



European Iraqi Freedom Association (EIFA)

REPORT TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON IRAQ

TUESDAY 16th FEBRUARY 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Iraq is facing perhaps the deepest crisis in its history. Daesh has seized a significant part of Iraqi territory and meanwhile Iran is using the excuse of fighting a war against terrorism to extend its meddling inside Iraq, commanding and funding dozens of brutal Shi'ia militias that are butchering the civilian Sunni population at will, marginalising the Sunnis and driving them into the arms of Daesh. The West is aiding and abetting Iran by providing air strikes against supposed Daesh targets. In the north, the Kurds continue to provide a formidable counterbalance against Daesh, but the current crisis has increased their desire for autonomy. Iraq could now face being divided into three distinctive zones involving Kurds, Shi'ia and Sunni. After more than 500 days in office, Haider al-Abadi has done little to reassert the authority of the Iraqi government and to restore justice and inclusivity in Iraqi society. There are on-going widespread protests throughout Iraq, but the serial violation of human rights and the arbitrary use of detention, torture and execution continue apace, with Iraq also now listed as the most corrupt country in the Middle East. The biggest problem for Iraq is Iran. They are certainly not part of the solution. This fact has to be recognised by the UN Security Council who must insist on a wide range of immediate reforms, which essentially must include the banning of the Shi'ia militias and the eviction of Iran from Iraq. The UN Security Council must also take decisive action to provide immediate protection for the 2000 refugees trapped in Camp Liberty, with a major effort to airlift all of them to countries of safety without further delay.

A. CURRENT CRISIS

1. Often referred to as 'the cradle of civilisation,' today, Iraq has become the graveyard of civilisation. More than five hundred days after he took office, Haider al-Abadi now presides over the smouldering wreckage of a once thriving nation. Abadi succeeded the deeply unpopular and sectarian Nouri al-Maliki. Maliki gave free rein to the Iranian-led Shi'ia militias, as a vehicle for ruthlessly enforcing his merciless "iron fist" genocidal policy of indiscriminate bombing, shelling, arbitrary arrests, torture and mass executions of innocent Sunni civilians. The sectarian divide fomented by Maliki opened the door for Daesh, who quickly consolidated their gains by grabbing a significant part of Iraqi territory, including the major cities of Fallujah, Ramadi, Tikrit and Iraq's second city Mosul.

2. The Iraqi military, shattered by corruption under Maliki, has proved to be uselessly inept in the face of attacks by Daesh. When a relatively small force of Daesh jihadists advanced on Mosul, a city of two and a half million people protected by a vast Iraqi army garrison, the Iraqi

commanding general panicked and the military simply fled, abandoning a huge arsenal of modern US weaponry. Daesh still controls the city. Meanwhile Abadi has had to rely on American airstrikes and Iranian-led Shi'ia militias to recapture parts of Diyala, Salahaddin and Anbar provinces, with these once great conurbations being reduced to rubble in the process, their largely Sunni populace murdered or displaced.

3. Indeed Iran is using the excuse of waging war on terror and the convenient fight against Daesh, to consolidate its position in Iraq and to reinforce its control of Abadi, as it did during the Maliki era. Iran is enthusiastically behind the ethnic cleansing of the Sunni population and the destruction of Sunni mosques and businesses in Iraq, driving more and more Sunnis to supporting Daesh as the least bad option. The mass killings of the Sunnis in the city of Meghdadiya in Diyala in recent weeks by Iranian backed militias, together with America's silence and failure to censure the Abadi government, have very much benefitted Daesh.

