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PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

**Written statement* submitted by The International Organization For The
Elimination Of All Forms Of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 February 2009]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

EAFORD would like to draw for the international community's consideration a human rights situation, which requires the Council's attention.

Even though the Council addresses human rights violations throughout the world, one of the gravest human rights situations is on daily news but not on the Council's agenda or in its reports. We are all witnesses to the gruesome human rights violations perpetrated against Iraqis in general and Iraqi children in specific. Yet not a word is uttered concerning the ongoing horrors and killing of innocent Iraqi children. Systematically abused, tortured, left without basic health care, education, drinkable water and adequate sanitation, displaced, blown apart, disfigured, and maimed, they are caught behind a smokescreen engineered to keep them nameless and faceless.

As UNICEF recently reported, two million Iraqi children are threatened with poor nutrition, disease, violence, and a lack of basic education, not to mention the mental and emotional anguish of warfare. Since the invasion of 2003, four million inhabitants of war torn Iraq have fled the country, of which half of them are young children, now living in refugee camps in neighboring Jordan and Syria.

The infant mortality rate in Iraq has increased by a shocking 150 percent since 1990 after UN sanctions - the highest such increase recorded for any country in the world. Another recent report tells us that one in eight Iraqi children - 122,000 died before reaching their fifth birthday. Even more intolerable is the data reported by Van Auken in 2007 in which he cites: "Since the US invasion and occupation, the overall destruction of basic infrastructure has led to a horrendous decline in child health. Only 35 percent of Iraqi children are fully immunized and more than one-fifth (21 percent) are severely or moderately stunted."

In Iraq tens of thousands of children have been displaced from their homes. 75,000 are living in shelters. 4,500 are dying every month. 818,000 children, one in five, ages 6-11, are without schooling! According to UNESCO until 1989 five percent of the national budget had been going to education and tens of thousands of schools were built until 1990. During the UN sanctions it was estimated that 83% of the schools needed urgent repair and the number has increased since the 2003 invasion. The vast majority of Iraqi children have been traumatized by the horrors of war, and now have special needs. One study found that 92 percent of the children in Iraq have learning impediments, due to the climate of fear they are forced to live with.

According to Human Rights Watch, about 2,400 children in Iraq have been detained since 2003. Over 1,400 interrogated, and incarcerated without access to a lawyer; only allowed a military advocate, without training in juvenile justice or child development. They are in constant risk of physical abuse; compounded by the psychological scars they already carry with them: the trauma of which alone is severely damaging to their development. 70% of primary age school children in Baghdad suffer from trauma related stress. To further aggravate the disastrous situation there, we now have five million Iraqi orphans, most of them left struggling for mere survival.

More than a year ago, Save the Children estimated that 260,000 children had already died since the 2003 invasion. One shudders to even contemplate how the number today has escalated.

The tragedy of Iraqi children should be a grave concern to the entire human rights community and all members of the Council. Irrespective of the naming and shaming to hold those accountable, which is not done in this worst of cases, the Human Rights Council can no longer remain silent concerning the protection of the human rights of Iraqi children. It is here and not in the closed meetings of the Security Council that an open and in depth discussion on this major human rights crisis must be addressed, especially in lieu of human rights laws and monitoring and reporting on the humanitarian side of the crisis.

We urge the Council, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to seriously examine the human rights situation of Iraqi children in its entirety as one of the extremely urgent issues that need to be addressed. It is often cited that Iraq is the world's best known conflict but the least well-known humanitarian crisis. It is in fact a devastating situation, affecting the well-being and lives of Iraq's greatest national treasure- its children, the off-spring, and the children who formed the cradle of our civilization.

Let us not let them down.
