



# POLICY BRIEF ON CIVILIAN PROTECTION

in the Current Mosul Campaign

CENTER FOR  
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Cover photo: A woman, displaced by fighting in Mosul, bakes bread on an improvised stove in Jeddah displacement camp, Qayyarah, Iraq, in November 2016. (EU/ECHO/Peter Biro)

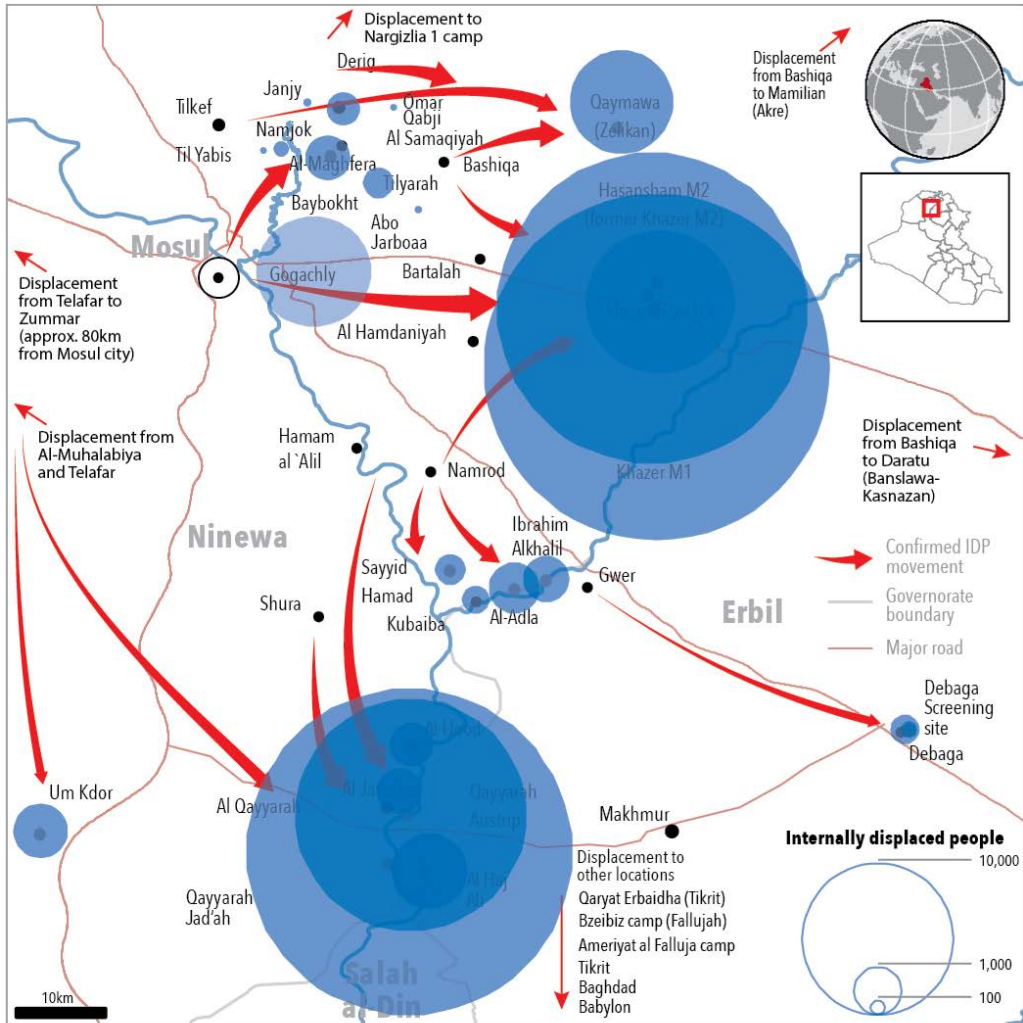
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# **Policy Brief on Civilian Protection in the Current Mosul Campaign**

**February 2017**



# DISPLACEMENT ROUTES



Map Sources: OCHA, CCCM, IOM DTM, Clusters

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created on 19 February, 2017

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Children carry food rations distributed by aid groups in Jeddah displacement camp, Qayyarah, Iraq. (EU/ECHO/Peter Biro)

## Executive Summary

Civilian protection is both a key component and a consistent challenge in the ongoing battle to retake portions of Iraq from the Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL, and *Daesh* in Arabic). Protecting Iraqi civilians from the threats posed by ISIS—as well as ensuring that ongoing coalition and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) operations against them do not cause harm—requires a deep understanding of the threats facing civilians and the harm they are suffering.