4. The city of Ramadi in central Iraq was captured by Daesh (ISIS) in May 2015. It was a city of over one million, mostly Sunni people. Last month, most of the city was recaptured by the Iraqi military, with the assistance of Shi'ia militias, funded and led by commanders from the Iranian Quds Force – a listed terrorist organisation. Daesh were finally driven from the outer suburbs of Ramadi on 10th February 2016. Nine months under the control of Daesh was devastating enough for Ramadi, but the final onslaught during the battle for its recapture has seen virtually every building in the city destroyed; only a handful of women, children and elderly men remain. Some estimates state that the population now numbers less than 1,000. The ruthless Shi'ia militias have waged a genocidal campaign against the Sunni population, torturing, burning and butchering at will. Thousands of civilians have been killed. The men of Ramadi have simply disappeared. Some say they are being held in secret prisons, others claim they have been murdered.

5. The next target for recapture is Mosul in Nineveh Province, Northern Iraq; it is Iraq's second city and home to over two and a half million people. Daesh has held Mosul since June 2014. Strict restrictions have been placed on the local population with only trusted traders being allowed to leave and return to the city. The remaining, largely Sunni population has been held hostage. Daesh captured vast quantities of modern American weaponry when the Iraqi army fled and the city has become an almost impregnable fortress. The Sunni population of Mosul have witnessed the fate of their brothers and sisters in Ramadi and must now be wondering if they are to be slaughtered like sheep during the forthcoming battle for the city. The appalling brutality of the Iranian-led militias will do little to encourage them. Many may feel that life under Daesh, although harsh, is better than death at the hands of the Iranian militias.

6. This is the dilemma now facing the West. American airstrikes assisted in the recapture of Ramadi, crushing most of the city's buildings and infrastructure to dust. Now warplanes from a US-led international coalition have begun bombing raids on Daesh targets around Mosul. An American general in the battle for the historic city of Hué during the Vietnam War notoriously stated: *"We had to destroy the city to save it!"* It seems like history is about to repeat itself in Iraq. Daesh has become a convenient vehicle for proponents of the war on terror. The US-led international coalition has rushed to provide air cover, while the Shi'ia militias under control of the Iranian regime provide the 'boots on the ground'. Everyone can then puff out their chests in pride at their involvement in the campaign to drive Daesh out of Iraq. Sadly, such victories are won at a terrible cost, being borne, for the most part, by Iraq's hounded, oppressed and brutalised Sunni population. Unfortunately, in parallel with launching airstrikes, the United States has not done much to arm and train the Sunnis in areas occupied

by ISIS. These are forces that could provide strong leverage on the ground in future. The number of trained Sunnis is about 5000, which amounts to only 5% of the necessary force; the rest is filled by Shiite militias, who are criminals and follow the orders of Tehran.

7. Meanwhile the Kurdish Peshmerga is providing a useful counterbalance against Daesh in Northern Iraq. US and international funding, together with Turkish training and support, has enabled the Peshmerga to recapture territory from Daesh, simultaneously proclaiming KRG control over areas not formerly in the Kurdistan zone. This has increased tensions with Baghdad, where simmering disagreements over the budget and oil resources have continued under the Abadi government. Collapsing oil revenues and the massive influx of refugees from Syria and the rest of Iraq have created a major economic crisis for President Masoud Barzani and the KRG. He claims that total KRG revenues amount to only \$500 million per month and that it is costing \$300 million per month simply to fight Daesh. He is constantly calling for international help and is now, perhaps opportunistically, demanding that a referendum on Kurdish independence should be held prior to the US presidential elections in November 2016.

8. Despite repeated warnings the West stood aside and allowed Nouri al-Maliki to remain in office for 8 disastrous years. He became a puppet of the fascist Iranian regime, doing their bidding by opening a direct route for Iranian troops and equipment heading to Syria to bolster the bloody Bashar al-Assad regime. He became a serial thief, systematically robbing the Iraqi people of their oil wealth. The Iraqi Commission of Integrity (CoI) told the Iraqi Parliament last year that Maliki siphoned off a staggering \$500bn (£327bn) during his term in office between 2006 and 2014. The CoI report stated that nearly half of the Iraqi government's revenues during that eight-year period were "stolen" by Maliki. This was corruption on an industrial scale. Iraq is now considered as the most corrupt country in the Arab world, according to Transparency International. Widespread protests involving tens of thousands of Iraqis have taken place in Baghdad, Basra and other major cities. The main focus of the protests has been a general outcry against on-going corruption by government officials and the failure of the Abadi government to tackle the situation effectively.

