

# MISSION UNACCOMPLISHED

Iraq Statement Report

10 years on

MAY 2013



# OUR STATEMENT

## FORGOTTEN WAR

### Children are the aftermath of the Iraqi conflict

On the first of May 2003, Bush announced the end of combat operations in Iraq while standing before a banner that declared 'Mission Accomplished'.<sup>2</sup> A decade on and Iraq continues to suffer from the sentiment of those words. Iraq can now be seen as one of the world's most neglected crises, with The Department for International Development (DFID) pulling out of their in-country commitment in 2012<sup>3</sup> and other donors ignoring the stark numbers and realities of conflict that Iraqis still must face.



**“By all measures and standards, there has been a deterioration in the quality of life of Iraqis as compared to 25 years ago”**

Khalid Khalid, UN Development Programme<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IRIN, 'Iraq 10 years on: The humanitarian impact', 22 April 2013: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97895/Humanitarian-overview> accessed 23 April 2013.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, Speech on End of Major Combat in Iraq, San Diego, California, May 1, 2003: <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com> accessed 25 April 2013.

<sup>3</sup> The Department for International Development pulled out of Iraq in March 2012, but has programmes that will continue running into 2014. See: DFID, 'Summary of DFID's work in Iraq 2011-2012', March 2011, p.1. Access at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67520/iraq-2011-summary.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67520/iraq-2011-summary.pdf).



Insecurity and violence continue to weaken governance and cripple the ability of the country to feed, protect and educate its citizenry.<sup>4</sup> In parallel to Iraq having fallen off the media map, so too has humanitarian funding<sup>5</sup> to one of the worst remaining emergency situations. There is a systemic issue with how the International Community responds to aid delivery when the emergency phase is perceived to be over but the development phase never quite comes into force – producing a fatal gap in assistance. According to several surveys and studies Iraq has gone from being among the most 'hospitable places' for children in the Middle East and North Africa, to being one of the most hostile:<sup>6</sup> with, for example *100* infants dying every day<sup>7</sup> which is equivalent to 35,000 infants dying before they reach their 5th birthday.

The international community has neglected Iraq and contributed to negative and perpetuating cycles of violence. This is not just about aid. In fact, it should not be. The Government of Iraq has responsibility for protecting children under Article 38 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)<sup>8</sup> and there should be no distraction from that eventual aim. But a combination of lack of aid, lack of diplomatic pressure on the national government and lack of support for the Iraqi people has resulted in a potent mix of inequality, poverty and insecurity that drag this conflict into its eleventh year, bringing the future generation down with it.

There is no escaping the fact that children and young people are shouldering much of the impact of decades of war they did not start.

**War Child is calling for increased donor support balanced with diplomatic efforts to achieve equitable access to quality basic services, prioritisation of child protection and education and increased accountability of the Iraqi Government to children and young people.**

## In a war that's 'over'

- There have been 19 violent incidents per day in Iraq since December.
- It is estimated that over 550 children and young people have died from attacks alone in the first months of 2013.
- Children as young as 14 have been used as suicide bombers
- 100 infants are dying every day
- Life expectancy has decreased by almost two years
- Iraqi refugees feared going back home more last year than they did 6 years previous

\* All statistics can be found throughout the document

<sup>4</sup> War Child UK donor proposal 2011.

<sup>5</sup> See page 10 below for information on donor funding to Iraq.

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF, 'An Iraq Fit For Children: Building Iraq's Future', Iraq Newsletter – Q1 / Q2, 2011, p.7 - "Not long ago, in the 1970s, Iraq was one of the leading countries in the Middle East and North Africa to be a child; today, due to decades of war and neglect, it has become one of the worst."

<sup>7</sup> IRIN, 'Iraq a bad place for children', 4 July 2011: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/93133/IRAQ-A-bad-place-for-children> - accessed 19 April 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>. See Article 38, section 4, "In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict".

---

# WORDS FROM THE FIELD

War Child UK Country Director in Iraq

---

**"The fear among the Iraqis is increasing day by day. An ordinary Iraqi citizen thinks once and then twice about practicing their basic right: they fear going to work, sending their children to schools, or even feeling safe while in their own homes."**

The logo for War Child, featuring the word "WAR" in a bold, sans-serif font above the word "child" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, both enclosed within a red square border.

