

**Kurdistan Regional Government**

**Council of Ministers**

**Office of the KRG Coordinator for International Advocacy**



**Summary of KRG's Position on the Developments and Challenges in the  
Ninevah Plains-Updated**

**03/03/2019**

### **General situation:**

Ninevah Plains have a historical importance, due to their diversity and ancient legacy. The area was subject to lots of upheavals, due to its geopolitical, religious and historical significance; the latest of which being ISIS attacks in 2014. As a result, the area faced many destructions leading to human casualties and mass displacement across the region. Ever since, the situation of Ninevah Plains have turned into a significant national and international concern and efforts have been in place to improve it.

One of the important events took place on October 16, 2017, which caused further destructions and instability.

The KRG has always favored the progress of the situation of Ninevah Plains and its people and reiterated the necessity of peaceful coexistence of the people of those areas and the improvement of administrative institutions and the security condition. To this end, the KRG has always expressed its readiness to engage in dialogue with the Iraqi Federal government, to tackle the issues in Ninevah Plains and improve people's lives.

Since 2014, the those areas have gone through a lot of adversities and now that their areas are liberated, a new phase of challenges has begun concerning reconstruction and return.

For example, many people of Shingal are not ready to return to their homes despite the liberation, due to the political bidding that is done on their areas. Thus, they feel insecure. Among the other challenges are issues of the lack of basic needs and job opportunities.

### **Security concerns:**

The presence of armed groups whose members are not from the region has increased concerns among residents. Additionally, a faction of people has hijacked the control of Iraqi border entries and the restrictions are used for trafficking and illegal business through which "taxes" are collected from the civilians.

Furthermore, the presence of ISIS sleeping cells poses a threat to the security situation of those areas.

The region is still unsafe, especially Tal-Kayf and Hamdaniya since they have been turned into armed towns and prisons with terrorism-related detainees are still present in the areas. The presence of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) (checkpoints, patrols, areas of administration) has produced fear among the people of returning to their homes and areas.

What has also deteriorated the security situation of those areas is the presence of IDPs whose backgrounds are unknown and who have moved out to Ninevah Plains from other towns and districts.

Due to the pronouncement of general pardon for the individuals that were affiliated with ISIS, uncertainties start with the local people especially number of currently affiliated ISIS locals returned without obtainable security screening.

Three main roads, Zummar-Werdk-Gwerr were shut down, due to the political conflicts in the area.

**Proposed action – security concerns:**

Neighborhood representatives and tribal leaders proposed actions that would benefit the community and reduce the conflicts and instability potentials in the region:

- The security must be in the hands of official security forces from the Iraqi army and federal police, Peshmerga and other local forces must be included in the security set-up of those areas. The borders must be controlled by border guards  
There is a need for an united security administration
- Intelligence must be strengthened to inspect the general security relevant to suspect ISIS families so as to encourage the return of IDPs
- In areas like Tal-Kayf, where there are prisons and courts in the city centers, those must be transferred to the outskirts. The city should be evacuated of all the military units except the federal police, whose presence should be strengthened
- Importance must be given to the implementation of rule of law and holding those who violate the laws accountable. There is a need on implementing principles of justice in fair trial process and compensating the victims of various cases

- Media has an important role in showing a clear picture of the realities on ground to the citizens, currently, its reports allegedly scare the population
- All the roads that are closed down between Duhok and Ninevah must be reopened
- Demining

Administrative and political concerns:

The presence of more than just one decision-maker in the city administrative institutions. For instance, in the provincial and district level meetings, a number of PMF members attend and they make decisions on certain matters. The concerns also surround the fact that there are no governmental regulations in place to resolve the issues of those who have fallen victim of the transitional justice in this conflict as well as no regulations for compensating those who have become victims of ISIS.

Other concerns include seizing land and property of Yazidis and Christians. There have been attempts to change the demography of the area. For example, in some areas like Tal-Kayf, lands are being distributed to other people for that purpose (expropriation). There are a lot of land disputes and litigations among Shabaks and Yazidis, for instance.

As mentioned before, there are not enough job opportunities and necessary services.

There are numerous political actors to administer those areas. Affiliated representatives with armed groups have requested changing the mayor of Shingal under the directorship of PKK or the PMF, under the justification that thus people would be more confident to return. The PMF elects the candidates based on national and tribal affiliation and they use political pressure influence court's decisions in the primary level.

As mentioned before, three main roads, Zummar-Werdk-Gwerr were shut down, due to the political conflicts in the area.

**Proposed action – political and administrative concerns:**

- Official recognition by the Federal government and the KRG of Shingal genocide and mass killings
- All the roads that are closed down between Duhok and Ninevah must be reopened

- The administrative concern must be jointly dealt with by the Federal government and the KRG
- Awareness must be raised towards embracing a national identity and giving up on other identities by preventing political parties from spreading ethnocentric idea as part of the their agenda and practices
- Initiating projects of reconstruction, job opportunities and other services in secured areas will regain people's trust to their national identities and strengthen their affiliation to it.
- Creating a representative judicial council of all ethnic and religious groups

**Proposed action – rule of law:**

- Creating strong judicial institutions that are neutral and free from any political or external interventions
- Implementing transitional justice for the returnees
- Urging the government to return lands and properties of the returnees
- Giving extended authority to the administrative leadership to resolve the conflicts before court is involved
- Implementing laws in a strict, correct manner.

**Proposed action – social welfare:**

- Providing services and society development programs, job opportunities, and encouraging the return of IDPs
- Providing psychological, health and social support for the victims of the events.

**Implementing authorities/ partners:**

The above-mentioned remedies are diverse and cannot be achieved by a single player and without a multilateral dialogue. Depending on the issue and the clarification proposed to resolve the issue, the implementing partners must be the Federal government, the KRG and their various institutions: local administrative bodies, high judicial councils, electoral committees, and security entities. Civil society and NGOs as well as media also take part in a vital role in implementing the proposed compromises.

Examples:

- The courts must operate in a nonaligned manner in the absence of political pressures or external intrusions for rebuilding the judicial institutions – all parties should show restraint and good-faith’s involvement to avoid obstruction of justice and fair trials
- The roads between Ninevah, Duhok and Kirkuk must be opened and managed based on joint coordination between the KRG and the Federal Government
- The joint efforts must be directed towards improving the security situation as well, accountability and prevention, such as the background check of families believed to be ISIS-related and screening them