9. Many Iraqis wonder why, after more than 500 days in office, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has not ordered the arrest of his predecessor Nouri al-Maliki who still maintains huge power and influence in Iraq. Abadi sacked Maliki as vice-president in August 2015 as part of a wider reform package. But why has he not been indicted for crimes against humanity, genocide and venal corruption? On the contrary, he still finances a private army carrying out lethal attacks on unarmed Sunni civilians. This is a disgrace and an offence against any attempt at reform and it is a sign of weakness by Haider al-Abadi. Similarly, many Iraqis are demanding the reinstatement of former Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi and other prominent Sunnis who were hounded from office by Maliki during his Iranian-inspired anti-Sunni pogrom.

10. But this is not the only area where Abadi's leadership has been found wanting. There are still thousands of people languishing in Iraq's network of secret prisons, including many hundreds of women. Most of the prisoners are Sunni and most have been arrested on trumped-up charges of terrorism. Few have faced even a cursory form of judicial hearing. Iraq's heavily politicized courts, set up by Maliki to do his sectarian bidding, are still unreformed by Abadi. Tortured confessions and violations of human rights are commonplace and Iraq now executes more people than any other country in the world barring China and Iran. There have been widespread protests in Baghdad and in cities throughout Iraq in recent months, but Abadi has failed to respond by introducing meaningful reforms.

11. Abadi had one clear opportunity to display his humanitarian principles and show the world that he could act outwith the control of Tehran. He could have provided full protection for the 2,000 Iranian refugees incarcerated in Camp Liberty near Baghdad. He could have cooperated with Western efforts to have these people airlifted to countries of safety. Instead, because Tehran wishes to annihilate these unarmed civilians whom they regard as the key focus of opposition to their fascist regime, Abadi did not do what he could have done to improve security and accelerate the relocation process. For example he did not allow the residents to sell their property that they were forced to leave behind in Ashraf, which is now serving the Iraqi government as a military base. Neither did he try to compensate for it. These properties have a total value of more than \$5.50 million dollars. This theft of the Iranian refugees' property is something that was initiated by Maliki and is still going on. Abadi did not oppose the imprisonment and oppression of these refugees in appalling conditions. He allowed their persecution to continue and did not prevent repeated rocket attacks launched from well inside Iraq's own military security perimeter, which have caused horrific death and injury to the camp's inhabitants.

12. More than four years have passed since the Camp Ashraf residents were moved to Camp Liberty based on a mutual agreement between the UN and the Iraqi government, with the active approval of the US. However, since the American occupying forces transferred control and jurisdiction for the residents of Ashraf to the Iraqi government under Nouri al-Maliki seven years ago, there has been a constant state of intense siege imposed by the Iraqi government, which continues to this day. This siege involves the complete imprisonment of the residents of Camp Liberty in a small compound vulnerable to repeated rocket attacks, a sporadic blockade against fuel, food and essential equipment, a determined resistance by the Iraqi authorities against the provision of protective concrete T-walls inside the camp, a medical blockade that has cost many lives and much suffering and constant psychological torture embracing bogus 'family members' from Iran, who have been allowed to penetrate the security perimeter and shout abuse and threats at the residents through loudspeakers.

13. These serial violations of the basic human rights of the civilian residents of Camp Liberty have been ignored by the UN, despite the fact that over the past seven years 141 residents have been killed in a series of well-planned massacres, 27 have lost their lives due to the medical siege, 1,400 have been injured in the numerous attacks and 7 residents abducted during the brutal massacre in Camp Ashraf on 1st September 2013 have simply disappeared without trace. Notwithstanding this catalogue of abuse, Liberty has still not been recognized as a refugee camp and the Iraqi government continues to impose an intense siege. The management team in charge of the camp consists of the same individuals who played major roles in the massacres against these refugees in Camp Ashraf. Additionally, until the end of Maliki's tenure Liberty had been the target of numerous rocket barrages. This has continued under Abadi with the latest such attack on 29 October 2015, involving 80 massive rockets fired at Liberty leaving 24 residents dead.

