



Forum on Minority Issues

Preventing conflicts and protecting the human rights of minorities

2-3 December 2021

Intervention

Item 5 of the agenda

- Arabic -

Intervention by Adessa Fedor Hanna - Nineveh Center for Minority Rights / Iraq

Mrs. President- Thank you for the opportunity

The Assyrian-Christian minority, one of the oldest indigenous peoples in Iraq, faces serious challenges today that affect their existence, the land and the Assyrian identity. There are several factors contributing to this threat, but the tax paid by the Assyrian people, and their suffering due to internal, regional and even ongoing international conflicts may be the most critical ones.

It is sufficient for us to look at the geography of the city in which I live, the city of Dohuk (Nohadra), where until the 1960s there were more than 250 Assyrian villages, of which today there are only 90 sites left! Where did these communities go and why? These communities were forced to move within the borders of the country once, twice and five times, but the unrest, the conflicts and the lack of rule of law continued, so the only option available was to emigrate abroad for the last time.

In Nineveh Plains, within Nineveh Governorate, the historical city of the Assyrians, more than 130,000 Assyrians lived until mid-2014, but the ISIS attack uprooted them and forced them to migrate internally, and less than 50% of individuals who had been displaced for more than three years returned after the regions had been freed. Before ISIS invaded, 1,200 Assyrian families lived in Tel Kaif, a city north of Mosul (the heart of Nineveh), and only around 50 of those families have since moved back.

Conflicts are almost often the root of problems, therefore avoiding them is the greatest method to safeguard minority' survival and rights while also establishing sustainable peace in the whole region. In this regard, we recommend the following:

To the newly elected Iraqi parliament:

- 1. Pass the Law on the Protection of Minority Rights and Diversity, pursuant to Article 125 of the Constitution, and as per the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review for Iraq in 2018.**
- 2. Enact a special law to protect the rights of indigenous peoples, and consider Assyrians among as indigenous peoples in Iraq, thus ensuring their rights to protect their traditional and historic lands.**

To the Kurdistan Region Parliament:

- 3. Make and operationalize the required amendments to Law No. 5 of 2015, especially with regard to dealing with demographic change.**

Thank you for listening