contains the latest major documents and background information pertaining to Iraq.

ReliefWeb [<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf>] is a project of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and serves the information needs of the humanitarian community.

³UNEP. *Updated Scientific Report on the Environmental Effects of the Conflict between Iraq and Kuwait*, Mar. 8, 1993. United Nations document UNEP/GC.17/Inf.9. This document summarizes the U.N.'s findings on the environmental impacts of the oil fires and oil spills during the 1991 Gulf War.

UN Wire

[<http://www.unwire.org/>]

UN Wire is a news service sponsored by the UN Foundation and its sister organization, the Better World Fund. UN Wire provides daily news briefings covering the United Nations, global affairs, and key international issues.

See the Humanitarian and Food Security page for news briefings concerning current humanitarian issues.

[http://www.unwire.org/unwire/util/category_search.asp?objCat=humanitarian]

Key U.S. Government Agencies

Following is a list of key U.S. government agencies that currently provide humanitarian assistance to impoverished countries around the world, and if a war occurs in Iraq, these agencies will be directly involved in providing humanitarian assistance to Iraq. Internet addresses of the U.S. government agencies as well as their Web pages on Iraq (if available) are provided.

Agency for International Development (USAID)

[<http://www.usaid.gov/>]

USAID is an independent federal government agency responsible for providing economic and humanitarian assistance around the globe. Information is provided on all USAID assistance programs by country and region.

Following are offices within USAID that also provide some type of specialized humanitarian assistance:

Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

[http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/ofda/]

The OFDA focuses on disaster prevention, preparedness, and delivery of disaster relief.

Office of Food for Peace (FFP)

[http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/ffp/]

The FFP makes commodity donations to NGOs to address the needs of food security through 5-year development projects and through emergency food assistance.

Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)

[http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/oti/]

The OTI helps local partners advance peace and democracy in major conflict-prone countries, and works closely with local, national, international, and nongovernmental partners to carry out short-term, high-impact projects that

increase momentum for peace, reconciliation, and reconstruction, including encouraging measures to bring the military under civilian democratic control.

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)

[<http://www.state.gov/g/prm/>]

The PRM of the Department of State coordinates U.S. international population policy and promotes its goals through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. It works closely with the U.S. Agency for International Development, which administers U.S. international population programs. PRM also administers and monitors U.S. contributions to international and nongovernmental organizations to assist and protect refugees abroad.

Department of Agriculture

[<http://www.usda.gov/>]

U.S. International Food Aid Programs provides humanitarian assistance to needy people throughout the world, including poor countries.
[<http://www.fas.usda.gov/food-aid.html>]

See Country Pages—Iraq.

[<http://www.fas.usda.gov/hotpages/default.asp?lstCode=IZ&submit=Submit+Query>]

Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)

[<http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/index.html>]

The OFAC of the U.S. Department of the Treasury administers and enforces economic and trade sanctions based on U.S. foreign policy and national security goals against targeted foreign countries, terrorists, international narcotics traffickers, and those engaged in activities related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The OFAC also issues licenses for American NGOs planning to provide humanitarian assistance independently to the Iraqi people.

See OFAC's Sanctions Program and Country Summaries—Iraq for specific guidelines for NGO registration.

[<http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/sanctions/index.html>]

Office of Humanitarian Assistance and Mine Action (HA/MA)

[<http://www.dsca.osd.mil/programs/HA/HA.htm>]

The HA/MA is part of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA). It provides supervision and oversight of the Department of Defense (DOD) humanitarian mine action and humanitarian assistance programs for the Director, DSCA. The DOD programs include the Humanitarian Mine Action program (HMA), the Humanitarian Assistance (HA) program, the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) program, and the Foreign Disaster Relief Assistance and Emergency Response (FDR/ER) program.

Office of International Information Programs (IIP)

[<http://usinfo.state.gov/>]

The IIP, part of the Department of State, is the principal international communications service for the State Department and the foreign affairs community.

See Iraq Update for latest news, including U.S. plans on humanitarian assistance and fact sheets concerning Iraq. [<http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/nea/iraq/>]

Selected Major International and Nongovernmental Organizations—Iraq

Following is a list of major international aid organizations that may possibly provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq. Internet addresses of the humanitarian aid organizations as well as their Web pages on Iraq (if available) are provided.

Doctors without Borders (known in French as Médecins Sans Frontières or MSF)
[<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/>]

MSF, founded by French doctors in 1971, delivers emergency aid to victims of armed conflict, epidemics, and natural and man-made disasters, and to others who lack health care due to social or geographical isolation.

Humanitarian Concerns about a Possible War on Iraq.
[http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/other/opinion_detorrente_iraq.shtml]

Human Rights Watch (HRW)
[<http://www.hrw.org/>]

HRW is an NGO dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world.

