

UN 8th session Forum on "Minority in criminal justice system"

Agenda item 4: Challenges of criminal justice system in addressing the needs and demands of minorities

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates:

I am representing the Assyrian people, one of the ancient nations living in Iraq. We have been persecuted and discriminated constantly throughout history.

Since 2003 many crimes were committed against us because of our identity, including kidnappings and killings, but the criminal justice system failed to identify or punish the perpetrators. As a result, a significant migration happened in the last 12 years decreasing our population from 1 200 000 to 400 000 – or even less. When ISIS attacked parts of Iraq in 2014, the situation became even worse; the Assyrians/Christians and other minorities like Yazidis faced serious crimes against humanity such as widespread killings and ethnic cleansing leading to even more people being uprooted from their lands.

Unfortunately, the government failed not only to protect affected minority communities but also to investigate, identify and bring to justice the military leaders and the politicians involved in this failure which led to these horrific crimes.

In order to prevent future crimes and protect the existence of Assyrians and other minorities in Iraq, it is extremely important to address impunity. The recapture of Sinjar and few villages now opens up a critical opportunity to ensure that justice is done. In order to be able to bring those responsible to justice, it is imperative to establish a police presence in the recaptured areas as soon as possible and ensure that these crimes are properly investigated and evidence is properly secured.

The Iraqi government must pave the way for a future where trust, tolerance and love exist among the different communities so that they can live together peacefully. This requires that crimes committed against minorities are investigated and prosecuted and that all communities, including minority communities are treated equally, including being treated equally in the criminal justice system. Therefore, it is important to include recommendations 14, 16, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33 and 45 in the final document.

Thank you for your attention

Seham Vacek

