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**For immediate release**  
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## **UK GOVERNMENT MUST DO MORE TO HELP IRAQI REFUGEES**

### **Life After Iraq Photography Exhibition**

The UK government should do more to help Iraqi refugees displaced from their homes in the aftermath of the Iraq war and offer them the chance of a future in Scotland, Scottish Refugee Council and the UN Refugee Agency will say at the launch of the ***Life After Iraq*** photography exhibition on Thursday (June 12).

Much attention has been given to the conflict in Iraq, but much less to the resulting humanitarian crisis currently facing the Iraqi people. Since 2003 when war broke out, at least 4.5 million Iraqis have been forced to flee their homes. Around half of the displaced remain in Iraq, while more than 2 million have crossed borders into Syria and Jordan, struggling to survive in increasingly desperate conditions.

Western nations, including the UK, have given little assistance to Syria, and the UK has been slow to resettle even a small number of the refugees.

As well as the Iraqi refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries such as Syria, a small proportion have also come to the United Kingdom and applied for asylum. Some of these are currently in Scotland. As of March 2008, there were 370 Iraqi asylum seekers in Scotland, mostly in Glasgow, waiting for an outcome on their asylum application.

Of the 1355 Iraqis who applied for asylum in the UK in 2007, around 80 per cent were refused first time. Many of those who have been refused are unable to return home because of the continued violence in Iraq and are being forced into homelessness and destitution in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Scottish Refugee Council, supported by UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency), has commissioned ***Life After Iraq***, a photography exhibition of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Scotland, to draw attention to the plight of Iraqi refugees.

**John Wilkes**, Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council: said:

*“There are still hundreds of Iraqi refugees fleeing their homes every day, adding to the estimated two million living in dreadful conditions in Syria and Jordan, whose governments are struggling to meet their needs.*

*Scottish Refugee Council calls on the UK government to increase the capacity of its resettlement programme so that a number of the most vulnerable refugees can be resettled to Scotland and the rest of the UK.*

*We also urge the UK government to stop returning Iraqis back to a country which is still unsafe and to give leave to remain - with access to health, housing, employment and education - to Iraqi asylum seekers in the UK whose claims have been refused until it is safe for them to return. Given the UK government’s active role in Iraq, they have a responsibility to do so.”*

**Jacqueline Parlevliet**, UNHCR London Deputy Representative, said:

*"This exhibition portrays the very real plight of Iraqis caught up in the Middle East's most recent refugee crisis. UNHCR is very concerned about the plight of Iraq's 4.5 million refugees and displaced persons, many cannot return, and coping mechanisms are running out. Iraqis need protection and support, and more needs to be done by donors, both the public and governments, to support their needs."*

end

**Notes to Editors:**

- **What?** Launch of ***Life After Iraq***, a photography exhibition of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Scotland. Pictures by Angela Catlin, words by Billy Briggs.

Speakers: John Wilkes, Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council  
Jacqueline Parlevliet, UNHCR London Deputy Representative  
Mahamad Al-Shagra, exiled journalist and Iraqi refugee living in Scotland.

**When?** Thursday June 12, 2008  
Media interviews 3-5 pm  
Event 6-8pm. Press welcome at both.

**Where?** Media interviews and launch will both take place at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, 2 Castle Street, Glasgow, G4 0RH

- ***Life After Iraq*** is at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art from Friday June 13 - Sunday October 26 2008.  
Opening Times: 10am - 5pm (Mon - Thur & Sat), 11am - 5pm (Fri & Sun)  
St Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art, 2 Castle Street, Glasgow, G4 0RH  
Free - For more info: [www.glasgowmuseums.com](http://www.glasgowmuseums.com) 0141 553 2557
- Commissioned by Scottish Refugee Council as part of Refugee Week Scotland '08 [www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)
- Supported by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency [www.unhcr-iraqcrisis.org](http://www.unhcr-iraqcrisis.org)
- Refugee Week Scotland '08, June 16-22, is part of a UK-wide festival to celebrate diversity and raise awareness of refugee issues. To download a pdf of the Scottish programme visit [www.refugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk)
- [www.angelacatlin.com](http://www.angelacatlin.com) [www.billybriggs.co.uk](http://www.billybriggs.co.uk)
- For pictures, interviews or more information, contact Aideen McLaughlin at Scottish Refugee Council on 0141 223 7927/07734030763