



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Concerns about the non-renewal of UNITAD's mandate in Iraq

Iraq, 12 September 2023

We, the undersigned organizations, have been made aware of highly concerning news that the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL's (UNITAD) mandate may not be renewed in Iraq beyond September 2024.

UNITAD was mandated pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2379 to collect, preserve, and store evidence of ISIL crimes in Iraq in line with the highest possible standards. UNITAD was established following the tireless advocacy of survivors and several of the undersigned organizations, and in response to the scale of ISIL crimes. This advocacy was aiming to ensure that evidence of ISIL crimes would not get lost until a holistic strategy from both Iraq and the international community would be in place to address ISIL crimes. This has yet to happen.

UNITAD began operating in Iraq in the fall of 2018 and has in the past five years made significant progress including collecting thousands of pieces of evidence, interviewing survivors from all Iraqi communities, supporting national prosecutions in third countries, and substantially supporting exhumations of mass graves all over the country. UNITAD has also strengthened the capacity of Iraqi authorities and Iraqi civil society, including some of the undersigned organizations.

Many survivors and the undersigned organizations see UNITAD as the only hope to achieve meaningful justice in Iraq. For its work to stop so abruptly, when not a single ISIL member has been tried in Iraq for core international crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes), would be a disaster for survivors, Iraq, and the international community. It would send the signal that justice is not a real priority, that trust with survivors was built for nothing and that their testimonies and continuous calls for justice were in vain.

This news is all the more alarming since Iraq currently has no legal framework in place to use UNITAD's evidence and also has no experience prosecuting international crimes. Furthermore, Iraq has not communicated any plan or strategy on how it is planning to move this process forward without UNITAD's expertise. Nor has Iraq recognized the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court or responded to detailed proposals submitted by survivor groups to establish a hybrid tribunal to prosecute ISIL members for international crimes.

For the reasons above, UNITAD must continue to operate because Iraq alone is currently not in a position to achieve meaningful justice for survivors. Survivors have also repeatedly highlighted that they would not trust a purely national process and called for appropriate international involvement.

We, the undersigned organizations, call upon Iraq, the UN Security Council, and the international community to:

- Renew UNITAD's mandate beyond September 2024 and as long as it is needed.
- Prepare a strategy to prosecute ISIL crimes holistically both in Iraq and other jurisdictions.
- Support Iraq in adopting a legal framework to prosecute core international crimes and to establish a survivor-centered mechanism which would allow for such prosecutions.
- Ensure that UNITAD supports Iraq in the prosecution of ISIL crimes in Iraq until Iraq is able to follow fair trial rights and implement a survivor-centered mechanism.

Undersigned organizations:

1. Air Bridge Iraq (Germany)
2. All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Yazidis (UK)
3. Bassma NGO (Iraq)
4. Better World (Iraq)
5. Center for Victims of Torture
6. Coalition for Genocide Response (UK)
7. DAK Organization for Ezidi Women Development (Iraq)
8. Eyzidi Organization For Documentation (Iraq)
9. Ezidi Millennium Organization for Development (Iraq)
10. Farida Global Organization (Germany and Iraq)
11. Fight For Humanity (Switzerland)
12. Free Yezidi Foundation (Iraq and USA)
13. Gazi Organization for Civilian Activities (Iraq)
14. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (USA)
15. Harikar (Iraq)
16. HÁWAR.help (Germany)
17. Hope Givers (Iraq) - Network of Yazidi male survivors
18. Hope Maker's Organization for Women (Iraq)
19. House of Coexistence (Iraq)
20. Inhalation of Hope Organization (Iraq)
21. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (UK)
22. International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims
23. Jinda Organization (Iraq)
24. Jiyan Foundation For Human Rights (Iraq and Germany)
25. JOMR (Iraq)
26. Nadia's Initiative (Iraq and USA)
27. Nasem Sinjar Organization for the Care of People With Special Needs (Iraq)
28. NL Helpt Yezidis (The Netherlands)
29. Nuhanovic Foundation (The Netherlands)
30. Office of Yazidi Affairs (Germany)
31. Petrichor Organization for Human Rights (Iraq)
32. Religious Freedom Institute

33. Shingal Engineering Organization (Iraq)
34. Sinjar Academy (USA and Iraq)
35. Sunrise Organization for Civil Society Development (Iraq)
36. Sustainable Peace Foundation (Iraq)
37. Tomooh Organization for Development (Iraq)
38. Turkmen Rescue Foundation (Iraq)
39. Voice of Ezidis (France)
40. We Are With You (Iraq)
41. WOLA Organization (Iraq)
42. Yazda (Iraq and USA)
43. Yazidi Legal Network (The Netherlands)
44. Yazidi Survivors Network (Iraq) - Network of Yazidi female survivors
45. Zentralrat der Êzîiden in Deutschland e.V. (Germany)

This statement is open for further endorsements, please send your request to:

Natia Navrouzov, Legal Advocacy Director : natia.navrouzov@yazda.org