



Human Rights Office
United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق (يونامي)



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Forum on Minority Issues

Fourteenth session “Conflict Prevention and the Protection of the Human Rights of Minorities”

Geneva, 2nd – 3rd December 2021

Agenda Item 4

Intervention by: Mikhael Benjamin – Senior Minority Fellow (HRO – UNAMI)

Dear Madam Chairperson, I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak at today's forum.

My name is Mikhael Benjamin. In recent years, I addressed you in my capacity working for the Nineveh Center for Minority Rights. This year, I was given the opportunity to complete an assignment as a Senior Minority Fellow, placed with the Ninewa Human Rights Office at the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq - UNAMI. Ten days from today, I will complete one full year of being a member of this great program, and I am thankful to the OHCHR and UNAMI for giving me this opportunity.

The governorate of Ninewa is home of many of Iraq's ethno-religious and linguistic minorities. The respect for minority rights serves as an early warning indicator not only for Ninewa, but for the whole of Iraq and its neighbors.

One of the main topics of my assignment was to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Sinjar.

Why Sinjar? Sinjar, which is placed in Ninewa, Northwest of Iraq, forms the historical homeland for the Yazidi community, as well as other minorities. Also, the topic of this session, “Focusing on the rights of minorities and effective early prevention of conflicts” is very relevant for the situation in this region.

Today, six years has passed since Sinjar was liberated from the scourge of Daesh, also known as ISIL. Moreover, over a year has passed since the adoption of the “Sinjar Agreement”, signed by the federal government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, under the auspices of UNAMI, aiming for stability, reconstruction, and reconciliation.

However, some provisions of the agreement, such as the full withdrawal of all armed actors and their replacement with Iraqi federal forces and local police, have not yet been fully implemented. Additionally, progress on administrative and reconstruction provisions have also been limited, and much more needs to be done.

More importantly, the reality of long-standing grievances, as a result of the crimes committed by ISIL, need to be addressed in order to avoid further tensions and the fueling of conflict dynamics in the region. I also want to highlight the adoption of the Yazidi Survivors' Law in March 2021, providing measures of



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reparation, rehabilitation, and reintegration for survivors of abductions and other crimes committed by ISIL, including sexual violence, against the Yazidi, Turkmen, Christian, and Shabak communities.

If effectively implemented, these documents have the potential of becoming model practices in conflict prevention. However, for this to be successful, minorities must be included in the implementation of these documents. Furthermore, ensuring the rights of minority women and girls in post-conflict situations is of paramount importance as they are particularly vulnerable and play a significant role in contributing to the prevention of conflict and its non-recurrence.

Next to the involvement of all minorities in the drafting and implementation of relevant laws, policies and procedures, special attention needs to be given to minority concerns regarding land and property disputes. This is particularly important to ensure peaceful co-existence and successful reintegration of the Iraqi people to their areas of origin after the liberation from ISIL.

Finally, the lack of accountability to minorities' full enjoyment of human rights needs to be addressed to efficiently activate the recovery of the district. In conclusion, the respect for minority rights forms a critical component in the early prevention of conflict.