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The Protection Needs of Minorities from Syria and Iraq, Report Presentation





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«The wars in Syria and Iraq have caused immense suffering, and religious minorities have been particularly badly hit. These groups need our help. Norway is therefore increasing its support for vulnerable groups such as Christians and other religious minorities in Syria and Iraq,» said Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende





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The study

- Desk study, primary and secondary sources
- 3 surveys (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq) + 44 Focus Groups (Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Norway) + Interviews, more than 4000 Syrians and Iraqis (56% men, 44% women)
- Local partners
- Expert papers on conflict dynamics and security
- Quality assurance mechanism



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The concept of minorities

«Minority could indicate second-class citizens. But internationally it is accepted, and there are laws within the UN system regarding the rights of minorities, thus it is all right to use the term.»

Male Shaback Representative, Erbil,
Kurdistan region, Iraq, September 2016.



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Impact of the crisis

- All Syrians and Iraqis are affected
- Minorities among the most vulnerable groups
- Yezidis around Sinjar
- Assyrians from Al-Hasakah



Displacement and communal tension

- IS brutality
- Displacement
- Intercommunal tension and violence
- Removal of IS alone will not secure return
- Push and pull factors



Overthrow of IS and power struggles

- Set in motion power struggle
- Unresolved issues of disputed territories
- Internal politicking
- Exacerbates difficulties of return and lasting solutions for minorities



Impact of conflict dynamics

- Minorities are targeted and affected in different ways
- Women, men, boys and girls
- Minority groups experience of violence and discrimination matters.



The humanitarian response

- Lack of resources, complex working conditions
- Not enough knowledge and sensitivity towards differentiated needs.
- Less efficient assistance (crsv, fear, education)
- Aid prioritization and earmarking
- Perceived discrimination in access to assistance
- Frustration and «push» factor



Recommendations Short Term

- Sufficient and flexible funding -1
- Assessment tools to capture ethno-religious differences -2
- Minority vulnerabilities and needs must be disaggregated to provide targeted and tailored assistance.2
- Integrate community based psychosocial support into humanitarian responses. 6
- Humanitarian assistance to displaced populations should not overshadow support to rehabilitation and return (when possible)7
- Use local civil society structures to channel assistance 8
- Social Cohesion programs, stand alone or integrated. 5



Recommendations Short-Long Term

- Gender responsive transitional justice perspective into current displacement response.1
- Proper procedures to deal with property redistribution. 6
- Cohesion and reconciliation initiatives. 2
- Trust building measures between affected communities and security forces, addressing perceptions of wrongdoings. 4
- Provision of relevant educational opportunities and curriculum reform.5.1



Recommendations long term

- Promote education and curriculum reform. 1.5
- Foster recognition of diversity!
- Address democratic governance deficits in Iraq.2
- Address degradation of minorities in public discourse.2
- Address culture of impunity.
- Promote implementations of constitutional provisions for minorities and when necessary review all levels of the legal framework to promote equal citizenship.
- Secure inclusive processes.



Voices of refugees

- “I will never go back, Iraq is not a safe place. My nine year old cousin saw his father being killed just in front of him. I lived with my neighbors for 40 years and all of a sudden they point at me with their weapons.” (Christian male Iraqi refugee in Jordan, June 2016)
- “People were butchered, and not only by Daesh but by their neighbours.” (Syrian Kurdish woman, Lebanon, Feb. 2016)
- “Going back to do what? Besides the fact that our houses are destroyed, people there are destroyed too. Reconciliation and healing is a long process many of us are not ready to go through. The Syria we knew no longer exists.” (Young Christian Orthodox man from Syria, Lebanon, Feb. 2016)



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END

