

July 20, 2020

Statement by KRG Office of the Coordinator for International Advocacy (OCIA)

There is a Consistent Coordination between KRG and Mosul Governorate to Continue the Return of Remaining of IDPs, and KRG's Ministry of Interior Supervises this Coordination

Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report on July 19, 2020, entitled “Kurdistan Region of Iraq” Arabs Blocked from Returning. The report alludes to several allegations that KRG has been deterring about 1,200 Sunni Arabs’ families-since-2014-to return to their homes in Rabia sub-district, particularly in the villages of Qahira, Suadia, Sufiya, Mahmoudia, and Jidria.

HRW has illustrated a minimalist-negative definition of KRG’s consistent efforts to reestablish peace and stability in the disputed areas following October 2017 events. Besides, they largely omitted KRG’s explanations in this respect, which have been framed based on information provided by local tribal leaders residing in the above- mentioned areas.

The return of the people residing in these villages without proper screening will have potential security repercussions. There are infiltrations of members of the organization from Syria to the lands of Rabia and Zummar, and there are ISIL sleeping cells that hinder the process of returning part of the families. Furthermore the presence of Peshmerga forces in Rabia is indispensable for local peace and stability, and this initiative will incentivize the families to return to their homes.

Excluding Jidria, in which no ISIL elements were identified, roughly 37 families out of 120 families in Qahira village, 20 out of 170 families in Sufiya, 70 out of 350 families in Suadia, and 80 out of 300 families in Mahmoudia, have had links with ISIL. Nevertheless, there is a consistent coordination between KRG and Mosul governorate to continue the return of the remaining IDPs, and KRG's Ministry of Interior supervises this coordination. The IDPs submit a request to the host governorate to return to their homes, and afterwards the request is forwarded to the relevant parties for approval.

The overwhelming majority of the return families are still concerned about the security situation there, and the destruction of their properties in the liberation process in 2016 and 2017. These concerns have been addressed in the meeting between KRG and Mosul Governorate in February 2020, in which they agreed that the returnees should be registered and documented, the security situation in the area should be assessed, and the process should be coordinated by KRG, Federal and the local authorities.

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