This policy briefing details daily threats faced by Moslawi civilians such as indiscriminate attacks from ISIS using mortars, explosives and other booby traps, suicide bombs, armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and snipers. Civilians have also been harmed by ISF and coalition air attacks, and caught in the crossfire between ISF and ISIS fighters.

According to the UN Assistance Mission of Iraq (UNAMI) monthly statistics on civilian casualties, between October 2016 and January 2017, there were 2,814 civilians killed and 3,909 injured in Iraq. These numbers are an “absolute minimum” as UNAMI has been unable to verify casualties in conflict areas.<sup>1</sup> As of February 2017, more than 217,000 civilians have been displaced from Mosul. Some have now returned to government-held areas, but 160,000 remain in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

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<sup>1</sup> UNAMI, UN Casualties for Iraq, January 2017, [http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=6221:un-casualties-figures-for-iraq-for-the-month-of-january-2017&Itemid=633&lang=en](http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=6221:un-casualties-figures-for-iraq-for-the-month-of-january-2017&Itemid=633&lang=en)

The information in this briefing is based on interviews with civilians, humanitarian organizations, Iraqi and Kurdish government and security officials, as well as select coalition members currently in Iraq.<sup>2</sup> Our interviews indicate that ISF appear to have conducted operations with a focus on protecting civilians; however, there are still allegations of civilian harm, looting, demolition of homes, summary executions, and abuse of ISIS fighters by pro-government forces.<sup>3</sup>

This paper assesses progress and challenges that remain to protect civilians and stabilize Iraq after the defeat of ISIS in Mosul and offers recommendations to various stakeholders. While extensive recommendations are found at the end of each section, here are the key recommendations.

To the Iraqi Security Forces:

- **Amend Battle Damage Assessment guidelines** to account for civilian deaths, injuries, and property damage.
- **Create and fully staff a Civilian Casualty Mitigation Team** at the Joint Operations Command that is specifically tasked with gathering information on all incidents of civilian harm, analyzing causes, and recommending changes to tactics, training, and procedures.
- **Acknowledge civilian losses** to both dignify victims and prevent revenge and anger amongst the civilian population.

To the Government of Iraq (GoI):

- **Empower ISF CIVMIL** team with adequate resources to gather information regarding protection concerns prior to operations, to investigate civilian harm after operations, and to liaise with humanitarian organizations and civilians.
- **Ensure only trained and vetted government-backed forces** are providing security and remove any official support of armed groups not formally under the MOD or MOI or Commander of the Armed Forces of Iraq. Investigate and hold pro-government forces accountable for unlawful actions.
- **Renew the 2009 Iraqi Compensation Law** to address civilian harm and provide monetary assistance to those who have suffered losses including the death of loved ones, injuries, and property damage.

To the US and anti-ISIS coalition:

- **Reaffirm and continuously train forces on the high standards** on the use of force and rules of engagement to protect civilians learned over 15 years of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- **Exercise tactical patience** to reduce civilian harm when responding to ISIS targeting coalition aircraft from rooftops and when called upon to support Iraqi ground forces who are under fire from ISIS.

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<sup>2</sup> CIVIC team visited the following areas in Sinjar and Nineveh, Iraq from October 2016–February 2017: Qayyarah subdistrict, Makhmour, Haji Ali, Hasan Shami, Saif bdiinan, Bertele Subdistrict, Hamdaniya District, Karamlis, Gogjali, Gaulat, Kanhash al-Kabiir, Kanhash al-Saghiir, Khidir, Namrud archaeological site, al-Abbas, al-Najafia, al-Salamiya, Ibrahim al-Khalil, Shaquli, Sheikh Amir, Mosul quarters of al-Noor, al-Akha, al-Muthana, al-Zuhur, al-Alil town.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews in Mosul, February 2017



- **Improve post-strike assessments** by tracking civilian harm from all weapons platforms—UAV, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft—and indirect and direct fire weapons.
- **Create Iraqi and coalition joint incident assessment teams (JIATs)** to assess civilian harm once areas have been retaken. Use data from both internal and external sources to guide on-the-ground assessments.
- **Develop guidelines to provide condolence payments** to civilians harmed by the coalition.

