

## **Response regarding Human Rights Watch Report about Sunni Turkmens' Eviction from Kirkuk**

### **The following information was gathered from the Kirkuk Asayish Department (Head of Public Relations, Hemin Tahsin in Kirkuk Security Department):**

The IDPs are first received by the Peshmerga forces and those coming from [Dibis], Zone 5 are transferred to the Asayish belonging to Kirkuk Asayish Department. There, they are provided with humanitarian assistance like food, water, medicine and basic needs. This is done jointly with the assistance of the international organizations' like UNICEF, ICRC, UNCHR, IOM and others. The children and women (those who do not have alleged affiliation with terrorism) are transferred to the refugee camps within 1-3 hours. While waiting for IOM buses, in the [Dibis] Asayish premises, waiting rooms that are built according to UNHCR standards, and which has heating and cooling system as well as bathrooms and showers. Later, a primary investigation begins by a joint committee to separate suspects and criminals. This security screening takes about 5-24 hours (except unusual situations like breaks) and later the suspects are transferred to relevant departments like police and courts.

The refugees are not classified by nationalities and all the nationalities are equally provided with services, but in total, the number of those who have sought refuge in Kirkuk is between 600,000 and 700,000 persons. In 2016, about 7000 Arab families sought refuge in Kirkuk and half a million have remained in the province most of which are from Salahaddin province and are unwilling to return. This has put a huge burden on the Kirkuk Province in terms of providing services for the population and the refugees.

There has not been such thing as a deadline for the refugees to leave Kirkuk, especially Sunni Turkmens as there has not been any kind of discrimination or ill-treatment against any religions or ethnicities.

According to a decision by the Kirkuk governorate, governors and the Iraqi Council of Ministers, the refugees whose areas have been liberated months or a year ago are assisted to return to their original areas of residence (i.e. Diyala and Tikrit) so as for those areas to be rebuilt. For that reason, sometimes it has been necessary to take their documents for their return procedures so that the checkpoints will not prevent them from getting back their land and properties.

In the time of return procedures, the checkpoints, especially Daqwa checkpoint allows the people to transfer their possessions and later will be given back their documents.

There has not been any kind of discrimination or different treatment with the Sunni Turkmens or other ethnicities. The procedures are followed according to criminal evidence and the terrorists are treated equally whether Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen or any other nationality.

The investigation conducted by us is a primary screening for separating criminals/terrorists and the innocent people and it is not included in our tasks to know what evidence the prosecutor has against the suspects. The suspects are sent to police stations that work under instructions from court that has issued the decision of arresting the suspect.

That being said, we investigate any cases against the investigators who violate the terms. Torture is against law and it is an independent crime that is an ineffective investigation tool.

A security committee has been formed which includes the governor who is the head of the security committee, deputy governor who is Sunni Arabi, Police director who is Kurdish and both KDP and PUK Asayish, Intelligence director is Shitte Turkmen, the city police director is Turkmen. Intelligence director is Sunni Arab and the Kirkuk Province representative. The role of this committee is protecting the safety of Kirkuk province all the decisions are jointly issued including the decision related arresting suspects.