

SSR in the Middle East

Following the recent United Nations Secretary-General's Report on Security Sector Reform, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the support of Canada, hosted a consultative meeting on 17-18 March 2008 in New York City. The meeting gathered civil society actors and research & policy institutes from various parts of the world.

On this occasion, Dr Mustapha Adib, Director of the Centre for Middle-Eastern Strategic Studies (CESMO) based in Lebanon, commented on the role of the United Nations in SSR. He concluded his statement by noting the challenges that SSR efforts face in the Arab world. In this context, he said, "a strategic management of the security sector should be preferred."

Dr. Adib's full statement can be downloaded from the GFN-SSR front page: <http://www.ssrnetwork.net/>

Delivering aid and security to the Palestinians

The political and military crisis between Israel and Hamas remains unresolved. The situation in Gaza is increasingly alarming according to service delivery and humanitarian organisations. On April 24th, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which distributes food and essential commodities, suspended aid deliveries into Gaza after it ran out of fuel.

On the 12th of March, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and Shams Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Participation organised the first Forum of its kind, entitled 'Delivering Security to the People - Challenges to Palestinian Security Sector Governance,' in Ramallah.

The DCAF-Shams Forum full report will be soon available at:

http://www.dcaf.ch/mena/_events.cfm?navsub1=10&navsub2=2&nav1=3

Stabilisation and reconstruction in Iraq

Two new International Crisis Group Reports suggest a clear decrease in violence in Iraq following the US recent military surge. Nevertheless, the reports warn that the current stabilisation efforts will only achieve strategic success if the Iraqi government is able and willing to create the conditions for a broad

political agreement; "Instead, U.S. policy is bolstering a set of local actors operating beyond the state's realm or the rule of law and who impose their authority by force of arms. [...] None of this constitutes progress toward consolidation of the central government or institutions [...]" (ICG Middle East Report N°74).

The full report can be accessed at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2436&l=1>

In this context, the inconsistency and management failure of the reconstruction process is likely to seriously undermine the US and Iraqi broader stabilisation efforts, including that in the security sector.

An International Herald Tribune article described that the struggle in Baghdad "ties security to basic services". A month after the US and Iraqi troops took control of Sadr City, inhabitants have not seen any improvement in infrastructure or basic service delivery. The fear and anger of the population in Sadr City illustrates that reconstruction delays and inconsistencies could jeopardise the efforts of the US and Iraqi government to "win hearts and minds" outside the fortified Green Zone.

The full article can be accessed at: <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/04/22/africa/22sadr-city.php>

Likewise, an audit conducted by the U.S. military shows that Iraq's largest reconstruction project, a water treatment plant south of Baghdad, is failing, largely because of poor execution. According to the audit, the situation is partly due to "unqualified and unmotivated Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works staff unwilling to consistently attend the contractor-provided training" a Bloomberg article reports. As the U.S. will soon be turning over more responsibility to the Iraqis for infrastructure operations, the improvement of the local management and coordination appears necessary to ensure stability.

The full article can be accessed at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601116&sid=aqM9vF5GfX.M&refer=africa>