14. The UN must demand an investigation to find and arrest the perpetrators behind the recent rocket barrage against Camp Liberty (29 October 2015). Humanitarian personnel trained by the UN, should replace those currently managing the camp. The siege on the residents must be lifted and they should not be deprived of the rights they enjoy under international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially from a medical perspective. To protect the residents' lives Liberty must be recognized as a refugee camp and the UNHCR flag should be raised above this site until the residents are transferred to third countries. Bearing in mind

the presence of American and coalition troops near Camp Liberty and bearing in mind the US obligations towards the Liberty residents, aerial protection of the camp must be provided by United States and could be achieved without much difficulty.

B. MEDDLING BY IRAN

15. Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader has faced a humiliating climb-down over his efforts to secure a nuclear weapon. Iran's economy was crumbling under the combined weight of international sanctions and the collapsing oil price, forcing them to seek a deal with the West. In a bid to buttress his beleaguered regime, Khamenei is trying to extend Iran's influence in the Middle East. His efforts to shore up the gore-encrusted regime of Bashar al-Assad have fuelled the civil war in Syria for the past five years, creating the perfect environment for Daesh to exploit and expand. Khamenei, in turn, uses Daesh as his excuse to provide money, men and matériel to bolster the scorched earth campaign by the Shi'ia militias in Iraq. Western silence at this carnage has simply contributed to the spiralling sectarian war, which threatens to tear Iraq apart.

16. The most murderous militia organisations affiliated with Iran are the Badr Corps, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and Iraqi Hezbollah (Kata'ib Hezbollah). These militias suppress and massacre Sunnis and the Shi'ites who oppose the Iranian regime's interference in Iraq. During Nouri al-Maliki's 8-year tenure as prime minister, these militias enjoyed the complete support of the government. According to documented reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the UN Human Rights Council, these militias carried out their crimes using state resources. They had assassination teams that murdered Iraqi political figures, former officers, physicians and experts. After the removal of Maliki from power and the establishment of the Popular Mobilisation Force or Hashd al-Shaabi that is bankrolled by the government and is officially under the Prime Minister's control to combat Daesh, these militias grasped the opportunity and practically took over control of Hashd al-Shaabi to advance the objectives of the Iranian regime.

17. Currently, the commander of the Badr militias is Hadi Ameri, the commander of Kata'ib Hezbollah is Abu-Mahdi Mohandess, and the commander of AAH is Qais Khazali. All three militias fall under the command of the terrorist Iranian Qods Force. In view of the fact that in recent weeks the most prominent religious leaders and Shi'ia and Sunni political figures have called for the disarming of the militias affiliated with the Iranian regime, it is imperative that the UN should show firmness vis-à-vis these terrorists and save Iraq from plunging into a dilemma that promises its demise. The United States, the United Nations and the countries in the region should designate the militias affiliated with Iran, especially the Badr, AAH and Kata'ib Hezbollah along with their commanders, as terrorists and the Government of Iraq should disarm them and bring their commanders to justice.

18. In an unprecedented statement on February 8th, the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said: "If revolutionary guards (IRGC) were not present in Iraq and Syria, we would have had no security and would not have reached the nuclear accord." Paying homage to those involved in the nuclear negotiations Rouhani said: "Had it not been for our armed forces who guarded the security of this country and if our valiant commanders were not steadfast in Baghdad, Samara, Fallujah and Ramadi... , had they not helped the Syrian government in Damascus and Aleppo, and were it not for the valor of the army, the IRGC, the Basij, and the Islamic Republic Security Forces, we would not have enjoyed the security that we needed to conduct such good

negotiations.” This admission proves the fact that this regime has made and continues to make the most from its aggression in the region and its overt and covert occupation of Syria and Iraq, to extract more concessions from the West over the nuclear negotiations and in the lifting of sanctions. It also underscores the fact that Iranian interference in Iraq is deemed necessary to bolster Iranian security.