Background on Iraq and Possible War. [<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/iraq/>]

HRW World Report 2003—Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan.
[<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k3/mideast4.html>]

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
[<http://www.icrc.org/>]

The ICRC, established in 1863, is impartial, neutral, and independent international organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance.

ICRC in Iraq.
[<http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/iwplList74/F8EB853A6796F202C1256B6600601EDD>]

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
[<http://www.ifrc.org/>]

The IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian organization, and its mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.

IFRC in Iraq. [<http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?countryid=87>]

Mercy Corps International
[<http://www.mercycorps.org/>]

Mercy Corps is a not-for-profit organization that exists to alleviate suffering, poverty, and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities.

Mercy Corps Preparing for Possible Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq.
[<http://www.mercycorps.org/article.php?section=&id=1167>]

Oxfam International
[<http://www.oxfam.org/eng/>]

Oxfam International is a confederation of 12 organizations working together in more than 100 countries to find lasting solutions to poverty, suffering, and injustice.

Oxfam—Documents on Iraq. [<http://www.oxfam.org/eng/iraq.htm>]

Selected U.S.-Based Humanitarian Aid Organizations—Iraq

U.S. aid organizations are also pressing for the U.S. government to grant them permission to go into Iraq to make humanitarian assessments. As a result of sanctions against Iraq, “very few American or international organizations are currently operating in or around Iraq and have limited personnel, no physical infrastructure, and little experience with Iraqis.”⁴ In the event of a war, the American Council for Voluntary International Action’s alliance, InterAction [<http://www.interaction.org/>], the largest coalition of American international relief and development organizations, is urging the U.S. government to plan with interested humanitarian organizations to prevent a potential humanitarian crisis in Iraq and neighboring countries.⁵

⁴See InterAction, *U.S. Relief and Development Organizations Concerned Over Potential Humanitarian Consequences of War in Iraq*, Nov. 2002. Online at [http://www.interaction.org/media/Hot_Iraq.html].

⁵Ibid.

Following is a selected list of U.S.-based aid organizations that may possibly provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq. Internet addresses of the aid organizations as well as their Web pages on Iraq (if available) are provided.

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC): Statement on Iraq
[<http://www.afsc.org/iraq/Default.htm>]

The AFSC [<http://www.afsc.org/>] is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service.

Bread for the World: Statement on Iraq
[<http://www.bread.org/iraq.html>]

Bread for the World [<http://www.bread.org/>] is a nonpartisan Christian citizens' movement of 46,000 people of faith, including 2,000 churches, that addresses hunger in the United States and around the world.

CARE USA: Work in Iraq
[<http://www.careusa.org/careswork/countryprofiles/iraq.asp>]

CARE USA [<http://www.careusa.org/>] is a part of CARE International, a confederation of 11 CARE organizations that strives to be a global force and partner of choice within a worldwide movement dedicated to ending poverty.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS): Iraq Section
[http://www.catholicrelief.org/where_we_work/middle_east_and_north_africa/iraq/index.cfm]

CRS [<http://www.catholicrelief.org/>] was founded by the Catholic Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and disadvantaged outside the country.

Church World Service (CWS): Statement on Iraq
[<http://www.churchworldservice.org/news/Iraq/index.html>]

CWS [<http://www.churchworldservice.org/>] is the relief, development, and refugee assistance ministry of 36 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations in the United States. CWS works worldwide to meet human needs and foster self-reliance.

Lutheran World Relief (LWR): Mideast: Iraq
[<http://www.lwr.org/mideast/>]

LWR [<http://www.lwr.org/>] works with partners in 50 countries to help people grow food, improve health, strengthen communities, end conflict, build livelihoods, and recover from disasters.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR): Research and Investigations—Iraq
[http://www.phrusa.org/research/find/find_iraq.html]

PHR [<http://www.phrusa.org/>] promotes health by protecting human rights. Using medical and scientific methods, PHR investigates and exposes violations of human rights worldwide and works to stop them.

U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR): Country Report Iraq
[<http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/mideast/iraq.htm>]

USCR [<http://www.refugees.org/>] defends the rights and calls for adequate protection and assistance of all uprooted people, including refugees and asylum seekers.

Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children/IRC: Statement on Iraq
[http://www.womenscommission.org/media/wc_stmtiraq1002.htm]

The Women’s Commission [<http://www.womenscommission.org/>] is an advocacy organization that monitors the care and protection of refugee women and children.

World Resources Institute (WRI): Environmental profiles for Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries
[<http://www.wri.org/iraq/index.html>]

WRI [<http://www.wri.org/>] is an environmental think tank that provides information, ideas, and solutions to global environmental problems and finds practical ways to protect the earth and improve people’s lives.