## Introduction

Civilian protection has been a consistent challenge in the ongoing battle to retake portions of Iraq from the Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL, and *Daesh* in Arabic). Civilian deaths and injuries as well as the scale of physical destruction of cities such as Ramadi, Fallujah, Zumar, and Sinjar, and villages and towns across Iraq, highlight the challenges and costs of dislodging a group that embeds itself amongst civilians and rigs cities with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and booby traps.<sup>4</sup> Fighting in populated areas such as Mosul requires creative thinking by military planners involved in the air and ground campaign. Prime Minister Abadi has urged all Iraqi forces to protect civilians in the campaign to defeat the Islamic State and the anti-ISIS coalition has also stated their intent to minimize harm to civilians. Realizing these goals, requires the various militaries in Iraq fighting ISIS to constantly learn and improve tactics to both reduce civilian harm and to ensure maximum effectiveness of operations.

In late January, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), supported by the US-led anti-ISIS coalition, retook eastern Mosul from ISIS.<sup>5</sup> After a three-week pause, ISF is now engaged in operations to retake western Mosul. The area's dense population of 750,000-800,000, old buildings, and narrow streets will make the task difficult and places civilian men, women, and children at risk. ISIS is expected to put up a fierce fight and use civilians as human shields. Worryingly, some security officials believe that residents in western Mosul are more sympathetic to the group.<sup>6</sup> Such perceptions can influence the conduct of security forces, which must be closely monitored to ensure respect for the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law.

In addition to tactical challenges of urban warfare, major questions remain regarding how Mosul will be stabilized and governed once the city is retaken, how security forces will protect civilians from ISIS retaliation and sectarian revenge attacks, and how a still-fractured Iraq can approach the challenge of national reconciliation. Meanwhile, the new United States administration issued a Presidential Memorandum on January 28 requesting a new strategy for the defeat of ISIS to be delivered within 30 days.<sup>7</sup>

This briefing paper assesses progress and challenges that remain to protect civilians and stabilize Iraq after the defeat of ISIS in Mosul and offers recommendations. The information in this briefing is based on interviews with civilians, humanitarian organizations, Iraqi and Kurdish government and security officials, as well as select coalition members currently in Iraq.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) visited several towns and villages in Nineveh and Kirkuk governorates in Iraq in 2015-2016. Sahr Muhammedally, "Iraq: Learning Civilian Protection the Hard Way," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, July 2015, <http://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.ge/>; Tribune Writers, "Iraqi City Ramadi Once Home to 500,000 Now Lies in Ruins," *Chicago Tribune*, January 17, 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-ramadi-iraq-buildings-destroyed-20160117-story.html>

<sup>5</sup> Kurdish Peshmerga forces did not take part in operations inside Mosul city, but were involved in shaping operations and retaking areas outside of Mosul city when operations began on October 17, 2016. Peshmerga forces retook the towns of Bashiqa and several villages near Gwer and Khazir.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews with Iraqi officials, February 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Presidential Memorandum to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, January 28, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/28/plan-defeat-islamic-state-iraq>.

<sup>8</sup> CIVIC team visited the following areas in Sinjar and Nineveh, Iraq from October 2016-February 2017: Qayyarah subdistrict, Makhmour, Haji Ali, Hasan Shami, Saif bdiinan, Bertele Subdistrict, Hamdaniya District, Karamlis, Gogjali, Gaulat, Kanhash al-Kabiir, Kanhash al-Saghiir, Khidir, Namrud archaeological site, al Abbas, al Najafia, al Salamiya, Ibrahim al Khalil, Shaquli, Sheikh Amir, Mosul quarters of al-Noor, al Akha, al-Muthana, al-Zuhur, al-Alil town.



An elderly man, displaced by the military offensive to drive ISIS from the Mosul area, in the Khazir camp, northern Iraq. (EU/ECHO/Peter Biro)

## Protection Concerns in Mosul

As Iraqi forces advanced to Mosul, Islamic State members indiscriminately attacked civilians with mortars, explosives, armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and snipers. ISIS fighters also booby-trapped houses as they retreated, destroying homes and caused civilian deaths and injuries.<sup>9</sup>

Islamic State converted vehicles into mobile suicide bombs accelerating out of side-streets targeting Peshmerga and Iraqi tanks, Humvees, and static checkpoints. As they reached the outskirts of Mosul, Peshmerga and Iraqi military forces faced waves of such vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs).<sup>10</sup> Civilians were also killed and wounded in these attacks.

