

Panel 1 - Better Normative Frameworks and Mainstreaming the Declaration

Thank you Chair - Geneva International Centre for Justice - advocating on behalf of minority groups in Iraq

GICJ has just concluded Phase 2 of a training project working with Civil Society Organisations in different regions of Iraq exploring how the human rights enjoyed by minorities can be protected given the fragile security and lack of true democratic governance in Iraq.

Despite the challenges those in our network are invigorated by the possibility of engaging UN mechanisms - treaty body mechanisms or working groups where they are the only facet of the UN system where they see activity in their own country - for example we organised just last week, a meeting with a delegation the Committee of Enforced Disappearances during a country visit and have direct avenue to file Urgent Actions and complaints on the international plane.

It speaks to a greater trust of the international mechanisms - to achieve a measure of justice and accountability that is all but impossible domestically.

When there is rule by force through armed militias exercising state power the space for rule of law-backed concepts diminishes.

We would like to explore the options of a binding treaty, particularly where they can be effective in supplementing existing mechanisms and where it can draw states into compliance with their broader international law obligations not to devolve/cede power or responsibility to unregulated and unchecked militias as has regrettably continued in Iraq.

As for what a more effective normative framework looks like, nothing will change unless and until human rights are embedded at the heart of every decision, every policy, every practice.

[if time insert comment about a key point made by a panellist]

The rare examples of minorities having equal participation in a society are convergent with the local polity adopting such a human rights approach.

Specific, tangible human rights considerations must displace vague notions of public order or security in the motivation for states' decisions.

Geneva International Centre for Justice urges all governments, and in particular the government Iraq, to take a human rights approach to ensuring proper governance and protection of minority peoples in Iraq.

Thank you