WAR  
child



# BRUTAL 'PEACE'



The insecurity that inhibits the daily lives of Iraqis must be seen through the prism of children and young people who make up over 56% of the Iraqi population, almost 40% of whom are under 14 years of age.<sup>9</sup> This makes Iraq the second youngest country in the Middle East,<sup>10</sup> yet little provision or priority is given to the specific needs of these groups.

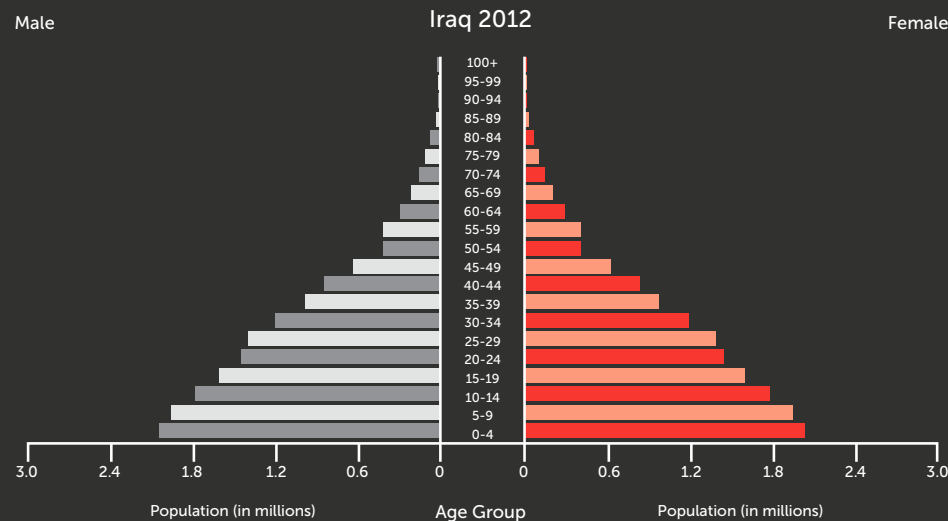


Figure 1 - Population demographic in Iraq [CIA World Factbook data]

War Child has calculated security incidents affecting Iraq for the first quarter of 2013 and including the last month of 2012<sup>11</sup> to demonstrate the severity of the continuing situation and the impact this is having on children.

<sup>9</sup> See, CIA World Factbook statistics, accessed at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html> accessed 23 April 2013. Children and young people aged up to 24 make up 56% of Iraq's population, while children aged up to 14 accounts for 37%.

<sup>10</sup> Global Research, 'Iraqi Children: Deprived Rights, Stolen Future', March 15, 2013: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/iraqi-children-deprived-rights-stolen-future/5326552> accessed 23 April 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Information collated from daily UN security reports from Iraq. Relates to statistics on page 6.



# ARE THESE THE STATISTICS YOU WOULD EXPECT FROM A WAR THAT'S OVER?

Ten years on and statistics relating to insecurity are still staggering.

Violent incidents, often fatal, have risen over the past two years<sup>12</sup> and events throughout March and April of this year show further intensification of violence.<sup>13</sup>

Security reports show severe rates of violence but are likely to be an underestimation of the scale of incidents that actually occur. The following statistics are based only on acts that are reported and doesn't include those that are not. In less than 5 months, based on officially reported incidents alone (between December 3rd 2012 and April 23rd 2013) we have already found that:

- There have been more than **2,693** security incidents, equating to **19 incidents per day**
- More than **1,236** Iraqi civilians have been killed, averaging **9 deaths per day**
- More than **3,529** Iraqi civilians have been injured, averaging **25 people per day**

The impact on children and young people

- An estimated **692** children and young people have been killed since December last year
- More than **1,976** children and young people have been injured.

**WAR**  
child



Photograph © 2003 Kenneth O'Halloran

<sup>12</sup> The Telegraph, 'Violence in Iraq goes up despite US pull out, as freed prisoners rejoin militias,' 16 March 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/9934656/Violence-in-Iraq-goes-up-despite-US-pull-out-as-freed-prisoners-rejoin-militias.html> - accessed 23 April 2013. Article includes Iraq Body Count statistics showing an increase in civilian deaths from 4,147 in 2011 to 4,570 in 2012.

