



DATE: MAY 10th 2016

Hello and peace be with you all,

Shlama oEqara am kolokhon,

Honourable President of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples

Myoqra Resha ed Mtwā d15 zidqeh ed nashe aslayeh,

We congratulate you on your position as President of the 15th session of the indigenous peoples forum.

With reference to item 4, article eight and article 11 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The persistence of genocidal acts targeting indigenous peoples in Iraq and Syria have immensely increased since 2014, resulting in killing, displacement, and involuntary mass migration of thousands of indigenous peoples. These acts have negatively impacted their lives and future amid the silence of the international community who are not exercising their power to intervene in an effort to put an end to the ongoing violence that is endangering their existence.

Following the invasion of Mosul in 2014 by the self-proclaimed Islamic State, also known as ISIS or "Daesh", it is apparent that their objective is to systematically wipe out the cultural heritage of the indigenous Assyrians. This is displayed through their ongoing campaign of destruction of artifacts dated thousands of years old with the intention of removing all evidence of historical identity belonging to the indigenous peoples.

In 2015, Daesh destroyed priceless ancient antiquities in Mosul's central museum, demolished the ancient city of Nimrud, (dated 1244-1373 BC), destroyed the city of Khorsabad (dated 721BC) and other notable ancient artifacts and archeological sites. In 2016, shortly after the welcoming of the 6766 Babylonian-Assyrian New Year celebrations – Akitu, Daesh destroyed the historic Nineveh wall and three of the five gates of the city of Nineveh, including Nergal, Adad and Mashki Gate, dated (2500 – 3000 BC) as reaction to the offensive attacks directed by the international coalitions military bases in Mosul.

It has been two years now since most of the areas in Nineveh Plains region belonging to the indigenous peoples have been occupied by Daesh. In the midst of the ongoing criminal acts committed by this terrorist group, the towns and villages of the indigenous peoples situated in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region have become a battlefield for military fighting between the Turkish army and Kurdish fighters from Turkey, resulting with destruction of agricultural lands which prevents the inhabitants to return to their homes. In addition, in the Kurdistan region, illegal land grab and occupation of the lands belonging to the indigenous Assyrians remain ignored and not regarded by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).



The above-mentioned factors have resulted in increasing of migration by members of the indigenous communities in search of security, stability and social justice. Accordingly, as the Iraqi government has approved the criminal acts committed by Daesh against the Assyrian Christians and as genocide, we demand the following:

1. An internationally protected zone for the indigenous peoples in the Nineveh Plains with the establishment of the Nineveh Plain province, according to the Iraqi constitution.
2. Support for the indigenous peoples in Nineveh plains to allow them to regain and safeguard their lands to preserve and maintain their historical identity. It is worth mentioning here that despite the limited support for the Nineveh plains Protection units (NPU), they were able to retake the Town of Telisquf (in coordination with Peshmerga and other coalition forces), during the May 3, 2016 ISIS assault of the town.
3. The international community and organizations concerned with the preservation of the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples must develop practical plans to stop the ongoing destruction and targeting of antiquities, as well as addressing the damage caused by vandalism and destruction that is currently taking place under their watch.
4. Adopt a plan to empower the indigenous peoples by providing them the necessities to return to their righteous lands, allowing them to practice their religion and maintain their cultural identity. This includes the reconstruction of their homes, symbols and places of worship.
5. Iraqi Government and KRG must enforce and prioritize a resolution in accordance with the declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples to control and address the outstanding cases pertaining to Assyrian Christians properties in Baghdad, and surrounding cities. At the same time, they must instill laws and regulations to address the issue of illegal land grabs in the Assyrian villages in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

Thank you

Basimeh Rabba

Long live the indigenous peoples