

*Restoring the future: Helping the Iraqi religious and ethics minorities to recover in the aftermath ISIL*

**Building Trust Declaration among Nineveh Communities in the Aftermath of ISIL**

After ISIL, communities in Nineveh will face challenges to rebuild trust among them and establish of psychological, social and political stability in the governorate. In this context, Masarat Institute for Cultural and Media Development in partnership with Heartland Alliance International held 24 joint meetings between leaders from Muslim, Yazidis, Christian, Kakais, Zoroastrians, Baha'is and other minority groups from Nineveh Governorate. These meetings were part of the activities of the *Restoring the future: Helping the Iraqi religious and ethnic minorities to recover in the aftermath ISIL* project.

The project started with individual and joint meetings with clerics and representatives of minorities from different religions and ethnics. The meetings aimed to reach a unified vision and rhetoric, directed to the leaders' followers in order to spread freedom of speech, respect for others' opinions and conflict resolution in the areas liberated from ISIL control. Nine individual meetings were conducted during the project's implementation. 157 leaders from the Yazidi, Muslim, Christian, Kakai, Baha'i and Zoroastrian communities participated in the 24 joint official meetings.

During these meetings, several issues were discussed like spreading a culture of peace, containing retaliations and prosecuting the perpetrators only through the relevant state security and judicial institutions in a context of transitional justice. Also discussed was stimulating the role of informal social authorities such as elders, tribal leaders and clerics in mediation in order to rebuild trust. Additionally, the attendants thought about the best legal means to address the issues of the attack on the Yazidis and their property during the rule of ISIL over their cities and villages as well as a set of mechanisms to identify the aggressors who attacked properties and individuals.

Key determinants were highlighted during the meetings that would facilitate creating a work plan to rebuild trust between the social components of the governorate at the horizontal level and between individuals and the various local and national authorities on a vertical level:

### First: At the State Level

- 1- Urging the legislative authority to enact a specific law to compensate people affected by ISIL. Particularly, (A law to rebuild trust in the aftermath of ISIL) that ensures criminals are held accountable by the state and grants justice to the victims in a way that guarantees achieving reconciliation in the context of transitional justice.
- 2- To urge the formation of a special court consists of competent judges (taking minorities' views into consideration regarding the abilities of the selected members). This court will be established on a national, international or mixed basis to prosecute the perpetrators accused of committing mass killings, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement and other crimes associated with ISIL.
- 3- Granting minorities the right to veto any laws related to their community that may be proposed in parliament and in local councils.
- 4- Reconstruct the affected areas as quickly as possible and facilitate the return of IDPs to their homes.

### Second: At the level of the religious endowments Religious

- 1- The Christian, Yazidis and Mandaean Endowment should urge their citizens to adhere to peace and to prosecute those suspected of involvement in ISIL crimes through official channels and restrict the punishment to the state.
- 2- Urge the Islamic endowment offices to train imams, preachers and clerics intellectually and culturally on the concepts of diversity in order to accept others and have peaceful coexistence in all regions of Iraq, particularly in the areas liberated from ISIL.
- 3- Work on unifying the Islamic speeches in Nineveh (a centralized speech) to reinforce the coexistence of minorities and Sunni Muslims in the governorate.

### Third: At the level of the clergy

- 1- Effective participation of Sunni Arab leaders in the search for the kidnapped Yazidi and Turkmen as sign of goodwill and positive messaging directed to the minority communities.

- 2- The office of the Sunni endowment should urge citizens to report Yazidi children and others who have been abducted or adopted by Muslim families and take them back to their original families.
- 3- The office of the Sunni Endowment should direct the imams and preachers of the mosques through centrally approved guidelines to spread moderate messages that aim to respect each.
- 4- Form a delegation of moderate Sunni Arab clerics to visit and conduct workshops with Yazidi women survivors to restore and strengthen trust-building and healing processes.
- 5- Muslims should participate in donations for the reconstruction of Yazidi and Christian shrines that were destroyed by ISIL (even if those donations are symbolic and collected through community campaigns).

#### Fourth: On the educational level.

- 1 – Encourage the minority representatives and the Muslims who participated in the meetings, along with the Ministry of Education, to design a curriculum written by experts and researchers from a variety of religious groups themselves to introduce the various communities of Iraq.
- 2 - Work on drafting a similar book which can be taught in the faculties of Islamic sciences to educate and qualify both Sunni and Shia students enrolled in the Religious Sciences Department.
- 3 - Accelerate the rehabilitation of teaching staff to contain the trauma students experienced, which will continue to affect them after returning to school.

#### Fifth: At the level of civil society and youth initiatives:

- 1- Conduct visits and workshops in the liberated areas and guide families through Civil Society Organizations to apply the rule of law with the parties accused of assaulting Yazidis and their property.
- 2- Counter any demands for an amnesty law for perpetrators of crimes related to ISIL outside of the context of transitional justice.

- 3- Establish an Advisory Council (Council of Mosul Elders) that consists of representatives of all religions in Mosul whose mission is to intervene to resolve conflicts and mediate in a peaceful way.
- 4- Create social media pages and forums to encourage cooperation and coexistence among the communities of Mosul.
- 5- Distribute posters and brochures that promote peaceful coexistence and enhance trust among Mosul's communities.

#### Sixth: On the level of the media

- 1- Focus on positive experiences of cooperation between Muslims, Yazidis, Christians and other religions during the ISIL invasion of the of Nineveh plain.
- 2- Organize TV programs focused on the strategic depth of living together in Mosul and the role of minorities in the civilization and history of Iraq.