<sup>13</sup> An increase in security incidents coincided with the tenth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2013, and the period preceding provincial elections held on April 20, 2013. An intensification of sectarian tensions and spike in violence in the latter part of April followed a raid by security forces on an anti-government protest camp on April 23 in which 50 people were killed. Security incidents since April 23 are not incorporated in figures given in this report, suggesting the actual scale of violence is even more significant than the estimates given here.

By the end of 2013, if nothing is done, well over 1,800 children and young people, (around 1215 under the age of 14) could have died in violent attacks.<sup>14</sup>

1800



**“It is the most widespread violence since the withdrawal of US troops in 2011.”**

BBC News, April 29, 2013

**A deadly wave of attacks has surrounded the 10th anniversary of the Iraq war, April’s provincial elections and anti-government demonstrations.**

- **56 were killed and more than 200 injured by 12 bombs detonated in Baghdad exactly 10 years after the US invasion was announced**<sup>15</sup>
- **Earlier this month four children were among 27 killed in an explosion above a Baghdad ice-cream parlour**<sup>16</sup>
- **50 were killed in an army raid on an anti-government protest camp on 23rd April 2013**<sup>17</sup>

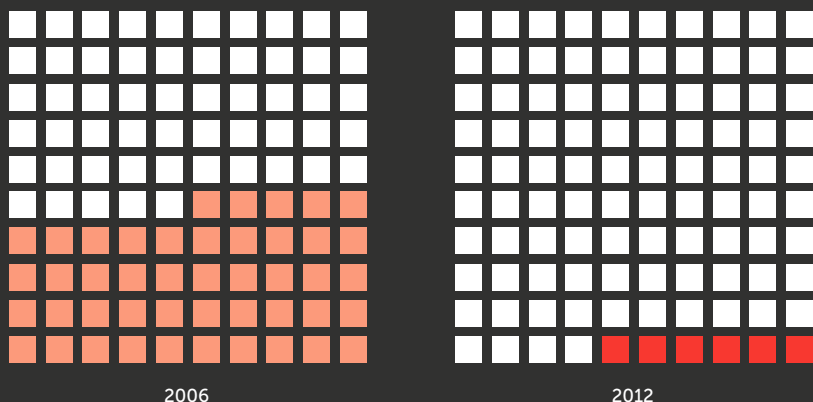
<sup>14</sup> The figure of 1800 is based on 5 children dying per day over 142 days in which we calculated fatal security incidents, and children and young people being 56% of the population, amounting to 1825 child and young person deaths. The figure for deaths under 14 years of age is based on 9 overall civilian deaths per day for 365 days, 37% of which could be under 14 years of age relating to the population demographic.

<sup>15</sup> Guardian, 'Bombings in Baghdad kill 56 on eve of Iraq war anniversary,' March 19 2013: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/mar/19/baghdad-bombings-anniversary-invasion> - accessed on April 24 2013.

<sup>16</sup> CNN, 'Blast in popular Baghdad coffee shop kills at least 27,' April 19 2013: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/18/world/meast/iraq-violence> - accessed April 24 2013.

<sup>17</sup> BBC, 'Iraq: deadly car bombs hit Shia provinces,' April 29 2013, paragraph 6 - accessed - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22335017>.

The number of Iraqis who are displaced or refugees is another profound indication of how insecurity is tearing families' lives apart. Research estimates that 10% of the Iraqi population remains displaced – that is 3 million people.<sup>18</sup> It is pertinent to point out that, primarily due to fears of persistent insecurity, the number of people wishing to return home has dropped dramatically from 45% in 2006 to 6% in 2012.<sup>19</sup>



Landmines pose a further risk to Iraqi children, who are particularly vulnerable to this lethal legacy of conflict. Nearly one million children are affected by the presence of landmines, which limit their access to essential services. Hundreds of children have been maimed or killed by exploded cluster bomblets since 1991.<sup>20</sup>

## LANDMINE CRISIS

**In March a twelve year old boy lost an eye and both hands when a munition exploded while he herded sheep near Basra.**<sup>21</sup>



**WAR**  
child

Photograph © 2003 Kenneth O'Halloran

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Ferris, Co-director of Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, 'Remembering Iraq's displaced,' March 18 2013: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/03/18-iraq-displaced-ferris> - accessed on April 24 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF, 'More Progress Required to Eliminate Threat of Landmines to Iraqis,' 4 April 2013: [http://www.unicef.org/iraq/media\\_8087.html](http://www.unicef.org/iraq/media_8087.html) accessed on April 24 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



# THE NEXT DEGENERATION

There is a big, but not impossible, 'to do list' before Iraq should ever be associated with words like 'accomplished'. It is an embarrassing legacy of the international community that support was not followed through, both in terms of development and diplomacy to improve outcomes for Iraqi citizens.

