

15 September 2004

Interview (OSSG); BBC

(These are excerpts from the BBC interview with the Secretary-General in New York. Video of full interview available from UN Video Library – Ref: 525-KA 0809.)

[...]

Elections in Iraq:

Q: You mentioned Iraq. There's a plan to have elections in January. I was just reading the comments from your Envoy in Iraq, and it sounds like it's going to be extremely difficult to hold elections.

SG: Absolutely. There's a lot that needs to be done. We have helped the Iraqis set up a legal framework for elections. Despite the security situation, I took a calculated risk and sent in two teams: one led by [Lakhdar] Brahimi, that helped them set up the interim government, and another one led by Carina Perelli, who is the head of our electoral division. And we helped them set up the legal framework for election political parties law, and independent electoral commission. And we've had some of their officers trained in Mexico and ready to go.

And there are quite a lot of things the Iraqis have to do themselves. We will advise and assist them. They will be running the elections not us. We will be giving advice and assistance and I hope they will be able to do everything they have to do, but of course security will be a factor.

Q: But do you honestly expect elections in January? It sounds impossible.

SG: Not if the security... You cannot have credible elections if the security conditions continue as they are now.

Q: And so you're saying there's a good chance there will not be elections in January?

SG: Well the judgement – the main judgement – will have to be done. The judgement will have to be made by the Iraqi government which is going to run the elections. We will be supporting them. Obviously there may come a time when we have to make our own independent assessment.

[...]

Legality of the Iraqi war:

Q: Are you bothered that the US is becoming an unrestrainable, unilateral superpower?

SG: Well, I think over the last year, we've all gone through lots of painful lessons. I'm talking about since the war in Iraq. I think there have been lessons for the US and there have been lessons for the UN and other Member States. And I think in the end everybody is concluding that it is best to work together with allies and through the UN to deal with some of these issues. And I hope we do not see another Iraq-type operation for a long time.

Q: Done without UN approval – or without clearest UN approval?

SG: Without UN approval and a much broader support from the international community.

Q: I wanted to ask you that – do you think that the resolution that was passed on Iraq before the war did actually give legal authority to do what was done?

SG: Well, I'm one of those who believe that there should have been a second resolution because the Security Council indicated that if Iraq did not comply there will be consequences. But then it was up to the Security Council to approve or determine what these consequences should be.

Q: So you don't think there was legal authority for the war?

SG: I have stated clearly that it was not in conformity with the Security Council – with the UN Charter.

Q: It was illegal?

SG: Yes, if you wish.

Q: It was illegal?

SG: Yes, I have indicated it is not in conformity with the UN Charter, from our point of view, and from the Charter point of view it was illegal.

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