

## CONFERENCE

### “Post-ISIS Ninewa: The European Response”

*Hosted by MEP Ana Gomes and Elmar Brok*

*Organised by the Institute for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR), the Multinational Development Policy Dialogue of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation (UNPO), and Minority Rights Group International (MRG)*

**European Parliament, Brussels, room ASP 1G2  
6 June 2017, 14:00-18:00**

#### Background

The military operation to retake Mosul and remaining occupied areas in Ninewa governorate from ISIS is now in its sixth month. Several important questions still remain: the ultimate timing and success of the military campaign, the size and scope of further displacement of the population, and the conditions the affected population will encounter after liberation.

Many thousands of persons belonging to Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities have been murdered, maimed or abducted, including unknown numbers of women and girls forced into marriage or sexual enslavement, after the fall of Mosul in June 2014. According to international rights organisations, the Christian population, which before 2003 numbered as many as 1.4 million, is now under 250,000. Most of the Yezidi and Kaka'i have been forced from their traditional lands and are now internally displaced or have fled the country altogether, whilst Shi'a Turkmen and Shabak have been driven to the south.

A vacuum in planning for the post-ISIS era still persists. Post-ISIS planning in many respects has been subordinated to the need to keep anti-ISIS factions together, and there still appears to be no comprehensive Iraqi or international effort to build the political, social and economic conditions for the sustainable return of those who lost homes and livelihoods as a result of the conflict. Militias and unscrupulous local and regional authorities are exploiting this vacuum.

Fighting to liberate Ninewa and planning for the peace are not mutually exclusive. Thoughtful and realistic planning – with identification of financial and other resources – should accelerate in the post-ISIS era, including gaining agreement on the establishment of security to allow for the return of the displaced to their original homes and lands. International officials in Baghdad and Iraqis themselves say this is not happening and the weight of planning remains on the military campaign.

## **Objectives**

Holding a conference on 6 June 2017 in Brussels will be an opportune time to discuss a stronger European response – both in terms of resources and policy - to these difficult issues. This conference will draw from prior efforts such as the International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, held in Paris in September 2015. The Spanish Foreign Ministry is planning to send a representative to update participants on the results of a Madrid Follow up Conference, to be held 24 May.

This date will also coincide with the third anniversary of the fall of Mosul and will be an ideal juncture to review progress. By June the international community will likely be in a position to assess the post-ISIS landscape, and the issue likely will be high profile and covered extensively in the media. Meanwhile, pressure from the ongoing refugee and migration crisis will continue to impact the bloc of 27.

This conference will achieve the following three objectives: (1) enhance European and international awareness of the situation facing Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities in post-ISIS Ninewa, (2) provide a platform for minorities, vulnerable groups, other displaced affected by the conflict, and Iraqi political leaders and (3) building on the Paris Action Plan of September 2015, follow up on and further identify concrete European Union, EU member states and international measures that can encourage sustainable returns and international action, and build the basis for a durable peace in Ninewa and other liberated areas.

## **Structure and Expected Outcomes**

The discussions will be organised along three main areas, drawn from the three-part structure of the Paris Action Plan. These issues will focus on both portraying the Iraqi reality away from the headlines and developing practical European responses. These areas include:

- Supporting affected populations and facilitating durable solutions for those affected, including humanitarian, reconstruction, and post-conflict stabilization efforts;
- Fighting impunity and ensuring justice, including international and Iraqi efforts to document and prosecute crimes; and
- Preserving the diversity and plurality of Ninewa and the surrounding region, including short and long term security arrangements, legitimate and inclusive political processes, reconciliation processes, and safeguarding cultural heritage.

The main expected outcomes will include the following:

- Enhancing European and international understanding of the political and security situation in post-ISIS liberated areas, and facilitating information sharing and collaboration among civil society organizations, Iraqi leaders, and other implementers;
- EU and member state identification of resources and policy options that can be part of an enhanced European response;
- Assessing implementation of Paris Action Plan goals, and better focusing the European and international response on the way forward; and
- Providing a platform for Iraq's minority and government leaders to make their own case to Europe and the international community.