19. Rather than recognising the detrimental impact of Iranian meddling in Iraq, Abadi has surrendered to it and in doing so, has been aided and abetted by the West who have provided airstrikes against supposed Daesh targets in Iraq, in a bid to deliver support for the Iranian-led and funded Shi’ia militias, who provide the boots on the ground. This policy is short-sighted and wrong and is simply assisting Iran towards its dangerous goal of Middle East domination.

C. THE WAY FORWARD

20. Abadi should take the following steps:

a/ Form a government of national unity and that involves all Sunnis and their real representatives and all other ethnic groups in Iraq into the police, army and government services.

b/ Clear out the corrupted judiciary and reform the courts. He needs to close the secret prisons and release the political prisoners.

c/ End the wanton use of torture and the death penalty.

d/ End corruption and start using Iraq’s oil revenues for the benefit of the people.

e/ Outlaw the Shi’ia militias and prevent all further Iranian interference in Iraq.

f/ Rehabilitate those people like Dr. Hashemi who are in exile because of Maliki's policies and return them to political life.

g/ Guarantee protection of Camp Liberty residents and end their oppression and work with the West for the relocation of the remaining Iranian refugees to European countries and permit them to sell their property in Ashraf or compensate them.

These steps will surely receive the support of the Iraqis, the Arab world and Europe.

21. The UN Security Council must:

a/ Encourage Abadi to take the above steps.

b/ Call for Abadi to hold early elections under UN supervision.

c/ Support the eviction of the Iranian regime from Iraq, punishing Iran for its meddling in Iraq.

d/ Compel Iraq to get rid of the Iranian-led militias, placing them on international terrorist lists, in particular Badr, AAH, Harakat al-Najba and Kata’ib Hezbollah along with their commanders.

e/ Call for the creation of an inclusive government with the wide participation of the Sunnis.

22. Regarding Camp Liberty the UN Security Council must:

a/ Support the provision of air cover for the Camp Liberty residents.

b/ Demand an immediate change to the current management of the camp, which currently involves criminals like Faleh Fayadh, who were responsible for the previous brutal massacres in Camp Ashraf.

c/ The 2,000 refugees in Camp Liberty must as a priority be airlifted to countries of safety.

d/ Liberty must be recognised as a refugee camp and the UNHCR flag should be flown over it.

e/ All of the protective concrete T-Walls that were removed from Camp Liberty must be restored and the residents' protective helmets and vests must be returned immediately.

f/ The siege of Camp Liberty must be lifted immediately and the rights of the residents under international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be restored.

g/ All international assistance to Iraq must be conditional upon the guaranteed security and protection of the Camp Liberty residents. The UN must stop any further obfuscation and officially recognise Camp Liberty as a refugee camp under its direct supervision and protection.

STRUAN STEVENSON

President of the European Iraqi Freedom Association (EIFA)

(Struan Stevenson was a Member of the European Parliament from 1999 to 2014 and was President of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Iraq from 2009 to 2014.)

European Iraqi Freedom Association (EIFA), 1050 Brussels, Belgium

President: Struan Stevenson, Chairman of European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Iraq (2009-2014),
Members of the board: Alejo Vidal-Quadras, Vice President of the European Parliament (1999-2014); Stephen Hughes, 1st Vice-President of European Parliament Socialist Group (2009-2014); Giulio Terzi, Former Foreign Minister of Italy; Ryszard Czarnecki, Vice-President of the European Parliament; Lord Carlile of Berriew, QC; Paulo Casaca MEP (1999-2009); Kimmo Sasi, MP (Finland); and *honorary members* including Tariq Hashemi, former Vice President of Iraq, Sid Ahmed Ghozali Former Prime Minister of Algeria