



SPEECH

by

Ronald K. Noble

INTERPOL Secretary General

Towards International Solidarity to Confront Terrorism

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Your Excellency Nouri AL-MALIKI, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq;

Mr. Nickolay MLADENOV, U.N. Special Representative for the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI);

Honorable Ministers and Ambassadors;

Distinguished Representatives from Global, Regional and Local Organizations:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Seven years ago, Iraq - a nation in conflict - was brought to its feet in celebration and unified in victory.

In front of 60,000 live and hundreds of millions more over television, the world watched as the Iraqi national football team narrowly defeated Saudi Arabia to win its first ever Asian Cup.

It's a day that no Iraqi is likely to forget, and one they were reminded of last Wednesday when the national team qualified for the 2015 tournament.

These moments, which bind Iraqis and remind the world of their passion and potential, however meaningful, are inadequate to shield them against the constant threat of violence and terrorism.

Alone, these moments cannot deflect the wave of six car bombings that killed 18 and wounded more than 50, in downtown Baghdad earlier that same day;

They cannot erase the nearly 8,000 terrorist-related deaths and 18,000 injuries that Iraq suffered in 2013; or the fact that no country over the last decade has been more affected by terrorism than Iraq.

But what these moments can do is inspire a vision that takes Iraq from a country where its progress and stability are being chipped away, to one where its prosperity and security can flourish.

Yet, for it to be achieved, this vision requires the full support and participation of the global community. Why?

Among the increasing suicide and car bombings, there is enough evidence to suggest that those targeting the cities and countryside in Iraq are not Iraqi, but foreign fighters coming from across the globe – from America, Europe, North Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

This transnational component ensures a shared responsibility between us for making this vision happen, and to do this we must focus on what we can achieve collectively in response.

The good news is Iraq and the global community have seen this threat before, and have experience in addressing it.

Starting a decade ago, INTERPOL, Iraq and Coalition Forces joined together under Project VENNLIG, which aimed to identify, investigate and interdict foreign fighters and terrorists bound for the country.

Through VENNLIG, thousands of pieces of information and high quality identifiers collected in the field were shared with

law enforcement, intelligence and defense agencies in more than 60 countries.

Among other outcomes, these exchanges unmasked a financier in Italy supporting future plans to launch terrorist attacks on Iraqi soil; they dismantled a network of Tunisian facilitators working for Al-Qaeda, and they provided assistance in identifying and locating the 2003 Istanbul bombers.

In other words, through secure channels of mutual cooperation, Project VENNLIG created leads, initiated investigations, and formed an extra layer of security for Iraq, ultimately built by Iraq and its global partners.

While INTERPOL has carried over its experience with Project VENNLIG to launch similar initiatives on foreign fighters in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Libya, and Somalia, we remain focused on Syria and Iraq.

Currently, under the umbrella of our Fusion Task Force and its six regional projects, we continue to facilitate exchanges between our member countries to compile and compare information and identifiers of suspected foreign fighters heading to this conflict area.

However, the work by specialized investigators and experts internationally is only one component.

It must be complimented by efforts on the ground that disrupt the travel of foreign fighters, and undermine their operations in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere.

Available in 190 countries at airports, ports and border crossings, through INTERPOL, authorities anywhere can access INTERPOL Notices, including ones issued jointly by INTERPOL and the UN Security Council.

Such notices put in the hands of law enforcement and border officers information on individuals and entities linked to Al-Qaeda and sanctioned by the UN, including the former leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab AL-ZARQAWI, and the current leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Abu Bakr AL-BAGHDADI.

This is the same system Iraq used last July following the coordinated attacks on prisons, in this case requesting an Orange Notice to share photos and identity information of the

327 escapees with the rest of the global law enforcement community.

In concert with our Notices, INTERPOL also works to ensure authorities everywhere can access, share records, and search against our databases that includes, for example, information on stolen motor vehicles (“SMV”).

With over seven million records, any one search to the SMV database could stop the foreign inflow of a stolen car to Iraq that might otherwise be the next improvised explosive device set off in a busy street.

The importance of this one search is reflected in the stolen Mitsubishi Canter that was allowed to transit through multiple countries before it was used to assassinate former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq HARIRI;

And reflected in the three stolen vehicles that transported explosives to commuter trains in Madrid ten years ago yesterday, killing nearly 200 citizens.

As we look forward, what we face may be even more challenging.

There is nothing that prevents foreign fighters from returning to their country of origin, a trend that is likely to increase overtime.

This is concerning for Iraq because these individuals will be encouraging and attracting new recruits, and creating a bridge between the old and new generation of terrorists and suicide bombers.

At the same time, this concerning for the rest of the global community as these same hardened veterans now possess specialized skillsets and ideologies that make them an unpredictable, high-risk threat.

This is why the time to act is now, and every country, organization, and individual here has an interest in doing so.

I would like to thank Prime Minister MALIKI, and the organizers for the opportunity to speak and share some of the lessons and experiences of INTERPOL.

I also look forward to hearing other perspectives, and to the detailed discussions that will follow.

This is an opportunity, and we should not let it go to waste.

By sharing with each other and identifying ways we can concretely work together, we will be taking one step towards the vision of a more prosperous, secure Iraq, a stronger Middle East, and a safer world.

Thank you.