Some key development facts that need to be reversed in their reality:

## Improved outcomes of quality education across primary and secondary schools

- 82% of 3-5 year olds<sup>22</sup> in Iraq are not 'on track' to reach numeracy and literacy standards.
- 51% of 12-17 year olds do not attend secondary school.<sup>23</sup>

## Improved access and quality of welfare services

- There are an estimated 35,000 infant deaths<sup>24</sup> every year in Iraq.
- One in four children has stunted physical and intellectual development due to under-nutrition.<sup>25</sup>

## Long-term assistance provided for children and young people affected by the conflict

- In 2011 a survey found up to 1 million children have lost one or both parents in the conflict.<sup>26</sup>
- In 2010, 7 years after the conflict began, it was estimated that over a quarter of Iraqi children, or 3 million, suffered varying degrees of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.<sup>27</sup>



<sup>22</sup> UNICEF cluster report, 'Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey' 2011, published September 2012, p.126. Children whose literacy and numeracy was assessed were aged 36-59 months old.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 'Infant' refers to children aged less than 1 year.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

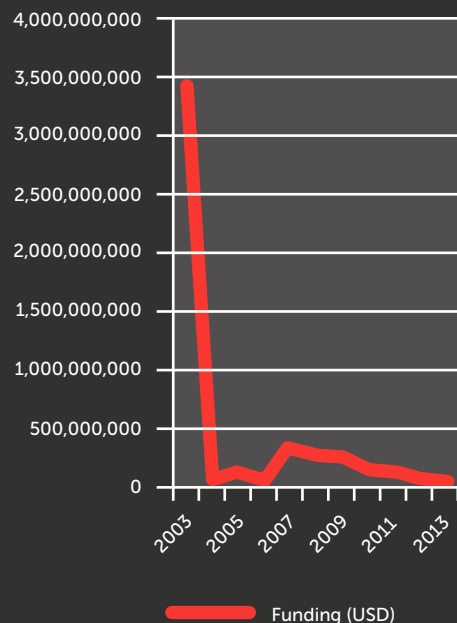
<sup>26</sup> BBC News, 'Iraq Conflict: Crisis of an orphaned generation', 28 November 2012: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20461110> accessed April 19 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Neta C Crawford, 'Civilian Death and Injury in Iraq, 2003-2011', September 2011, accessed on April 19 2013: <http://costsofwar.org/sites/default/files/articles/15/attachments/Crawford%20Iraq%20Civilians.pdf>; pp 10.

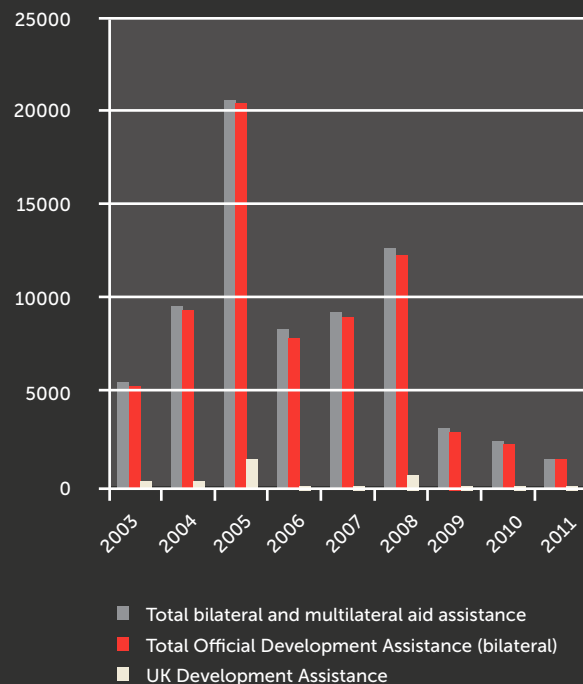


International aid is a critical part of the development picture. Iraq benefited from international support that helped improve the circumstances of many Iraqis, but drastically inconsistent aid patterns, as illustrated by the graphs below <sup>28</sup>, make it impossible to create the required systemic and sustainable changes as well as gains in basic needs such as nutrition.