The UN Assistance Mission of Iraq (UNAMI) issues monthly statistics on civilian casualties due to acts of terrorism, violence, and armed conflict, but does not attribute harm to any one party. Between October 2016 and January 2017, UNAMI recorded 2,814 civilians killed and 3,909 injured in Iraq and cautions that the numbers are an “absolute minimum” as UNAMI has been unable to verify casualties in conflict areas.<sup>11</sup> Airwars—a transparency organization—records civilian harm by the coalition only and not ISF or the Islamic State (see below). Since 2003 Iraq Body Count has

<sup>9</sup> ISIS used tunnels—some big enough for motorcycles—which connected houses and allowed for both cover from airstrike and storage and distribution of materials. Interview with Iraqi and Peshmerga forces, January 2017. CIVIC saw many of these tunnels in towns outside Mosul.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Peshmerga Zeravani commander, October 2016.

<sup>11</sup> UNAMI, UN Casualties for Iraq, January 2017, [http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=6221:un-casualties-figures-for-iraq-for-the-month-of-january-2017&Itemid=633&lang=en](http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=6221:un-casualties-figures-for-iraq-for-the-month-of-january-2017&Itemid=633&lang=en)

been issuing statistics on civilian deaths from all armed actors. Local Iraqi organizations and media issue news articles noting incidents of civilian harm as they occur. As Mosul becomes more accessible, additional information will emerge and it will be important to analyze this information for investigations, lessons on harm mitigation, acknowledgement, and compensation for civilian losses.

Residents of eastern Mosul who spoke with Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) said that the Islamic State retaliated against civilians when they refused to join its retreat to western Mosul as they feared being used as human shields. They were told that those who remain are “valid targets” and “unbelievers” similar to Iraqi and coalition forces.

As fighting spread in Mosul, families locked their doors and lived off limited food and water. Many feared going outside and being shot by snipers.

“Our biggest fear during the fighting was when fighters entered our home and then our home became a target,” said Hamza, a resident of eastern Mosul.<sup>12</sup> When ISIS fighters positioned themselves inside homes or on residential rooftops, ISF and the coalition targeted them. “It’s a death wish when ISIS fighters would go on the roof and start firing at coalition airplanes,” said Bilal from Mosul. “We can’t stop them.”<sup>13</sup> Bilal claims that his two cousins died in October 2016 when the airplanes affiliated with either Iraqi forces or the coalition returned fire on an ISIS fighting position on a roof.

Ahmed, a resident of al-Noor quarter in eastern Mosul, was sympathetic to the challenges facing security forces in fighting ISIS in civilian areas. “I can’t say Iraqi forces are wrong because the enemy takes shelter amongst civilians.”<sup>14</sup> But, he suggested Iraqi forces should be “patient” when ISIS fighters are firing from a home as they may be gone by the time coalition or ISF attack ISIS positions. “Daesh does not wait to be attacked. They jump on an adjacent roof, so it does not make sense to attack the home every time an ISIS fighter is seen in homes,” he said.<sup>15</sup>

Allegations of looting, summary executions, and abuse of ISIS fighters by pro-government forces have been reported.<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Watch alleges some ISF and pro-government forces were involved with looting and demolition of homes in southeast and southwest of Mosul after areas were retaken from ISIS.<sup>17</sup> In January, 2017 videos and reports surfaced showing some government forces in army and police uniforms abusing ISIS fighters. Prime Minister Abadi ordered an investigation into these allegations.<sup>18</sup>

Many residents of eastern Mosul, who are predominantly Sunni, praised the Shia-dominated Iraqi forces. A 50-year-old man told CIVIC, “We were expecting the worst. Daesh told us we will be

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with residents of eastern Mosul, February 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Bilal, Hassan Sham IDP camp, October 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Ahmed, Erbil, February 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Interviews in Mosul, February 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Interviews with residents from Hamdaniya, southeast Mosul, February 2017. See also Human Rights Watch, Iraq: Looting, Destruction by Forces Fighting ISIS, February 16, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/16/iraq-looting-destruction-forces-fighting-isis> (Noting the presence of the Christian Nineveh Plan Protection Units, Iraqi Army’s Ninth Division, Federal Police in southeast Mosul and presence of Shia PMUs southwest of Mosul).

