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**Письмо представителей Дании, Соединенного Королевства
Великобритании и Северной Ирландии и Сьерра-Леоне при
Организации Объединенных Наций от 23 декабря 2025 года
на имя Генерального секретаря**

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Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council

Summary of the meeting on the situation in Iraq held on 8 December 2025

On 8 December 2025, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in Iraq. The members heard a briefing by the Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Claudio Cordone, accompanied by colleagues from UNAMI and the United Nations country team. The briefing was followed by an overview of key recommendations for the Security Council by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Questions from Security Council members

Members of the Security Council raised several questions in relation to the drawdown and withdrawal of UNAMI from Iraq and its impact on the work to advance the women and peace and security agenda in the country. These questions included: the anticipated capacity gaps following the closure of UNAMI; how to effectively involve civil society organizations in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the future; the status of the funding compact outlined in the Secretary-General's transition and liquidation plan for UNAMI; and whether the multi-partner trust fund outlined in the plan included resources for women's organizations. In addition, there were a number of questions in relation to the feasibility of a possible visit to Iraq by the Informal Expert Group after the closure of UNAMI. Council members also raised questions about the recently adopted personal status code and how the United Nations intended to monitor the implementation of the code in practice to identify and communicate potential negative impacts on women and girls, as well as whether the United Nations had engaged with women leaders of the Yazidi community to help children born as a result of rape gain acceptance in local communities.

Main points raised in the meeting

Women's political participation, including in the recent elections

- Following the federal parliamentary elections, held on 11 November 2025, women's representation in the Council of Representatives stands at 84 out of the 392 seats, including one of the 9 minority seats, according to uncertified results. This is a decrease from the previous elections, held in 2021, in which 98 women were elected. There is growing concern that the 25 per cent quota for women's participation is understood as a ceiling rather than a floor, and that the elected women lack power within their parties or are selected merely to fill the quota. A government is yet to be formed both in federal Iraq and in the Kurdistan region, where elections were held in October 2024.
- The United Nations, through its integrated working group led by UNAMI, provided technical support and advice, as well as training and protection initiatives to support women's participation in the elections, including

protection from hate speech and smear campaigns online. The integrated working group successfully advocated with the Independent High Electoral Commission to reduce nomination fees for independent women candidates.

- UN-Women conducted a comprehensive training-of-trainers programme ahead of training sessions for women candidates and for women's departments of political parties in September 2025. The programme strengthened the national pool of trainers, and more than 110 facilitators across Iraq were trained, including on violence against women in politics.
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) contracted a local company, Technology Organization for Peace (Tech4Peace), to review individual complaints from women candidates related to cyberbullying, defamation and hate speech. Over a three-month period, Technology Organization for Peace intervened in 10 social media harassment cases, containing hundreds of offensive links and images. All the cases were reported and the links and/or images removed within 24 to 72 hours. Technology Organization for Peace also produced a series of investigative articles addressing rumours targeting several women candidates, including alleged videos and images attributed to candidates. These articles were published across Facebook, Instagram and the X platform, achieving wide engagement, with some posts exceeding 760,000 views and reaching a total of more than 1.8 million views.
- In 2026, the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, UNFPA and UN-Women plan to organize capacity-building training, including on information and communications technology (ICT) security, for women members of parliament and women leaders.
- Women's civil society organizations have called for the commitment to women's participation to be extended beyond parliament and into governments at the federal, regional and local levels, into all the initiatives on social cohesion, reconstruction, conflict prevention and peace consolidation and into monitoring and protection for women's rights more generally.

Legislative changes, including the amendment to the Personal Status Law

- In January 2025, the parliament amended the Personal Status Law (No. 188 of 1959) and subsequently adopted a personal status code, based on Shi'a Ja'fari religious doctrine, without a debate, in August 2025. The draft bill contained a provision to allow child marriages for girls as young as 9 years old, but the amended law maintains the provisions on the minimum age for marriage at 18 years or 15 years with judicial and guardian approval. However, under the amended Personal Status Law, men can choose which law to follow for their marriage, the 1959 Personal Status Law or the personal status code, and the decision cannot subsequently be changed. There are concerns about women's consent and over the code's broader compatibility with the international human rights obligations of Iraq, for example, in relation to child custody, inheritance and the right to equality before the law.
- UNAMI completed an initial analysis on the impact of the personal status code on women and girls, and UN-Women will continue to lead on further analysis and advocacy in this regard, together with UNFPA, as the Co-Chairs of the gender theme group. While the personal status code is now law, there is scope to advise in the way the code is interpreted and implemented.