10 Year Humanitarian Aid Picture



Global Development Assistance in USD millions



## Why the argument?

The discourse on development aid and a prevailing debate over giving aid to so-called 'Middle Income Countries' has also done Iraq's children and young people no favours. Is Iraq 'too rich to be poor'? A country with significant oil wealth that is considered a Middle Income Country and yet has suffered protracted conflict for 10 years following foreign invasion and for another decade before that.

The wealth of the Iraqi government and national income statistics that put Iraq into the category of Middle Income, does not serve to protect the population from the insecurity and violence that is fatal at worst and prohibitive of basic rights like education at best. Children have been directly caught up in and targeted by conflict in Iraq, which continues to rage in pockets of the country: children as young as 14 years old have been recruited and used as suicide bombers.

<sup>28</sup> Left hand side graph uses data from the Financial Tracking Service: <http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emergencyCountryDetails&cc=irq> accessed on April 24 2013. Right hand side graph uses data from OECD DAC Statistics database: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/> - accessed on April 25 2013.



Aid has declined to the extent that Iraq could be considered one of the worlds' neglected crises. There are obvious peaks in humanitarian aid relating to severe violent incidents of the bombing offensive in 2006 and the start of the war in 2003. These 'responsive' donor patterns with a lack of long-term vision supported by development assistance have resulted in the situation we now see today with fatal levels of insecurity and regression in some key development indicators.

**Between 2005 and 2011, global development assistance to Iraq has gone down from over 20 billion US dollars to 1.5 billion – a reduction of 19 billion dollars.** <sup>29</sup>

There is evidently a huge amount of 'unfinished business' that the international community needs to fulfil to help improve issues that have actually deteriorated over the past two decades in which Iraq has been faced with war, sanctions and sectarian violence.

For example:

- Between 1990 and 2011: primary education enrolment rates have **declined**. <sup>30</sup>
- The life expectancy of ordinary Iraqis has gone **down** by two years in just over a decade. If you were born in 2000 instead of 2011 you could expect to live 2 years longer. <sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Refer to right hand graph 2005-2011 on page 10.

<sup>30</sup> UN, Progress in Iraq: The Millennium Development Goals, March 2013 <http://unam.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=bgHcDIXr8-s%3D&tabid=2790&language=en-US> accessed April 23 2013; p.1. From 1990 to 2011 the net enrolment ratio for primary education reduced from 91% to 89.1%.

<sup>31</sup> Information from the World Bank Databank: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN> accessed on April 24 2013. Life expectancy at birth reduced from 71 in 2000 to 69 in 2011.

# THIS IS PERSONAL

---

Numbers come to life when you realise the pain, trauma and suffering behind them. Every number in the statistics above has a story to tell and a life attached to it.

To understand what it was really like for the children growing up in conflict, we asked two girls and one boy involved in War Child programmes to tell us about their experiences and how they have changed over the past ten years. <sup>32</sup>

## **Aesera, 17 years old**

When the war began in 2003, Aesera was 8 years old. She had lived her whole childhood through conflict and has never seen real peace.

We asked her how her life had changed in the ten years since the war started.

She said, "Before 2003, we suffered from poverty and lack of basic needs, now we feel the economic situation is improving but our problem is lack of security. The lack of development has had a high cost of human lives. Before, there was a general fear of Saddam regime and total lack of freedom.

"We were forced to move due to deterioration of the security situation in Baghdad, we use to have daily bombings and attacks. And we felt threatened.

"We feel as strangers [when we moved to Basra], as we did not know Basra before. We live in a rural area, where movement is restricted and we are not familiar with it. In Basra we are suffering from lack of basic services, in particular clean water.



**"It is sad to see people get used to violence and gun shots... We fear going about our daily life"**

<sup>32</sup> All case studies collected by War Child UK staff in Iraq. Names have been changed for protection purposes. Interviews conducted in April 2013.



