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SOAS, University of London

Abstract of paper to be presented at the conference.

For details of the conference programme go to www.iraqistudies.org

Speaker: Philip Marfleet, University of East London

Title: 'Unmixing' Iraq: migrants and the state

Abstract:

The Iraqi state has been "in reconstruction" since 2003, largely on the basis of economic and political principles imposed by the Coalition Provisional Authority and by successive governments. These have profound implications for security of the population and for patterns of human movement. In the new environment, mass migration "unmixes" communities which hitherto had a heterogeneous ethno-religious character. Insecurity has compelled millions of people to flee to areas in which their socio-cultural identity is consistent with that of the majority population; at the same time, both national and local authorities have inhibited such movements, with the result that migrants are excluded from desired regions of refuge; denied housing, education and food rations; and/or marooned en route in places of danger. In addition, it has become clear that shared ethnic identity is no guarantee of security.

This paper looks at contradictions inherent in the new state structures. It examines demographic implications of confessionalism, including the creation of large insecure populations in which many people are under continuing pressure to join Iraqis who have crossed already national borders, becoming refugees "proper".