<sup>18</sup> Sinan Salaheddin, “Iraq Premier Orders Probe into Violations by Troops in Mosul,” Associated Press, January 23, 2017, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/932a47690a8f412398e5adcf028fd754>

slaughtered, but our Iraqi brothers saved us.”<sup>19</sup> ISF provided emergency medical aid to civilians harmed in the crossfire and even shared their food rations. These goodwill measures generated support for Iraqi forces. Some civilians provided information to the ISF on Islamic State deployments and locations despite immense risk such as public executions for being “spies.” Something as simple as being in possession of a SIM card can be punishable by whipping and death.<sup>20</sup>

ISF retook eastern Mosul on January 18, and ISIS soon began attacks on civilians. The Islamic State has flown armed drones from the west to the east of Mosul, killing and injuring civilians, including NGO workers distributing food. They have also launched mortar attacks and shelled civilian areas with Katyusha rockets. Initially, ISIS mortar fire was limited to neighborhoods near the Tigris River, which separates the two halves of the city, but since February, rockets are reaching further into eastern Mosul, causing civilian casualties and affecting delivery of humanitarian aid.<sup>21</sup> On February 15, the UN paused humanitarian aid in eastern Mosul due to security concerns.

On February 19, ISF launched operations to recapture western Mosul. In the initial phase, units from the Federal Police and the Emergency Response Division began artillery strikes against ISIS positions at the Mosul International Airport.

Conditions in western Mosul have worsened and there are shortages of food and medicine. Most people have access to untreated water only.<sup>22</sup> Humanitarian aid organizations predict up to 250,000 will flee western Mosul as the frequency of operations increases. They will be directed to the *Jaddah* camp in *Qayyara* and in *Hamam al-Alil*. ISF will need to prioritize efforts to secure the distribution of aid in both halves of the city and provide evacuation routes from western Mosul because operations are expected to last weeks or months, which will increase the severity of the humanitarian crisis.

As of February 2017, more than 217,000 civilians have been displaced from Mosul. Some have now returned to government-held areas, but 160,000 remain in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Their return to Mosul is fraught with danger due to ISIS sleeper cells, rockets attacks, and a lack of adequate security. Much of the infrastructure, including bridges, water, and power plants are destroyed. The increase in violence in eastern Mosul since areas were retaken, also suggests that areas were insufficiently cleared or that ISIS has already re-infiltrated the city.

Civilians expressed support for increased patrols in Mosul as they are concerned about ISIS sleeper cells, but are also wary of the mosaic of forces in Mosul.<sup>23</sup> A resident of eastern Mosul Abdul said, “Since ISIS took over Mosul, we don’t know who is who. We can’t trust our neighbors. We also don’t know which local force will protect us.”<sup>24</sup> With elite forces involved in offensive operations, eastern Mosul is now patrolled by a mix of army units, militia groups, and federal and

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<sup>19</sup> Interview in eastern Mosul, February 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews with ISF and Mosul residents, October 2016 and January 2017.

<sup>21</sup> CIVIC visit to eastern Mosul, February 2017.

<sup>22</sup> UN News Center, “UN Refugee Agency Focuses on Sheltering Displaced as Iraqi offensive Moves to West Mosul,” February 21, 2017, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56216#.WKYe2mXbSzs>

<sup>23</sup> Interviews in eastern Mosul, February 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Abdul, eastern Mosul, February 2017.

local police, which raises concerns about different mandates and training, and their impact on civilian protection.

## **Iraqi Security Forces in Mosul**

The Golden Brigade unit—a US-trained, elite Iraqi Special Operations Force within the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service (CTS) which has been at the forefront of operations in Mosul—is considered the most professional force and civilians have heaped praise on them.<sup>25</sup>

Soldiers from the Golden Brigade told us about the training they received from the coalition on protecting civilians in cities. They were taught to distinguish between civilians and ISIS combatants, how to evacuate civilians, and avoid harming civilians.<sup>26</sup> The Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Army's Ninth Armored Division said that protecting civilians is critical. "We have to defeat Daesh," he said, "but also protect civilians, or our mission will fail."<sup>27</sup>

Iraqi forces are using artillery, mortars, and attack helicopters, as well as Iraqi-piloted F-16s in the Mosul offensive. But ISF told CIVIC that they are not allowed to use heavy weapons when civilians are present. "We are ordered to reduce firing in areas with civilians," said an Iraqi colonel with the 16th Division. "Heavy weapons are allowed if there are no civilians left."<sup>28</sup> An artillery commander emphasized that they have instructions from Baghdad not to use artillery in populated areas. "When you have families everywhere, we can't do much," said Col. Ziad Nadha, of the Ninth Armored Division.<sup>29</sup> Instead, he said, units in eastern Mosul went house to house with light weapons to engage ISIS fighters. Armored vehicles, he added, were used as a form of "defense" to protect Iraqi soldiers from ISIS suicide vehicles.<sup>30</sup> The same measures used for eastern Mosul will be used for the western side, he explained.

