

Ninth UN Minority Forum
"Minorities in situations of humanitarian crises"

Agenda Item 5, Recovering from a crisis: ensuring durable solutions

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk on behalf of the Christian minority of Iraq represented by Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriac, who come from the same ethnic and cultural background.

This important community in Iraq is facing many difficult challenges after having been uprooted from its ancestors' lands through the ongoing humanitarian crisis since June 2014 when ISIS took control of Mosul and other areas in the Nineveh plain, forcing about 200 000 Christians to flee. The situation is even worse for other minorities like Yazidis who have lost thousands of their people.

After over 2 years' displacement and losing hope to return back to their places of origin, many belonging to these minorities are seeking safe refuge in other countries through migration. Their future is a serious matter of concern.

Therefore, it is urgent to have a post-crisis plan for Mosul and the Nineveh plain to ensure sustainable peace and to assure minorities that they can return to their lands and live in peace with other neighboring majorities.

It is recommended to have immediate solutions to provide basic services in the liberated areas for the returnees who lost their loved ones, homes, livelihood resources, and their cultural and holy places. These services should be done through coordination with the United Nations, the Iraqi government and other local and International NGOs to rebuild public services and damaged houses, as well as providing economic, medical and psychosocial support.

It is also important to have long term solutions; the following actions have to be taken to solve the causes of the crises:

- It is imperative to educate the society on tolerance and acceptance of others despite differences, through the school curriculum, positive use of media and public debates, and through peace building projects to remove the extremist ideology from the different communities of Iraq.
- We urge the Iraqi government to uphold the law, and bring perpetrators to justice; this will comfort and dignify the victims when justice is implemented.
- The Iraqi government should also adopt a law that bans any kind of violence and criminalizes hate speech.
- The international community has to urge the Iraqi government to protect minorities and respect their rights in accordance with the Human Rights conventions that Iraq has ratified.

Despite all the mentioned difficulties, we still believe there is a future for our communities in our homeland, so let's keep the hope alive and enable minorities to live in peace and prosperity with the others.

Thank you.

Suham Vacek