---

"[In] Baghdad, violence and bombing had become normal in our daily life, we got used to them. But in Basra we feel it is an exceptional thing to have happen. When there is one attack in Basra it becomes an issue for the whole town, not like in Baghdad. It is sad to see people get used to violence and gun shots!"

Aesra remembers witnessing her first bombing when she was about 8 years old. "I was visiting a friend a bit far from our house, and on my way some people opened fire and shooting started between some of USA troops and some armed groups. I was really scared, as it is the first time I saw such an aggressive act. I became afraid of going out, same as other Iraqis - we fear going about our daily life. Even our mother refused to leave the house fearing the violence in the street."

### **Sabeen, 16 years old**

Sabeen was around 7-8 years old when Saddam was removed. She was only in her second year of school.

"I was young, but I still remember how people and my family were talking about sanctions, war and other daily difficulties," she told us.

She explained that their family had to move from Iraq to Syria for economic and political reasons: "It was difficult for my father to get a job and he was unemployed for a long time, we were suffering poverty."

My father faced problems and we did not feel safe in Iraq as my father was sentenced to death.

[In Syria] we had problems, especially with our education; I was forced to repeat one year."

About two years ago Sabeen's family once again had to move country, this time back to Iraq due to the growing civil war in Syria.

**"My father faced problems and we did not feel safe in Iraq as my father was sentenced to death"**





"[The] security situation deteriorated there a lot and we did not feel safe anymore. The free Syrian army (opposition) was causing security problems; they would come inside houses, steal, and abuse people."

Sabeen wants a better future for herself and other Iraqi children: "We would like to get help in improving the education system, like intensive lessons for us to get better."

Her hopes for Iraq for the next 10 years are that there will be safety and security and a better education system.

### **Ali Malik, 16 years old**

Ali was born in 1997 and has lived through the Iraq conflict. His father died when he was 11 years old. He had no way of providing for his family and got caught stealing from a shop to provide food to his brothers. He was put in prison for 5 months as a result. "I was detained for one month at the detention facility and then I was transferred to the central prison. I had to wait a long time in the detention facility as I did not have access to a lawyer who can represent me", he told us.

Ali is still in prison but has been released on bail. The charges against him have still not been dropped and War Child's lawyer is supporting his case."

"Inside the prison, I did not get access to any services and I am glad that I am out now [on bail]."

"[When I was released for the first time] I worked in small electric repair shop with a payment of 5000 Iraqi Dinars - about 3 dollars. I have worked hard but since I am a child they have only paid me this amount."

"We are three brothers, our father died in 2008 and we did not have anyone to take care of me and my brothers so we were put in an orphanage. Now, together with my brother we have rented a small house and we are sharing costs."

When we asked him about his dreams for the future Ali said: "I wish to continue with my education. While in the detention centre I did a basic first aid course. I like it very much and I would like to get such chances."

**"Our father died in 2008 and we did not have anyone to take care of me and my brothers so we were put in an orphanage"**

---

# WORDS FROM THE FIELD

## War Child UK Country Director in Iraq

---

**“We need to work hard to ensure the Iraqi government and Iraqi politicians are committing to their responsibility to protect the civilians - as it is a humanitarian imperative that lies first and foremost with the Iraqi government. The international community and external organizations are equally responsible. If the international community fails to prevent the on-going violence and atrocities in Iraq, it is hard to see how the commitment to the main principle of responsibility to protect and human morality could survive and how international actors could explain their failure to look ahead and respond before it is too late.**

**With the growing political differences, violence and lack of security, as well as the regional tensions created by the Syria conflict, there is a general and an inevitable risk of total collapse of the state of Iraq. Democracy is not perfect, and democratization is not easy, but the more accountable governments are, the more likely they are to be responsive to the needs of their people.**

**The international community cannot afford to ignore Iraq and there is an urgent need to exercise harder diplomatic and economic pressure on Iraqi government to save lives and to protect its citizens.”**

