



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
29 August 2014

English only

---

**Human Rights Council**  
**Twenty Second special session**  
1 September 2014

**Joint written statement\* submitted by the Al-Khoei  
Foundation, a non-governmental organization in general  
consultative status; World Federation of KSIMC, Alulbayt  
Foundation, non-governmental organizations in special  
consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 August 2014]

---

\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.14-15126 (E)



★ 1 4 1 5 1 2 6 ★

Please recycle A recycling symbol consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



## **The brutal attacks of ISIL on minorities and Worship places in Iraq and Syrian Arab Republic**

We, the Al-khoei Foundation, World Federation of KSIMC and Alulbayt Foundation jointly submit this statement to appeal for continued advocacy on a number of issues and threats that relate to the global effect of the group which calls itself the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL).

We recognise, as do many other members of the international community, the immediate and severe threat they pose. Since the recent crisis in Iraq that unfolded in early June 2014, we have seen the loss of thousands of innocent human lives, targeted attacks against religious minority groups, the destruction and desecration of places of worship and heritage sites by ISIL, as well as the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians from their homes. We believe that the actions of ISIL are completely unacceptable and should not be tolerated. We wish to emphasise the damage that has been caused in hope of achieving greater international recognition of some elements of ISIL's offensive that have not yet received widespread attention.

As organisations committed to speaking out for the rights of minorities worldwide, and particularly the plight of Shia Muslims who are a minority group within the religion of Islam, we fully condemn the targeting of minority groups. When we examine the attacks on religious communities by ISIL, we see brutality and the enforced suffering of religious and ethnic minorities who are having their basic human rights and security stripped from them, their heritage destroyed and their homes- whether in villages, towns or cities- subject to horrific onslaughts of violence and terror. We believe strongly that by having minority groups thrive in countries across the world makes nation-states more diverse, more respectful and tolerant, and ultimately minorities enrich our societies and understanding of what it means to be human. But while minorities enrich our societies and cultures, they are often some of the most vulnerable citizens, falling prey to dominant groups or ideologies, and targeted for their differences, perhaps in race, ethnicity, religion or class. The importance of protecting minorities, along with their rights and places of worship by ensuring their basic safety and security, their empowerment and their deserved respect, has never been more important than it currently is now.

In the waking of the recent events in Iraq, the danger put forward by ISIL has targeted a number of religious and minority groups, some of which include the Shia Muslims, Christians, Yezidis, and ethno-religious minorities within the Shabak and Turkmen communities. This also includes Sunni Muslims who refuse to submit to ISIL authority. We believe the threats facing the Shia Muslim community in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala are becoming increasingly severe, as notions that ISIL target such cities seem more explicit and intimidating than ever before. It is understood that the group falsely believe the Shia Muslim faith to be centred around a polytheistic philosophy, and as such aim to eradicate two of the holiest cities of this community.

The ISIL spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani has recently stated the following: "Continue your march, as the battle is still not raging... it will rage in Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf, so be ready for it." In addition, Dr Ahab Bdaiwi at St Andrews University has translated the recent speech from ISIL spokesman Adnani, addressed towards ISIL fighters: "Do not concede territory gained to the Shia unless they walk over your dead bodies to retrieve it. March towards Baghdad. The Shi'a are a disgraced people. God forbid that they become victorious over you. How can they when they are polytheists. Don't stop until you reach Baghdad and Karbala. Be prepared! Iraq will transform into a living hell for the Shia and other heretic."

Such targeting and aggressive rhetoric is becoming increasingly worrying for the Iraq's Shia Muslims. The direct threat posed by ISIL in this, amongst other statements can be considered as a declaration of war against innocent civilians. The rising tension on social media websites has been fuelled by ISIL supporters who are reiterating the same intolerant and hateful speech towards the Shia Muslims of Iraq. As ISIL increases its proportion of controlled areas in Iraq, it seems increasingly likely that an attack on one of the holy Shia cities could be a reality. Especially on the holy shrine in the city of Samarra which previously witnessed such an attack in February 2006. We feel that the fanatical and dogmatic preconceptions ISIL have against these cities represents the extreme intolerance towards a community of over 200 million people purely due to religious beliefs, infringing on their fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief.

ISIL have also been seen to target places of worship from the Sufi Sunni Muslim, Christian and other communities in Iraq. We feel there is an unfortunate lack of attention given towards the importance of preservation of holy places and cultural heritage sites. The destruction of places of worship belonging to religious communities symbolises ISIL's desire to wholly eradicate them.

Documented evidence proves that thirteen Shia and Sufi mosques and shrines were demolished in an area outside the city of Mosul between June 24 and July 2, 2014. At a similar time, we find that ISIL conducted the destruction of nine Shia mosques and shrines in Tal Afar between June 25 and July 2, 2014.

In addition, ISIL video footage has shown at least seven exhumed and sabotaged Sufi tombs and shrines in the Al-Bab city in the countryside of Aleppo, Syria. These historic holy places, which are highly valued by the Sufi population and enjoy a great position in their hearts, included those of the renowned Skeikh Aqil, Sheikh Ajjan al-Hadid, and Sheikh al-Badawi.

ISIL have targeted shrines of companions of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), in a series of systematic attacks that included destroying and exhumation the shrine of Companion Hujr Bin Adi al-Kindi in Adra, Syria, in May 2013. In Iraq, the shrine of Prophet Yunus (Jonah) was obliterated in July 2014.