- The draft anti-domestic violence law has been pending in parliament since 2012, while article 41 (1) of the Iraqi Penal Code provides for a legal right for “the punishment of a wife by her husband”. The United Nations continues its advocacy for the adoption of the draft law.
- The Government did not accept the universal periodic review recommendations in 2025 (see [A/HRC/59/14/Add.1](#)) for the criminalization of gender-based violence or for the repeal of provisions in article 398 of the Penal Code, which exempt rape offenders from prosecution if they marry their victims.

Continued backlash against gender-related work

- Women-led organizations continue to face severe challenges and backlash to their work in Iraq, ranging from lack of funding to targeted hate speech and online violence. Women-led organizations have stressed that the backlash on gender-related work cannot be solved by avoiding the word “gender” but extends to anything that is perceived as advancing gender equality. They have emphasized that they need the support of the international community more than ever, especially as UNAMI closes and support provided to women human rights defenders appears to be limited.
- Women activists, political candidates and journalists continue to be targets of hate speech, defamation and cyberbullying. There have been targeted campaigns against women journalists, in particular against those speaking about women’s rights. In less than a month, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) tracked more than 600 cases of hate speech against women activists through its eMonitor+ tool, in addition to 37,000 cases monitored by artificial intelligence during the same period. This has led to some women activists avoiding social media for fear of attacks.

Women and peace and security-related work after the closure of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

- The United Nations in Iraq will continue to advance the women and peace and security agenda after the closure of UNAMI. Most UNAMI tasks have been transferred to the United Nations country team.
- Federal Government and Kurdistan Regional Government officials have emphasized that the government interlocutors who focus on women’s issues are keen to continue to cooperate with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in multiple areas going forward. However, the Government is yet to sign the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which was due to enter into force in January 2025. Discussions are ongoing on the funding of the work of the United Nations country team and the need for the Government of Iraq also to contribute to it.
- There is uncertainty about the future configuration of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presence in the country, if any, with the risk that the strong human rights mandate that exists under UNAMI might be significantly diluted.
- Women from civil society have expressed a worry that a handover of UNAMI functions to the United Nations country team in Iraq would fully depend on voluntary funding, at a time of decreased foreign aid globally and in Iraq specifically.

Potential visit to Iraq by the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

- The Informal Expert Group could consider visiting Iraq in 2026, following the end of the UNAMI mandate, if the visit is welcomed by the Government of Iraq and the resident coordinator. Security Council visits following the drawdown and withdrawal of a United Nations peacekeeping operation or special political mission are considered most useful for seeing the consequences of the withdrawal.
- The Security Council can continue to address and take action on the situation in Iraq in 2026, as countries formally fall off the Security Council agenda only after three years without formal meetings on the agenda item. In addition, Iraq continues to be covered in the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council.

Conflict-related sexual violence, including the situation of Yazidi survivors and children born as a result of rape

- The situation of Iraq has been covered in the annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence since 2009, with a particular spotlight since 2014 owing to the widespread and systematic use of rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage by Da'esh (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant). In the most recent annual report, Iraq was covered under the section on "Addressing crimes of sexual violence in post-conflict settings" to better reflect the current context and the progress made by the Government in addressing some of the needs of survivors.
- Since 2016, the United Nations has been working to address conflict-related sexual violence through a joint communiqué of Iraq and the United Nations on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence. The adoption and continued implementation of the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors is an important sign of the progress made.
- However, challenges remain and conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq remains chronically underreported, affecting minority communities in particular, including Shi'a Turkmen, Shabak and Christian communities.
- To date, there have been no domestic trials of perpetrators for crimes of sexual violence specifically or cumulatively. Justice and accountability are essential for the prevention of sexual and gender-based crimes in the future, and for ensuring that these crimes do not disappear from the historical record.
- Of the estimated more than 6,400 Yazidi civilians who were abducted by Da'esh in 2014, more than 2,250, including more than 1,200 women, remain missing. Survivors from other communities also remain missing. Many of them are expected to have been trafficked to third countries. In 2024, eight Yazidi women were rescued from neighbouring countries. Most recently, two survivors from Sinjar were reportedly rescued through government efforts from a neighbouring country, after 11 years in captivity and having been tortured and sold multiple times.
- The Government continued to disburse reparations under the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors and has approved nearly 2,600 applications for reparation benefits, 1,341 of which relate to women and girl survivors of sexual or gender-based violence (as at 31 October 2025). In August 2024, the Kurdistan Regional Government began disbursing a complementary monthly allowance of approximately \$100 to Yazidi survivors of Da'esh atrocities, including survivors

of sexual violence crimes. In addition, a new pilot programme was started in 2024 to allow survivors to file criminal complaints in third countries, easing barriers to justice for those resettled abroad. However, Yazidi and other survivors continue to face persistent barriers in access to documentation, justice and reparations under the law.