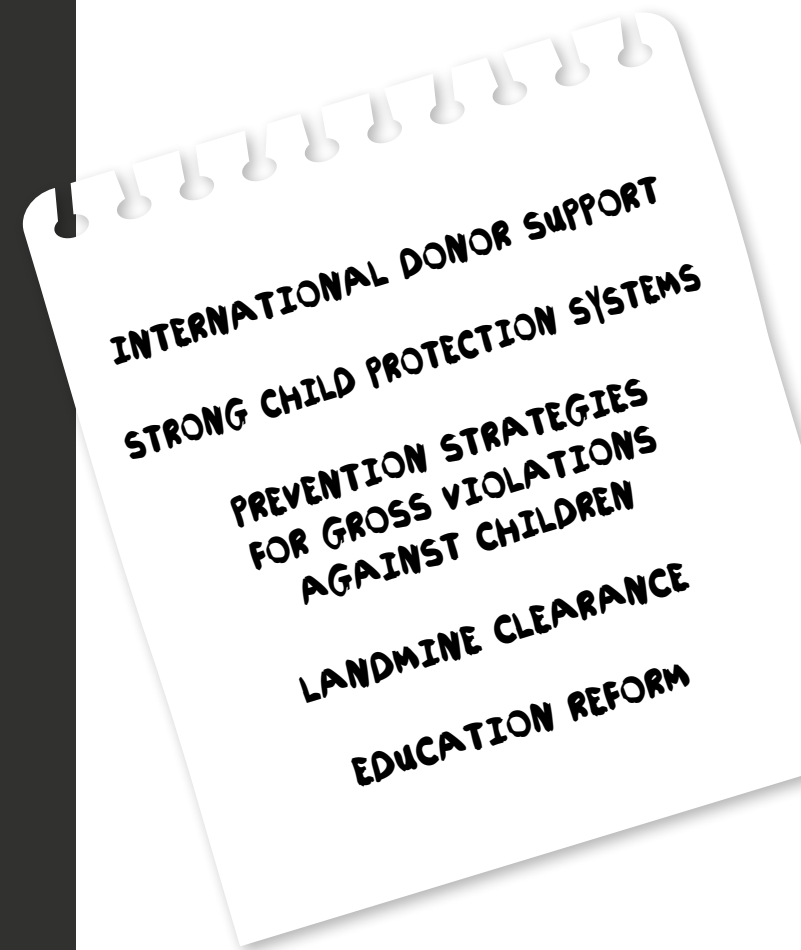


# CALLS FOR THIS CAUSE



## 10 YEARS ON, 10 POINTS FOR THE YEARS AHEAD.

1. A UN needs assessment of the current situation to be conducted in Iraq, paying particular attention to children and young people's specific needs. The UN should then make recommendations to donors on the gaps that need to be fulfilled.
2. Donors to support the strengthening of Iraqi civil society in order that government policy and practice is held accountable at the national and local level.
3. The UK Government to live up to its long-term commitments for real peace and stability by supporting children and young people through the UK Building Stability Overseas Strategy and Conflict Pool – working with the Government of Iraq towards real prevention of violence, abuse and attacks against children.
4. Strengthening and creation of high standard child protection systems to mitigate child rights violations and respond rapidly to those that do occur, as stipulated by international standards and norms.
5. A child helpline to be created and supported by the Iraqi authorities in order to ensure timely response to atrocities committed against children and young people.





6. Landmine clearance programmes to be conducted and supported as a matter of urgency and in full.
7. International community to increase their efforts in providing education reform projects, with a priority on quality of education and access for the most marginalised.
8. Increased provision for Iraqi refugees (who have been displaced on multiple occasions due to conflict) to be a key and consistent consideration in planning and delivering international assistance.
9. Iraqi government to set up a children and youth parliament so that they have a say in their own future, particularly as they are the overwhelming demographic within the country.
10. Diplomatic embassies in Iraq to make consistent efforts to work with the Iraqi authorities - calling for adherence to the UNCRC and the creation of a formal child protection strategy.

**"IRAQ IS A FORGOTTEN CRISIS. YET TEN YEARS ON AND THE COUNTRY IS STILL REELING FROM WAR. THE NEED IS PALPABLE; PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN IRAQ SHOULD BE AN INTERNATIONAL PRIORITY."**

Rob Williams, CEO War Child UK

Copyright War Child UK

Published May 1st 2013

For more information:  
0044 (0)207 91609276;  
[www.warchild.org.uk/](http://www.warchild.org.uk/)

Produced by:  
Kate Adams – Policy and Advocacy Manager War Child UK  
With thanks to Catherine Shannon and Naglaa Elhag

Design by: Rob Milner at Faction Creative