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Written statement* submitted by the Terre des Hommes Federation Internationale, a non-governmental organization 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).

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Protecting Children of Iraq

The conflict in Iraq has led to approximately 1.45 million displaced people in 2014 alone. Large number of the population remains trapped due to the conflict, in fear of violent attacks and with no access to basic resources and humanitarian assistance.

Children represent a high proportion of the IDP's and trapped people. A rapid Assessment carried out by Terre des Hommes Italy of Child Protection Needs in Ainkawa, a part of the city of Erbil, found that 40 to 60 percent of IDP's are children. The Child Protection Sub Working Group talks about 70 percent children in Ainkawa, the majority being under 5 years old.¹

Due to the volatile situation, Iraqi IDP's and Syrian refugees living in camps or villages in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, did move several times to escape attacks. Due to lack of housing IDP's are living in schools, parks and unfinished buildings, many of them exposed to extreme temperatures and sunlight without shelter and access to water, food and basic non-food items. Population is highly mobile in search of safety, family members, shelter and access to humanitarian assistance. About 2.500 schools in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are used to host IDP's and the reopening of schools by September 15 will be delayed.

Children trapped in several regions in Iraq and Syria, especially Sunni Areas and Turkmen Shia Areas are denied access to humanitarian aid. So far an assessment of Amirli/District Salah al-Din by the UN has not been possible due to area being virtually surrounded and under siege by ISIL forces.² Reports from different sources tell about grave human rights violations against children: killing and maiming, recruiting and using, sexual violence against girls and boys, including trafficking and forced marriage and slavery to ISIL fighters and affiliates.³

Iraqi IDPs children and refugees from Syria have experienced a wide variety of attacks and grave human rights violations and are facing the risk of violent attacks, no access or limited access to water and food, no or limited access to basic resources, lack of safe environment, increased risk of exploitation including child labour. There are a number of children with disabilities and/or special needs present among the IDPs and there are currently no specialised services available. Currently there is no response mechanism to address human trafficking. There is a need to strengthen psychosocial services for IDP children and refugee children suffering from trauma.

Host communities in some places are experiencing food shortages, price increases and decline in livelihoods, increases in IDP numbers put pressure on existing capacity of host locations and camps.

In the light of the above, Terre des Hommes International Federation would like to make the following recommendations to the Special Session of the Human Rights Council :

1/Urging the international community to put in place safeguards in order to ensure that no child is killed or maimed, abducted, recruited and used, falls victim to sexual violence, is attacked in schools hospitals, refugee camps or shelter or denied humanitarian assistance.

2/ Calling the international community to respond to urgent humanitarian needs of IDP's and refugees as requested by UN OCHA and assist local authorities in the country as well as of neighbouring countries, hosting refugees, to manage humanitarian assistance to IDP's and refugees. With regard to shelter and the approaching harsh winter, stable housing is of importance for the survival of children. With regard to protecting children from violence and exploitation, child protection mechanisms should be used in all emergency response. With regard to a very high number of traumatized children and children with traumatized parents or caretakers, psycho social support is vital. With regard to the right to education special attention should be paid to offer education to IDP and refugee children, as well as to children of hosting communities

¹Child Protection Sub Working Group, August 10th, 2014. Published via UN OCHA/relief web

²Iraq IDP CRISIS, Situation Report No. 8, 16 August – 22 August 2014; UN OCHA

³media reports, Iraq IDP CRISIS, Situation Report No. 8, 16 August – 22 August 2014; UN OCHA).

3/To avoid the deaths of children caused by the impossibility for civilians affected by conflict to find immediate refuge in safe places and to avoid new conflict in regions and neighbouring countries hosting hundreds of thousands IDP's and refugees: calling countries especially in the European Union to immediately give safe access to children and their families, seeking asylum.

4/Requesting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to dispatch a mission to Iraq to investigate violations of human and children's rights and to provide a report on its findings to the Human Rights Council.