ISF officials described the challenges in distinguishing civilians from ISIS fighters. "This is the hardest thing for us," said a CTS unit member. "During a fight, anyone pointing a gun and firing at us, we fire back. When we enter a house, we use night vision goggles, separate women and children, and use light weapons."<sup>31</sup> But ISF and Peshmerga officials also gave examples of being tricked by ISIS fighters posing as civilians waving a white flag—a tactic used by civilians to cross from ISIS-held areas to ISF and Peshmerga side. When they got close to ISF positions, they blew themselves up, causing casualties amongst civilians and security officials.<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, ISF personnel admitted that the greatest challenge they have is in identifying ISIS fighters embedded with civilians and moving civilians safely from active areas of fighting. An Iraqi colonel from the 16<sup>th</sup> Division said, "This is the first time ISF had to engage in battle in which civilians are involved. We don't have experience in this, but are learning as we fight Daesh."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service is an independent ministerial level organization, separate from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of the Interior. It was created by the US as a precision counter-terrorism force post-2003 and was mentored and trained by US special operations forces.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with CTS soldiers, February 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Chief of Staff, Ninth Armored Division, February 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with colonel, 16<sup>th</sup> Division, December 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Col. Ziad Nadha, Ninth Armored Division, February 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with CTS unit member, February 2017

<sup>32</sup> Interviews with ISF and Peshmerga officials, October and December 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with 16<sup>th</sup> Division, December 2016.

Iraqi forces have sustained heavy casualties from ISIS VBIED and ambushes when they pushed forward without properly clearing and securing areas.<sup>34</sup> More than 2,000 Iraqi special forces were killed in November 2016.<sup>35</sup> The Iraqi military command has ordered that no casualty figures be disclosed until the offensive is finished.

It's unclear how many civilians have been injured or killed during the fight between Islamic State and Iraqi forces in Mosul as there is no comprehensive tracking of such harm. ISF does not have a civilian casualty mitigation team—as currently used by the US in Iraq and Syria, and by Afghan forces and NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan—to assess the impact of operations on civilians. Iraqi forces do conduct battle damage assessments (BDAs) after operations, but they do not account for civilian deaths, injuries, or property damage. Rather, they focus on the number of ISF injured and killed, ammunition and vehicles used, and mission goals accomplished.

The Iraqi army has a civil affairs department and a Civilian-Military (CIVMIL) lead attached to each division that engages with civilians after operations. But according to Iraqi officials, this department is ineffective due to lack of staff, funding, resources, and lack of authority. This department does participate in monthly government and UN-led meetings in Erbil and Baghdad to discuss humanitarian situation and address displacement issues.<sup>36</sup>

Iraqi Security Forces should:

- **Amend Battle Damage Assessment guidelines** to account for civilian deaths, injuries, and property damage; to include information such as who, what, where, when, sequence of events, and actions taken after combat operations; and to report to unit command and Joint Operations Command. Such reporting would allow for assessment of tactics resulting in civilian harm.
- **Create and fully staff a Civilian Casualty Mitigation Team** at the Joint Operations Command that is specifically tasked with gathering information on all incidents of civilian harm, analyzing causes, and recommending changes to tactics, training, and procedures. Data gathered should also be used to inform efforts to appropriately respond to civilians harmed and to report incidents for further legal investigation when there may be violations of the law.
- **Assume the presence of civilians** in air and ground engagements given ISIS use of civilians as human shields and realize that during ground engagements rounds fired at ISIS targets can travel outside immediate target area and cause incidental civilian harm which should be assessed and, to the extent possible, prevented.
- **During ground and air operations**, adjust weapon choice and calibrations to reduce civilian harm. In choosing targets, consider all aspects of including the distance from which the weapon is launched and the angle and timing of the attack.
- **Ensure uniform guidance and training** on use of force across all Iraqi military forces and pro-government forces.

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with US and Iraqi military officials February 2017. Peshmerga officials also expressed concern that ISF was insufficiently clearing villages making them vulnerable to attack from behind.

