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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR IRAQ
UNOHCI

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

19 January 1998

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

Please find attached a petition signed by the Chairman of the Iraqi Trade Union Association (also a member of the Iraqi Parliament) conveying the concern of its membership with regard to the impact of sanctions upon the workers and their families.

Following a demonstration outside the UN Headquarters Canal Hotel building and the presentation of the attached petition before the cameras of the national and international media, I invited the seven leaders to meet privately inside the building. This is customary here in Baghdad when such demonstrations occur.

The leaders, in addition to the Chairman, represented a number of trade unions/associations including the metal workers, teachers, wool and cotton workers and youth associations - several million workers and several million more family members dependent upon them.

The message they wished me to convey to you and, through you, to the members of the Security Council, included the following.

The concern for children and adults dying in this country for lack of adequate foodstuffs and medicines and that this form of death was worse than war. They would prefer to be killed by missiles and bombs.

The problem of unemployment amongst the union membership as being very high due to a lack of raw materials and the greatly diminished purchasing power of the domestic market. Thus the workers were unable to take care of their families.

They wished to know why the United Nations had a deaf ear and why was humanitarian assistance not apolitical. They would like to have seen the separation of arms inspection from the feeding of Iraqi people. They prayed that the UN would not forget them. They regretted the breakdown of the social life in this country including a fall off in marriages. They noted that in some western countries animal rights were given higher priority than human rights in Iraq as impacted by sanctions.

The Secretary-General
New York

Mr. Sevan I have endorsed
Mr. Waldby in phone
do address you on
UNOHCI matters
AK

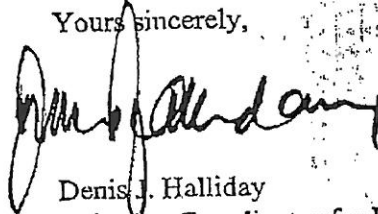
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In summary, they stated that the suffering of the Iraqi people was a catastrophe about which the world did not seem to care. They hoped that the Secretary-General would listen to their concerns and convey same to the Security Council.

I listened to the various statements summarized above, indicated that I would convey their grievances to you and underlined that the situation here and any possible improvements remained in the hands of the member states of the Security Council.

Yours sincerely,



Denis J. Halliday
UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq

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