

From: Dindar Zebari
Sent: 16 July 2020 15:54
To: Belkis Wille
Subject: Re: Request for information linked to subject of returns

Dear Belkis,

I hope you are doing well.

The fragile situation caused by the Covid-19 outbreak has impeded coordination both within local provincial departments and between KRG and the Federal Government. Hence, the follow-up committees are now suspended, restriction of movement is intensified, and NGOs' activities are reduced. These unpleasant outcomes accompanied by the postponement of the formation of the Iraqi government and the reemergence of ISIL terrorists in the disputed areas. The latter factor not only halted the return of the local populations, but also endangered the lives of the already present people there. And due to the federal authorities' inability to hold a census, there is no a clear figure to address the population of these villages. Moreover, the villages were evacuated with the arrival of ISIL 2014, and they were overwhelmingly destroyed with the liberation process in 2016 and 2017.

Erbil and Baghdad are currently working on new mechanisms to establish bilateral checkpoints, and conduct joint military operations against ISIL in disputed areas through a joint military operational command. These mechanism are obstructed by the some armed groups present in the area, however. In this respect, local community leaders confirmed that they cannot return to these areas because (1) they don't feel secure under the protection of the dominant armed groups; (2) the Turkish bombardments and PKK intrusions; (3) Covid-19 restrictions; and (4) the suspicion of some ISIL sleeping cells among the local returnees. The meeting between HE Masoud Barzani and Mosul Governor emphasized these points too: in the meeting they inferred that the returnees should be registered and documented, the security situation in the area should be assessed, and it the process should be coordinated by both KRG and the Federal Government.

The tribal leaders informed KRG of these concerns; and regarding the fear of sleeping cells, according to them, they responded to HRW inquiry and made that clear these cells are a potential threat which may detonate if they align themselves with the ISIL militants in some areas near Rabia. Still, there is a consistent coordination between KRG and Mosul governorate to resume the return of remaining of IDPs, and KRG's Ministry of Interior supervises this coordination. The IDPs submit a request to the host governorate to return to their homes, and afterwards the request is forwarded to the relevant parties for approval.

Sincerely,

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Dr. Dindar Zebari
KRG International Advocacy Coordinator
Council of Ministers