

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **Attacks on Aid Workers on the Increase**

#### **Irish aid agencies use World Humanitarian Day (19 August) to highlight dangers to aid workers**

Six years ago, on 19 August 2003, the United Nations Office in Iraq was bombed and 22 people lost their lives - among them was Sergio Vieira de Mello, at that time the UN's Special Representative to Iraq.

In order to honour aid workers who have lost their lives, and to increase public understanding of humanitarian assistance activities worldwide, the UN General Assembly designated 19 August as World Humanitarian Day.

“Clearly, as aid workers, our first concern is to bring life saving assistance to people and communities in need. However, in recent years, aid agencies have had to cope with increasing dangers for their own staff. Last year, there were some 270 deliberate attacks on aid workers around the world, and increasingly, these attacks seem to be politically motivated” said Hans Zomer, of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Irish aid agencies.

A recent report by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in the UK found that an average of 95 aid workers were killed in each of the past three years, up from an average of about 66 each year between 2003 and 2006. The rate of kidnappings of aid workers has accelerated even more quickly, from about 18 a year between 2003 and 2006, to about 57 a year for the past three years.

“Ireland has a proud tradition of helping the victims of disasters, war and famine. And as can be seen from our website [www.HowYouCanHelp.ie](http://www.HowYouCanHelp.ie), our ability to respond rapidly, effectively and predictably to crises has improved beyond all recognition in the last 20 years. This is due largely to the dedication of the many thousands of aid workers who have devoted their lives to humanitarian work. And it is due to the generous support of the people in Ireland, who continue to provide massive support for the work of Irish aid agencies – Support that is needed now more than ever” stated Zomer.

**Notes for the Editors**

- Dóchas has a special website with information on humanitarian aid: [www.HowYouCanHelp.ie](http://www.HowYouCanHelp.ie)
- The ODI report, entitled “Providing aid in insecure environments” is available at <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/3250.pdf>
- More information about World Humanitarian Day is available at <http://ochaonline.un.org/News/WorldHumanitarianDay/tabid/5677/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

For further information, see [www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie) and [www.HowYouCanHelp.ie](http://www.HowYouCanHelp.ie)

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**Dóchas** is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 44 members, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: [www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie)

#### **Dóchas Member Agencies**

1. ActionAid Ireland
2. Action from Ireland
3. Africa Centre
4. Aidlink
5. Amnesty International-Irish Section
6. Bóthar
7. Camara
8. Centre for Global Education
9. ChildFund Ireland
10. Children in Crossfire
11. Christian Aid Ireland
12. Christian Blind Mission Ireland
13. Church Mission Society Ireland
14. Comhlámh
15. Concern Worldwide
16. Friends of Londiani (Ireland)
17. Galway One World Centre
18. Gorta

19. International Service Ireland
20. Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation
21. Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs
22. Irish Council for International Students
23. Irish Family Planning Association
24. Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development
25. Irish Missionary Union
26. Irish Red Cross
27. Kerry Action for Development Education
28. National Youth Council of Ireland
29. Oxfam Ireland
30. Plan Ireland
31. Progressio Ireland
32. Self Help Africa
33. SightSavers International
34. Skillshare International Ireland
35. Suas Educational Development
36. The Hope Foundation
37. Trócaire
38. Vita
39. Voluntary Service International
40. Voluntary Service Overseas
41. Volunteer Missionary Movement
42. War on Want Northern Ireland
43. Wingspread International
44. World Vision Ireland