<sup>35</sup> Brett McKernan, "Scale of Iraqi civilian casualties inflicted by ISIS revealed by UN," The Independent, January 3, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraq-isis-casualties-civilian-islamic-state-un-figures-united-nations-middle-east-mosul-a7507526.html>

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Iraqi Civil Affairs officers, December 2016 and February 2017.

- **Ensure civilians** in western Mosul know safe routes to move away from the fighting.
- **Acknowledge civilian losses** to both dignify victims and prevent revenge and anger amongst the civilian population. Report all such incidents of civilian harm to the CIVMIL team.

Government of Iraq (GoI) should:

- **Empower ISF CIVMIL** team with adequate resources to gather information regarding protection concerns prior to operations, to investigate civilian harm after operations, and to liaise with humanitarian organizations and civilians.



Airmen from the 821st Contingency Response Group supporting airfield operations at Qayyarah West Airfield, Iraq, on Nov. 19, 2016. (U.S. Air Force/Senior Airman Jordan Castelan)

## **Coalition Operations Targeting the Islamic State**

The US-led Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), which includes Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, United Kingdom, and others, began targeting the Islamic State in August 2014. In addition to air strikes, US advisors working with ISF are using artillery against ISIS forces to allow Iraqi forces to maneuver. Civilian harm attributed to the anti-ISIS coalition has steadily increased as the intensity of the conflict has increased. As of January 30, 2017, the organization Airwars attributed 2,400 civilian deaths and injuries in Iraq and Syria to



coalition air operations.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, as of February 2, 2017, the US has acknowledged 199 “unintentional deaths” in Iraq and Syria.<sup>38</sup>

CJTF-OIR tracks and investigates allegations of civilian harm and analyzes information to identify recommendations to modify tactics.<sup>39</sup> The US government has also authorized ex-gratia condolence payments for incidental civilian harm caused during its operations in Iraq and Syria, but this has yet to be fully implemented. As of this writing, only one condolence payment was offered in Iraq and none for Syria.<sup>40</sup>

Since December 2016, CJTF-OIR has released monthly casualty reports along with the status of any assessments or investigations and notes that while they are “unable to investigate all reports of possible civilian casualties using traditional investigative methods, such as by interviewing witnesses and examining the site, we do interview pilots and other personnel involved in targeting decisions, review aircraft video if available, and analyze information provided by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, partner forces and traditional and social media. In addition, we consider new information when it becomes available in order to promote a thorough and continuous review process.”<sup>41</sup>

Aerial BDAs however, are limited in their ability to provide a full picture of civilian harm that can only be determined by on-site assessments. In Afghanistan for instance, US military studies found that aerial BDAs often undercounted civilian harm and recommended joint on-site assessments with Afghan officials when possible.<sup>42</sup> To try to address the lack of ground assessments, CENTCOM and CJTF-OIR check external reporting on civilian harm allegations, including those reported by Airwars, and has identified new incidents based on their reports.<sup>43</sup> The US State Department also monitors and receives allegations of civilian harm from external sources, has allocated personnel for such review within the Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor (DRL), and reports credible allegations for investigation to CENTCOM.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Airwars, <https://airwars.org/civilian-casualty-claims/>

<sup>38</sup> Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve Monthly Civilian Casualty Report, February 2, 2017, <http://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/1068742/combined-joint-task-force-operation-inherent-resolve-monthly-civilian-casualty/>. Data is not disaggregated between Iraq and Syria.

<sup>39</sup> Ongoing conversations with US Central Command (CENTCOM) targeting and legal teams involved in anti-ISIS campaign since 2014. See CENTCOM, To Provide USCENTCOM Policy on Civilian Casualty Mitigation, September 1, 2016 (on file with CIVIC); see also US Executive Order, United States Policy on Pre- and Post- Strike Measures to Address Civilian Casualties in US Operations Involving the Use of Force, July 1, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/01/executive-order-united-states-policy-pre-and-post-strike-measures>. Conversations with UK, US, Australian military forces involved in anti-ISIS air campaign. Col. Steve Warren, Operation Inherent Resolve Spokesperson, Department of Defense Press Briefing Via Teleconference in Pentagon Briefing Room from Baghdad, Iraq, October 28, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/626351/department-of-defense-press-briefing-by-colonel-warren-via-teleconference-in-th> (“We put a lot of energy into developing targets and we’ll continue to develop targets and refine them, and redevelop them and watch them and make sure that those targets meet our standards for minimizing destruction of civilian infrastructure and of course civilian casualties.”)

