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Muslim Charities Forum

## An Urgent Call to Stop the Horrific Suffering in Iraq

The humanitarian situation in northern and western parts of Iraq is dire. The untold suffering of minority groups as a result of escalating violence and attacks is unacceptable and the violation of international human rights and humanitarian laws is despicable. This must be stopped immediately. There are reports of gross human rights violations, especially committed against women and children, which could amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As international faith based humanitarian and development organisations and networks, we are utterly shocked at the horrific wave of attacks that has so far led to the killing of many and left hundreds of thousands more homeless, desperate and in flight. We are further concerned and saddened by the many cases of kidnapping and hostage-taking of people, including women and children.

We call for international pressure at all levels of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, and from people, governments and institutions of goodwill, to urgently and adequately address the situation in Iraq.

Since the beginning of the year, around 1.2 million people are reported to be displaced following violence and insecurity. Armed groups have taken control of large swathes of territory accompanied by local fighting and displacement. We are appealing for immediate action for the protection of all people, including Yazidis, Christians, Turkmen and other persecuted groups, hundreds of thousands of whom have fled in fear for their lives. The minorities are not strangers or alien to the land, they are important groups firmly rooted in the origin of Iraq and have defined the identity of the country, and have the right to be full citizens in their land. Their homes, their land, historic and cultural sites are connected to their heritage and lives. We are gravely concerned about their exposure to more loss, attacks, rape and other violations.

While taking cognizance of the United Nations Security Council's resolutions 2169 and 2170, we call on the council and all UN members States to take all possible peaceful measures to prevent killings and other forms of violence based on religious grounds, or framed as such, and to protect the fundamental right to life and freedom of religion and worship of the Yazidis, Christians and other minority groups as well as all Iraqis, regardless of their background.

All of the people affected by this crisis and in need of humanitarian assistance must be reached without delay with life-saving assistance such as water, food and non-food items. Besides the violence, people are in danger of more suffering and even death resulting from hunger and lack of water.

We call for a proactive search for lasting solution for peace, reconciliation and justice for all in the region. Iraq is divided and suffers many difficult challenges politically, economically and socially. Peace and reconciliation is critical and dialogue within the country is of utmost importance in order to bring about a lasting resolution to this humanitarian crisis. We believe that the crisis in Iraq exemplifies the challenges that affect men, women, youth and children in the Middle East region, and therefore call for a human rights based comprehensive long-term approach to addressing them.

The protection of civilians must be prioritised by the international community. We call for strict application of international law in all interventions that deal with the crisis in Iraq and call on all States to ensure that any measures taken are in conformity with international human rights and humanitarian law.

We pledge our solidarity and commitment to support and to continue providing humanitarian assistance to all the people affected by this crisis. Our interventions strictly adhere to humanitarian principles targeting refugees and all internally displaced persons in need, without discrimination or partiality.

***This statement is endorsed by the following:***

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Rev. Martin Junge, General Secretary, The Lutheran World Federation

Christine Housel, General Secretary, World Student Christian Federation

Charles Badenoch, Vice-president of Advocacy and Justice for Children, World Vision International

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