

“Post-ISIS Ninewa: The European Response”

European Parliament, Brussels

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Statement of the Chair

Representatives of the Government of Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government, the United Nations, European Union institutions, EU member states, members of the European and Iraqi Parliaments and Iraqi and international civil society organizations gathered to discuss options for Ninewa Governorate and other retaken areas in the aftermath of ISIS expulsion from Iraqi territory. Recognizing the heroic actions of Iraqi security forces and coalition support to retake ISIS-held areas, the conference took place to coincide with the liberation of Mosul. The conference was organized drawing on the Action Plan presented in September 2015 at the International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East convened in Paris.

Participants discussed the following three groups of issues surrounding Post-ISIS Ninewa and other retaken areas:

- How to support affected populations and facilitate durable solutions for those affected, including humanitarian, reconstruction, and post-conflict stabilization efforts;
- Fighting impunity and ensuring justice; and
- Preserving the diversity and plurality of Ninewa and the surrounding region for the future.

The Co-Chairs are pleased to endorse the recently released “Madrid Priorities for Action” as developed in the 24 May Madrid follow-up conference to the 2015 Paris conference. The Co-Chairs are also pleased to summarize discussions and make the following recommendations for this Brussels event:

1. *There is a clear need to ensure that returns to retaken areas are dignified, safe and voluntary, which may involve the establishment of secure areas.* The Iraqi Authorities (including the Kurdish Regional Government), the European Union, United Nations and other supporting governments should develop or enhance current plans to provide a framework for returns that includes the following elements:

- Define security arrangements in affected areas, working to ensure that security forces are accepted by local populations, and share this information with those seeking to return.
- Develop timetables to re-start basic services and rehabilitate public infrastructure and private housing which has been destroyed, and present budgeted plans for doing so at an international reconstruction conference.
- Implement a comprehensive strategy to support returns, including clear sources of funding, and infrastructure needs assessments.
- Ensure that the people of retaken areas have the right to determine their political and security future.
- Support demining efforts in retaken areas.
- Facilitate community-based reconciliation mechanisms to enable those who fled their homes and those who remained to reintegrate, and to mediate disputes between tribes, militias and returning populations to avoid revenge, forced or denied return and renewed displacement.
- Facilitate and accelerate efforts to expand strong and inclusive local governance representing communities of those who were forced to flee ISIS.
- Develop and implement plans for reintegration of Popular Mobilization Units into Iraqi armed forces, as directed by Iraqi law.

2. *Ensure freedom of movement for people and relief and reconstruction assistance in retaken areas.*

3. *Accountability for crimes is a critical part of the Post-ISIS era.* The Iraqi authorities (including the KRG) understand that reconciliation can only be successful when justice is established. It will work with the international community to bring all criminals and terrorists to justice, and asks for international action against perpetrators of genocide and other violations of international criminal and humanitarian law.

The Iraqi government recognizes the need to develop a national strategy to address violations of international humanitarian and criminal law for all perpetrators, and identify appropriate international and domestic resources. Because ISIS is a global phenomenon that requires a global response, the United Nations should also have a leading role. This strategy should:

- Include broad national consultation on judicial and non-judicial approaches to accountability.
- Ensure the protection of mass graves and other crime scenes in retaken areas.
- Collect, aggregate and analyse accounts of human rights and international humanitarian and criminal law violations to document crimes. Take steps to preserve evidence and exhume and identify remains.
- Build a responsive legal framework and capacity for domestic and international prosecutions, through ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and other domestic and international measures.
- Provide families and communities with appropriate information and assistance, including establishing a national missing persons registry.
- The European Union should collectively ensure the funding and implementation of an accountability mechanism to collect, preserve and analyse evidence of atrocity crimes and to prepare files to facilitate and expedite criminal proceedings.

4. *Iraq will protect its diversity.* We urge the Government of Iraq to honour its Constitution and respond to the needs of Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities by promulgating and implementing legislation and take other measures to safeguard religious and other rights as citizens, including possible establishment of special decentralization arrangements to better protect Iraqi components.

5. *Responding to the humanitarian crisis is an immediate priority.* On an urgent basis, we call on Iraqi authorities (including the KRG) to provide life-saving assistance to all persons in need and call upon donors to fully fund the Humanitarian Response Plan prepared by the UN and its partners. We urge the European Union, member states and the international community to continue their essential support to Iraqi authorities (including the KRG) as the situation progresses to the post-ISIS phase.

6. *Reconstruction should be accelerated where possible.* We urge Iraqi authorities (including the KRG) and international community to accelerate support for reconstruction to ensure that the gains made during stabilization are not lost.

7. *Efforts should be focused on protecting the most vulnerable.* We call on Iraqi authorities (including the KRG), EU institutions and member states to prioritize humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for those most vulnerable, including minority groups, women and children based on assessed needs. This assistance should include psychosocial support for women and children affected by the conflict.

We urge Iraqi authorities (including the KRG), European Union institutions, member states, the European Parliament, the United Nations and other supporting governments to consider and implement these conclusions and recommendations, including support for the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization and working for a diplomatic solution to political and security issues in retaken areas. In particular, we urge that European Union mechanisms and resources should be channelled to support implementation of these recommendations.