Since the ISIL occupation of northern Iraq, a number of prominent and historical Christian churches have been targeted and burnt, whilst others have been converted into regional headquarters for ISIL fighters. On July 22, ISIL militants seized Mar Behnam, a fourth century monastery run by the Syriac Catholic church near the town of Qaraqosh in Northern Iraq and expelled the monks inside. This is but some of the damage being inflicted upon the heritage and active religious centres of many communities.

We are deeply concerned regarding the targeted killings against the ethno-religious people of the Turkmen in Iraq. Reports suggest that increased inhumane and brutal attacks are continuously occurring upon the Turkmen minority group, since the beginning of the ISIL crisis in June. The Turkmen group are predominantly gathered in the north and western areas of Iraq, with a majority Sunni population and a minority Shia population.

Attacks on the Turkmen indigenous to areas in the north and west of Iraq have been frequent, active and violent, with ISIL predominantly reaching many Shia Turkmen villages and committing massacres in many areas such as Birvageli, Telafar, Qozrobat (Al-Sa'diya) and Bashir. Reports and eye witness accounts indicate that that ISIL have brutally attacked communities surrounding Amerli, killing civilians, burning dead bodies and assaulting women, children and the elderly. More than 4,000 people have reportedly had to flee their homes which were burnt alongside mosques and schools, and it has been under siege since ISIL arrived in the area. It is said that the victims of another mass killing in Kirkuk, June 16, 2014, consisted of dozens of Shia Turkmen, including children. Such attacks are few amongst many of blatant discrimination and hostility towards the Shia Turkmen population. The situation facing the population in Amerli is growing increasingly grave. The UN Special Representative Nickolay Mladenov said he was "seriously alarmed" by reports that the people living in the northern Iraqi town of Amerli had no food or water as the two-month blockade continues.

Several reports also suggest continuous mistreatment of Shias from the ethnic Shabak community. This can be seen between June 13 to July 10, 2014, 83 Shia Shabaks had been kidnapped from Gogjali, a neighbouring village to Mosul, by ISIL members. Days later, seven bodies were found dead, while the rest remain missing.

The plight of the ethnic Yazidi minority population concerns us all. We are appalled by the actions taken against the group, which numbers around 800,000 members, after ISIL occupied the Yazidi town of Sinjar in northern Iraq in early August 2014. ISIL believe the Yazidi population are devil worshippers and polytheists, and as such disregard the possibility of liberation and tolerance towards them. The trapping of up to tens of thousands of Yazidi civilians on Mount Sinjar was a brutal act that led to a humanitarian catastrophe and the inhumane starvation of innocent men, women and children, alongside other barbaric killings of members of the Yazidi community in other attacks by ISIL. The Christians of Iraq are considered one of the oldest surviving and continuous Christian communities in the world, dating back almost 2,000 years. A recent report by Human Rights Watch says that from July 14, 2014, ISIL have imposed a levied "jihad tax" on Christians, by placing marks on properties to identify and persecute. The Islamic State has also targeted security and police forces in Iraq, ordering them to "repent" or face death. Sources inside the Syrian Orthodox Church have reported that an "ongoing ethnic cleansing of Christians" is being carried out by the Free Syrian Army in Homs, with Christians being expelled without their belongings and the confiscation of their homes. As a result, the Christian population of Homs has decreased from 160,000 to about 1,000.

We have worked hard to establish solidarity and contribute to the humanitarian relief effort for religious minorities of all religious and ethnic backgrounds displaced by ISIL. We particularly welcome the efforts of the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani including the opening doors to displaced persons in Shia cities of Karbala and Najaf and his call for the peaceful co-existence, recognition and respect of Iraq's minorities.

. We feel the rise of ISIL has fuelled sectarian strife, creating tensions between the Shia and Sunni Muslim communities worldwide. The brutal activities of ISIL have gained support via the usage of social media, attracting supports from around the world, particularly in Europe, North America, and the Far East Asia.

Accordingly, there are a number of suggestions we would make to the following parties:

To the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights:

- To strongly condemn ISIL and its intolerant and barbaric acts towards religious and ethnic minorities.
- To emphasise the rights of all minorities, whether religious and/or ethnic, who are victims of on-going persecution, violence and human rights violations.
- To demand a thorough investigation into the grave human rights violations carried out against the ethnic and religious groups we have highlighted in this statement
- To encourage the international community to take a unified, cogent and practical approach towards inter-faith and intra-faith relations.

To States:

- To strongly and publicly condemn ISIL and its attacks against religious and ethnic minorities.
  - To take effective and practical measures to filter and block ISIL and its supporters from using social media websites to promote its violent and barbaric ideology.
  - To prevent the passage of foreign supporters joining and/or fighting with ISIL.
  - To pass legislation criminalising any form of violence and human rights violations against minority groups because of their minority status,
  - To declare places of worship and sacred sites to be considered inviolable and neutral at all times and not to be threatened, damaged or desecrated
  - To demand a thorough investigation into the grave human rights violations carried out by ISIL against ethnic and religious minorities
  - To recognise that minority groups in Iraq and Syria are significantly vulnerable as a result of ISIL and the rapid advances it has made across both countries
-