- The protection and legal status of children born as a result of rape continues to be a challenge. Many survivors, when returning to their communities, had to leave behind their children born as a result of rape owing to community rejection. Addressing the issue would also require engagement with religious and traditional leaders to create enabling conditions for these children. The United Nations has continued its advocacy in search of a solution and protection for these children.

Other points raised

- Women and girl returnees, including those supported in the Al Amal Rehabilitation Centre, continue to face challenges in accessing essential services, owing to community stigma, safety concerns and limited availability of services. Women-led organizations continue to play an essential role in providing services to the most marginalized women and girls returnees.
- Through the national Women Mediators for Peace network, which was set up by the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, UN-Women and UNDP support women's effective involvement and influence in peace processes at all levels with specialized mediation trainings. Funding the network continues to be a challenge. The International Organization for Migration has created community safety mechanisms, a reconciliation platform and local planning processes in accordance with the national action plan on women and peace and security.
- UNDP continues to support women's organizations' capacity to monitor the implementation of the third-generation national action plan on women and peace and security.
- UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) organized training on the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse to implementing partners and suppliers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in December 2025, and similar training is planned to be organized in federal Iraq next year.

Recommendations by the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security¹

Whether in upcoming decisions of the Security Council or statements by Council members, including press statements or joint statements by the signatories of the shared commitments on women and peace and security, or in their future engagement on Iraq as international partners, Council members could:

- Consider a visit to Iraq by members of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council at least 6–12 months after the withdrawal of the United Nations mission.

¹ These recommendations are prepared by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, in consultation with other United Nations entities, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and are not recommendations of the Informal Expert Group as a whole or of Security Council members.

- Partner with Iraqi authorities and civil society, in collaboration with the United Nations country team, for the implementation of the third national action plan on women and peace and security, as well as regional and local plans, and urge the authorities to allocate adequate human and financial resources for this purpose.
- Encourage greater support by the Peacebuilding Fund and partnerships with the international financial institutions for the funding and implementation of gender-responsive projects focused on women's participation in governance, the consolidation of peace and economic recovery and reconstruction.
- Call for continued efforts to promote women's equal and meaningful participation in all decision-making bodies and processes, including on peace and security, through targeted measures, including in government institutions and political parties, in line with the Secretary-General's commitment to advocating for an increase towards 50/50 gender parity in political and electoral processes.
- Urge the Government to issue a decree clarifying that the quota on women's political participation is a minimum threshold of representation, not a cap, and requiring political parties and electoral bodies to promote women's participation beyond the quota.
- Support gender-responsive reintegration efforts that enhance women's participation in community life and local decision-making, address post-return barriers and contribute to social cohesion and longer-term stability.
- Urge Iraqi institutions and authorities to ensure the protection of diverse women's rights organizations and women peacebuilders from intimidation, threats and reprisals, including those who promote and protect women's human rights, and enable a safe environment for members of civil society.
- Encourage Iraqi authorities to ensure that the amended Personal Status Law and the newly endorsed personal status code are implemented in a manner consistent with the country's constitutional guarantees of equality and its international human rights obligations, including through close monitoring of the law's impact on women and girls and by ensuring that protections under the 1959 Personal Status Law are not weakened in practice.
- Recall the Government's international commitments and reiterate that women's rights and women's empowerment are universal values that do not conflict with culture, religion or tradition.
- Call on the authorities to enact pending legislation on family protection, including legal protection for non-governmental organization-run shelters and other mechanisms for survivors of gender-based violence and child protection legislation rendering all children, including children born as a result of conflict-related rape, eligible for birth registration, documentation and legal status, and address harmful social norms preventing children's registration.
- Call on the Government to accelerate the verification of pending applications for the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors, to ensure that the application process does not lead to retraumatization of the women survivors, to expand its scope to include children born of conflict-related rape, to lift the requirement for a criminal suit to be eligible for reparations and to implement it in full, including provisions on survivors' access to education, psychosocial support and land.
- Encourage the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to enhance coordination with regard to missing persons.

- Call on the Government to establish a domestic legal framework for the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of international crimes, including sexual violence, in line with due process.
 - Recall Member States' obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, encourage ratification of its Optional Protocol, and call on the authorities to engage with women's groups and experts on their implementation of Treaty obligations.
-