



Approved

STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRAQ

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Amman, Jordan, 17-23 November 2017, recalls the recent developments in Iraq affecting the prospects for sustaining religious and social diversity in Iraq, and the future of the nation and its peoples.

The recapture of the Nineveh plains, Mosul and other areas removed the extremist so-called 'Islamic State' from the region. This restored some hope in the hearts of members of displaced communities, including Christians, of a return to their homes in the liberated areas. However, it has come at a great and tragic cost in lives, destruction of property and infrastructure, bringing new challenges for restoration of the affected communities and for promoting social and religious cohesion in Iraq.

More recently, the political and military confrontation following the referendum on independence conducted in the Kurdish region has added another major challenge to the search for a peaceful, just and sustainable future for Iraq and its peoples.

The executive committee notes that the vast majority of Christians remaining in Iraq are now located in the northern region of Iraq.

The executive committee:

- Calls on the political leadership of the Federal Government of Iraq and of the Kurdistan Regional Government to engage in dialogue and negotiations to resolve the current crisis, and to avoid any further conflict in a region that has known far too much violence and suffering.
- Urges the Iraqi authorities to ensure that the homes and businesses of those displaced are restored to them.
- Appeals to the international community – particularly those countries involved in the 2003 invasion of Iraq – to support urgently and generously the reconstruction of infrastructure and of communities (including through psycho-social trauma healing programmes) and initiatives to promote social and religious cohesion in Iraq, including addressing the particular vulnerabilities of religious minority communities.

The WCC is committed to continuing and increasing its efforts to develop programmes and financial resources to follow up on the observations of the WCC-led high-level church leaders' delegation to Iraq in January 2017, particularly promoting inter-religious dialogue and cooperation initiatives for social and religious cohesion, and support for Christians and other affected religious minorities in Iraq.