



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Open Day in Erbil Court Raises Awareness on Justice Services in Iraq

Erbil, Baghdad, 7 December 2011 - During an open day ceremony held at the Erbil Investigative Court today, the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union provided information on their support to the Kurdistan Judiciary, and in particular to the Erbil Investigative Court.

These activities are part of the UNDP programme "*Support to the Rule of Law and Justice in Iraq*" which is generously funded by the European Union. The programme includes the provision of legal training for judicial staff, the establishment of an electronic case management system, the establishment of a legal library and research unit, and the implementation of a legal help desk in the Erbil Investigative Court. So far, the help desk has assisted more than 750 vulnerable persons to receive free legal advice by lawyers employed under the legal assistance scheme.

During the ceremony, the Chief of Kurdistan Judicial Counsel Ahmed Abdulla Zubair formally launched an awareness raising campaign aimed at increasing people's understanding of their legal rights and informing them about how the justice system works.

" Today's event shows our strong commitment to supporting Rule of Law and Human Rights in Iraq" said Jobst Von Kirchmann, Head of Cooperation for the European Union in Iraq "Through this campaign we hope to encourage more Iraqi people from all social backgrounds to benefit from the court systems" he added.

This is part of a nation-wide campaign which aims to promote transparent justice and increased use of Courts in Iraq. Using television, radio and other mass media tools the campaign provides information on legal rights and how Iraqi courts work, with the aim being to encourage citizens to feel comfortable approaching the courts to resolve disputes.

"We are confident that the support which has been provided in Kurdistan will contribute to a more responsive, effective and accountable justice system throughout Iraq" said Peter Batchelor UNDP Country Director in Iraq. "The Rule of Law and Justice Programme would not have been possible without the substantial support of the European Union. We are grateful for their vital contribution to developing Iraq's legal institutions" he added.

For more information and media queries please contact

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About the project Support to the Rule of Law and Justice in Iraq

The Rule of Law and Justice project was initiated in 2009 and is expected to end on 31/12/2011. Funded by the European Union, it aims at 1) increasing the efficiency of the justice system to provide greater court transparency, accessibility and accountability (through the establishment of a model criminal court

in Erbil, and a model civil court in Basra) and at 2) strengthening the capacity of key government rule of law institutions (including the Higher Judicial Council and the Ministry of Justice) to promote a higher standard of justice.

The Media Awareness Campaign was researched, designed and implemented by Albany Associates, who have substantial experience in partnering with the UNDP and running marketing and media programmes within Iraq (www.albanyassociates.com). Albany partnered Iraqi marketing specialists in Baghdad to deliver the campaign materials.

About UNDP Iraq

UNDP has worked to support the Government and people of Iraq since 1976 in the areas of democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, and energy and environment. Since 2003, UNDP has been supporting a range of emergency physical rehabilitation projects to restore basic service delivery, including water and electricity.

Most recently, UNDP has contributed to strengthening the democratic process in Iraq primarily through its support to the 2010 national elections. UNDP also continues to work on anti-corruption, rule of law, justice, human rights, public sector reform, disaster risk reduction, and environment and climate change issues.

Supporting Iraq to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is among UNDP's top priorities as it will ensure a better life for millions of Iraqis. UNDP is committed to assist Iraq achieve these goals by 2015 especially in the areas of enrolment in primary education, unemployment and access to safe and reliable water and sanitation services.

For more on UNDP's work in Iraq please visit www.iq.one.un.org