



PRESS RELEASE

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UN FAMILY IN SIERRA LEONE OBSERVES FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF BAGHDAD BOMBING

Freetown, Sierra Leone – Staff members of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) today joined with colleagues of the UN family and other sympathizers at its Freetown headquarters to observe the first anniversary of the fatal terrorist attack last 19 August 2003 on the UN headquarters in Baghdad which killed 22 persons.

During a poignant programme, participants lit candles and viewed the live ceremonies being held simultaneously in Geneva and New York during which United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan made brief remarks.

The Secretary-General said the attack “was a really unique blow for us as an organization. It brought us face to face with danger in a new and more intimidating form -- the danger that we, servants of the United Nations, will no longer be victims simply by virtue of the times and places in which we are called upon to serve, but may have become in ourselves one of the main targets of political violence.”

“... But our belief in the cause of peace is undiminished, our sense of mission is intact, and our work goes on. And every day we work to further the cause of peace, we feel beside us those we have loved and lost, and we pay tribute to the cherished memory of those who perished a year ago.”

At the UNAMSIL observance, Force Commander and Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Major-General Sajjad Akram told participants, “while commemorating the first anniversary of our fallen heroes in Baghdad, let us rededicate ourselves to the vision and goal of all peacekeepers around the globe, including UNAMSIL peacekeepers and others who have made the supreme sacrifice toward making the world a better and a more peaceful place”.

The UN Resident Coordinator (ai) in Sierra Leone, Dr. Joaquim Saweka, also presented a brief message of sorrow.

More than 100 people were injured as a result of the Baghdad attack. However, the UN continues to provide humanitarian aid and political support to Iraq. The organization is also addressing fundamental security lapses in the system.

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