

A Call to Release the WHO Report on Iraqi Birth Defects

May 2013

To the World Health Organization and the Iraqi Ministry of Health:

"All studies done by the Ministry of Health prove with damning evidence that there has been a rise in birth defects and cancers" in Iraq.

This is quoted [directly from a senior official](#) at the Iraqi Ministry of Health. This senior official was speaking on-camera during a BBC documentary, called "*Born under a bad sign*", which aired on March 22, 2013. During the same interview, two other Ministry of Health researchers confirmed that the situation with cancers and birth defects constitute a "big crisis" for the "next generation" of Iraqi children.

The studies they refer to are the joint project between the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization which began in May/June 2012. The publication of the final report, most recently scheduled for early this year, has been delayed for unknown reasons.

This large-scale study, according to the WHO website, has been conducted in the following governorates of Iraq: Baghdad (Karkh and Rasafa) , Diyala, Anbar, Sulaminaiyah, Babel, Basrah, Mosul and Thi-Qar. A total of 10 800 households from 18 districts are included in this study, bringing the sample size to 600 households per district.

This yet-to-be-released study will shed light on the magnitude and trend of congenital birth defects at the selected district level. It will identify possible risk factors of congenital birth defects and it will assess the public burden of these conditions.

We, the undersigned, ask the World Health Organization and the Iraqi Ministry of Health to release this important report. Immediate release of this report will be the first step towards mobilizing global efforts to protect public health from further degradation in Iraq and in the entire region.

[Organizations listed for identification purposes only, except as otherwise indicated]

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- 3) Mozghan Savabieasfahani, Environmental Toxicologist; Tehran, Iran.

- 4) Saeed Dastgiri, Director of Tabriz Registry of Congenital Anomalies; and Professor of Epidemiology, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences; Tabriz, Iran.
- 5) Azadeh Shahshahani, President of the National Lawyers Guild; U.S.A.
- 6) As`ad AbuKhalil, Professor, Dept. of Politics, California State University, Stanislaus; U.S.A.
- 7) Maged Agour MD, Consultant Psychiatrist, U.K.
- 8) A Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Chair of the Department of International Development Studies, Trent University; Canada.
- 9) Izzeldin Abuelaish, Associate Professor of Global Health, University of Toronto; Canada.
- 10) Riad Bacho, Associate Professor, Lebanese University; Beirut, Lebanon.
- 11) Carl Bloice, journalist, Editorial Board, BlackCommentator.com; U.S.A.
- 12) Haim Bresheeth, Professor of Film Studies, filmmaker, photographer, University of East London; U.K.
- 13) Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Rutgers University, New Brunswick; U.S.A.
- 14) Noam Chomsky, Professor of Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; U.S.A.
- 15) Blaine Coleman, Human rights activist and attorney, U.S.A.
- 16) Michael Collins, Professor, UCLA School of Public Health, Department of Molecular Toxicology, Environmental Health Sciences, Los Angeles, U.S.A.
- 17) David Cromwell, Co-Editor, Media Lens, U.K.
- 18) Robert T Curtis, Professor of Combinatorial Algebra, School of Mathematics, University of Birmingham; U.K.
- 19) Tom Davis, Chief Program Officer, Food for the Hungry; U.S.A.
- 20) Jean Drèze, Honorary Professor, Delhi School of Economics, India.
- 21) Peter Eglin, Department of Sociology, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada.
- 22) Christo El Morr, Assistant Professor of Health Informatics, York University, Canada.

- 23) James H. Fetzer, McKnight Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota, U.S.A.
- 24) Gavin Fridell, Canada Research Chair in International Development Studies, Saint Mary's University, Canada.
- 25) Irene Gendzier, Professor, Dept of Political Science, Boston University, U.S.A.
- 26) Jess Ghannam, Professor, Department of Psychiatry, and Global Health Sciences University of California, San Francisco, U.S.A.
- 27) Colin Green, Professor of Surgery, University College London; U.K.
- 28) Prof. David Ingleby, Centre for Social Science and Global Health, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- 29) Kazuko Ito, Secretary General, signing on behalf of *Human Rights Now*, Japan.
- 30) Jon Jureidini, Child Psychiatrist, Department of Psychological Medicine, Women's and Children's Hospital, Adelaide; and Professor, Disciplines of Psychiatry & Paediatrics, University of Adelaide; and Senior Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, Flinders University; South Australia.
- 31) Ilan Kapoor, Professor, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, Toronto, Canada.
- 32) Leili Kashani, Human rights activist, Center for Constitutional Rights; U.S.A.
- 33) Michael Keefer, Professor Emeritus, School of English and Theatre Studies, University of Guelph; Guelph, Canada.
- 34) Imad Khadduri, Iraqi nuclear scientist; U.K.
- 35) David Klein, Professor of Mathematics, California State University, Northridge, U.S.A.
- 36) Mustafa Koc, Professor, Department of Sociology and Centre for Studies in Food Security, Ryerson University; Toronto, Canada.
- 37) Hans Koechler, Professor and Chair of Political Philosophy and Philosophical Anthropology, University of Innsbruck; and President of the International Progress Organization, Vienna, Austria.
- 38) Richard Levins, John Rock Professor of Population Sciences, Department of Global Health and Population, Harvard School of Public Health; Boston, U.S.A.

- 39) Malcolm Levitt, School of Chemistry, University of Southampton, U.K.
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- 41) Ken Loach, television and film director; U.K.
- 42) Moshe Machover, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, King's College; London, U.K.
- 43) Arthur MacEwan, Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Massachusetts; Boston, U.S.A.
- 44) Mary Anne Mercer, DrPH, Senior Mother & Child Health Advisor, on behalf of *Health Alliance International* Seattle, U.S.A.
- 45) David Nicholl, MD, Consultant Neurologist, Birmingham, U.K.
- 46) David Ozonoff, Professor of Environmental Health, Boston University; Boston, U.S.A.
- 47) David Peterson, Chicago-based writer and researcher; U.S.A.
- 48) Mr. John Pilger, journalist and film director; U.K.
- 49) Elaine Power, Associate Professor, School of Kinesiology and Health Studies, Queen's University Kingston, Canada.
- 50) Rush Rehm, Professor, Drama and Classics, Stanford University, U.S.A.
- 51) Hilary Rose, Professor of Social Policy, University of Bradford; and Emerita Professor of Genetics and Society, Gresham College, London; and former consultant to the WHO Copenhagen, Denmark.
- 52) Steven Rose, Emeritus Professor of Biology (neuroscience), Department of Life Health and Chemical Sciences, The Open University, Milton Keynes (UK); Emeritus Professor of Physick (Genetics and Society), Gresham College London.
- 53) Jonathan Rosenhead, Emeritus Professor of Operational Research, London School of Economics; U.K.
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- 55) Susanne Soederberg, Professor of Global Development Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario; Canada.

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