



## World Council of Churches

**Commission of the Churches on International Affairs**  
**World Council of Churches**

**Special Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**on the Human Rights Situation in Iraq**

To be delivered by Ms Christina Papazoglou

Mr President,

I have just returned this morning from leading a World Council of Churches fact-finding mission to the Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq. We were able to speak to and take testimony from a large number of people displaced from Mosul, the Nineveh Plain and other places now under the control of the so-called 'Islamic State' (IS), known locally by the Arabic acronym 'Da'ash'. The displaced people we spoke to represent a range of minority communities targeted by IS, including Christians, Yazidis, and Sufi 'Kakiya'. Their stories tell of the 'Islamic State's inhumanly brutal, violent, coercive and repressive efforts to eliminate any and all diversity in society in the region, in favour of the uniform ideology of their bloody 'caliphate'.

We will provide the testimonies and materials we have gathered to any UN institution mandated to examine these events and their impacts.

Mr President,

The bleak response from a 14-year old Christian girl from one of the villages of the Nineveh Plain, now finding temporary refuge in one of the churches of Erbil, is emblematic. When I asked her what she thought about the future, she replied "The Da'ash came, and destroyed our future."

Mr President,

In order to begin rebuilding hope in any future for religious minorities in the region, several things are critically needed:

- Neutralization of the aggressive military capability of IS.
- A further binding Security Council resolution containing effective measures to deprive IS of further financial and material resources.
- Exposure and accountability, not only for those who directly committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, but also for those who have provided financial, material and moral support for IS, and who have fostered, promoted and disseminated its pernicious ideology.

- Stronger humanitarian protection and support from the Iraqi national authorities and the international community, undergirding the efforts of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and particularly in light of the approach of winter.
- A clear international commitment to maintaining and protecting religious diversity in Iraq.

We would also recommend a joint mission and report by appropriate special procedures – including the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief – on the situation, drawing especially on testimony from members of the displaced religious minority communities and their religious leaders.

Thank you.

Peter Prove

Director, International Affairs

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