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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Association of World Citizens, a non-governmental organization on the roster

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

[5 September 2014]

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

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Humanitarian Crisis and Violations of Human Rights in ISIS-held Areas in Iraq and Syria

In a 25 August 2014 Statement, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the “appalling, widespread, and systematic violations of human rights” by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The violations mentioned included targeted killings, forced conversions, abductions, trafficking of women, slavery, sexual abuse, destruction of religious and cultural sites of significance and the besieging of entire communities because of ethnic, religious and sectarian affiliation. Among those directly targeted have been the religious communities of Christians, Yezidi (also written Yazidi) and Sabeans (also called Sabean-Mandaeans)

In addition to the violation of human rights, the High Commissioner cited other UN reports stressing the humanitarian crisis and the severe shortages of food, water and the lack of medical services.

The Association of World Citizens (AWC) is convinced that the development of a culture of human rights throughout the world is one of the most important contributions that we can make to future generations. The foundations for this culture are enshrined in the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.”

Therefore a culture of human rights requires not only being able to live free from abuses but also includes positive values at the heart of which is a deep sense of the inherent dignity of each human life.

One of the major UN declarations confirming this deep sense of inherent dignity is the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, adopted by the General Assembly on 25 November 1981 after a number of years of study and discussion in which the Association of World Citizens took an active part. The Declaration states “*that it is essential to promote understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion and belief and to ensure that the use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the Charter, other relevant instruments of the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the present Declaration is inadmissible.*”

Article One states clearly that “*No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice.*”

The Association of World Citizens believes that world law as developed by the United Nations applies not only to the governments of Member States but also to individuals and non-governmental organizations. The ISIS has not been recognized as a State and is not a member of the United Nations. Nevertheless, the Association of World Citizens is convinced that the terms of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief applies to the ISIS and that the actions of the ISIS are, in the terms of the Declaration “inadmissible”.

Citizens of the World stress the need for world law and certain common values among all the States and peoples of the world. We are one humanity with a shared destiny. The challenges before us require inclusive ethical values. Such values must be based on a sense of common responsibility for both present and future generations.

The humanitarian crisis and violations of human rights in ISIS-held areas of Iraq and Syria require energetic action on the part of the Council.