

## **Implementing Human Security in Basra. A proposal to the Kuwait Programme by Mary Kaldor and Yahia Said**

**The stability of Southern Iraq is essential for the security of the whole Gulf region and neighbouring Kuwait, in particular. This project aims to identify ways in which Gulf states including Kuwait can work together to promote the stability and prosperity of the most important city in Southern Iraq, so as to radiate outwards both to Southern Iraq as a whole and to Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf states.**

Contemporary conflicts can be viewed as the underside of globalisation, involving transborder networks of ethnic, militant religious, and criminal groups. Cities are the main sites for contemporary conflicts and cities provide the infrastructure for these transborder networks. For this reason, cities may be the appropriate level at which to focus security efforts. New concepts of human security need to be tailored to the specifics of urban landscape encompassing not only those policies which normally fall into the domain of security (policing, military back-up, judicial apparatus) but also broader political and economic policies.

The proposed project is a case study of the city of Basra. Basra is a potentially wealthy city located near some of the biggest petroleum reserves in the world. It accounts for most of Iraq's oil reserves, production and output. Yet Basra is one of the poorest and most polluted cities in Iraq with virtually no functioning municipal services.

Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, rival networks composed of different factions, criminal gangs and external links, have engaged in sporadic violence to control the city and with it the flow of oil rents. Forcible displacement has changed the composition of the city which to-day is largely Arab Shi'a with Sunni, Christian and other minorities. Competition among various factions and tribal groups over oil rents and Basra's place in Iraq run deeper than sectarian and ethnic tensions. All of these networks spill over borders and have a potentially destabilising impact on Iraq's neighbours especially Kuwait and the Gulf countries as well as beyond.

The government in Baghdad has recently succeeded in establishing formal if tenuous control over the city and its vital economic hubs including the oil fields and sea port. Opposition factions including the Sadrists and Fadhila remain stronger at the grass roots level. Violence may erupt at any moment particularly around the up-coming municipal elections. The issues surrounding the formation of a southern federal region including Basra is shaping up as a main battle ground. At the same time economic deprivation and lack of services continue to feed instability.

The project will analyse the political economy of Basra, identify the main sources of insecurity, and assess whether it is possible to draw up a long term human security strategy for a prosperous, stable and cosmopolitan Basra, inside Iraq. The project will seek to apply the human security approach to the Basra urban environment.

It will involve key stakeholders both within Basra and the region (neighbouring states including Kuwait, other Gulf states, and Iran) and beyond (the UK, the USA, and international agencies).

A background paper will be prepared by Yahia Said and Mary Kaldor, based on a combination of desk research (media reports, memoirs, etc) and a field visit. The visit will aim to interview or hold meetings with the main political actors, the security forces (police, army and coalition partners), members of the municipal government, the South Oil Company, trades unions, religious leaders, and civil society.