

**Response from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Human Rights
Office Regarding the Situation in al-Shirqat**

February 28, 2017

Dear Ms. Wille,

A local unit of the Popular Mobilization Forces was formed in the city of al-Shirqat by recruiting volunteers from liberated area in the aim of ensuring territorial control and administration in coordination with the Salaheddin Operations Command. After subjecting internally displaced persons to security vetting, the Salaheddin Operations Command detained people who are or suspected to be family members related to ISIS fighters for the following reasons:

- 1- Social reasons related to the safety of these families and ensuring that they are not susceptible to acts of vengeance.
- 2- Security reasons; remnants of the defeated group are infiltrating civilians and using them as human shields and targets for their suicide operations.
- 3- Military reasons, to ensure that there are no infiltrators among these families that are leaking information about the positions or intended operations of Iraqi Army divisions. [Such leaks] might endanger civilian lives and obstruct the liberation operations.

We confirm that the force mandated with protecting the camp is the Salaheddin Operations Command and that al-Hashd al-Asha'iri (Tribal Mobilization Forces) and Popular Mobilization Forces have no role in that. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not had the chance to know more details about the number of families in the mentioned camp. We reiterate that our ministry has received a request to answer these questions without having enough time to respond.

We hope that the remarks [by the Iraqi government] in regards to these questions are taken into consideration. We also hope that this would be an example of encouraging coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and your organization.

In a related issue, the government of Iraq and its investigative and judicial institutions are working hard to bring before judicial authorities whoever is found, as a result of investigations, to have committed an abuse in order to be fairly sanctioned. We have many such examples; cases of people who were found to be implicated were referred to the judiciary and they are now serving time in Iraqi prisons.