<sup>40</sup> Interviews with CENTCOM. Department of Defense Press Briefing by Rear Adm. Kirby in the Pentagon Briefing Room, October 14, 2014, available at <http://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/606936> (amends for Syria); National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, section 1211 (authorizing ex-gratia payments for incidental damage, personal injury or death), available at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-114s1356enr/pdf/BILLS-114s1356enr.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve Monthly Civilian Casualty Report, February 2, 2017. For review of coalition members’ efforts at investigating civilian harm see Airwars, Limited Accountability: Transparency Audit of the Coalition War Against the So-Called Islamic State, December 2016,

[https://airwars.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Airwars-report\\_Web-FINAL1.compressed.pdf](https://airwars.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Airwars-report_Web-FINAL1.compressed.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Sarah Sewall and Larry Lewis, *Reducing and Mitigating Civilian Casualties Afghanistan and Beyond: Joint Civilian Casualty Final Study*, August 31, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with CENTCOM officials and Chris Woods of Airwars, 2016.

<sup>44</sup> The state department has set up an email address to allow NGOs and the public to report alleged civilian harm: [civcas@state.gov](mailto:civcas@state.gov)

However, the difference between US numbers of civilian harm and that by organizations like Airwars is of concern and warrants further examination to improve processes to determine civilian harm, given the number of strikes in populated areas, ISIS use of civilians as human shields, and the faster process to call in air strikes to protect Iraqi forces under attack. As of January 31, 2017, in Iraq, the US has conducted 7,458 strikes, with the coalition conducting an additional 3,535.<sup>45</sup> Since December 2016, according to a new directive, US military advisors embedded with Iraqi forces in Mosul can call in airstrikes in support of Iraqi ground forces under attack (close air support) “without going through a strike cell” review process at the joint operations command in Baghdad.<sup>46</sup>

In January 2017, US President Trump issued a presidential memorandum, which requests a new strategy to defeat ISIS and recommendations for changes to any US “rules of engagement and other United States policy restrictions that exceed the requirements of international law regarding the use of force against ISIS.”<sup>47</sup> In Iraq and Afghanistan, the US learned the hard way that minimizing civilian harm can increase operational effectiveness. The high number of civilian casualties attributed to the US in these conflicts—as admitted by the US military in various studies—increased attacks on US military personnel, created tensions with the host nation government, and ultimately negatively affected the entire mission.<sup>48</sup>

Defeating Islamic State depends on adapting tactics to the situation on the ground and working with the Iraqi government and the anti-ISIS coalition to reduce civilian harm and deny ISIS opportunities to exploit such incidents. Weakening rules on the use of force, which would increase risk to civilians would undermine the intent to minimize civilian harm while fighting ISIS.

The US and anti-ISIS coalition should:

- **Reaffirm and continuously train forces on the high standards** on the use of force and rules of engagement to protect civilians learned over 15 years of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- **Exercise tactical patience** to reduce civilian harm when responding to ISIS targeting coalition aircraft from rooftops and when called upon to support Iraqi ground forces who are under fire from ISIS.
- **Assume presence of civilians** when engaging ISIS fighters located in civilian structures such as homes given the likelihood of ISIS using civilians as human shields.
- **Improve post-strike assessments** by tracking civilian harm from all weapons platforms—UAV, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft—and indirect and direct fire weapons.
- **Create Iraqi and coalition joint incident assessment teams (JIATs)** to assess civilian harm once areas have been retaken. Use data from both internal and external sources to guide on-the-ground assessments.

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<sup>45</sup> Andrew DeGrandpre and Shawn Snow, “The US Military’s Stats on Deadly Airstrikes Are Wrong. Thousands Go Unreported,” *Military Times*, February 5, 2017, <http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/airstrikes-unreported-syria-iraq-afghanistan-islamic-state-al-qaeda-taliban>

<sup>46</sup> “US Changes Rules of Engagement for Mosul Fight in Iraq,” *Military Times*, February 26, 2017, <http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/us-changes-rules-of-engagement-for-mosul-fight-in-iraq> (quoting OIR’s Air Force Col. John Dorrian).

<sup>47</sup> US Presidential Memorandum, January 28, 2017. The memorandum also requests ideas for: public diplomacy, information operations, and cyber strategies to isolate and delegitimize ISIS and its radical Islamist ideology; identification of new coalition partners in the fight against ISIS and policies to empower coalition partners to fight ISIS and its affiliates; mechanisms to cut off or seize ISIS’s financial support, including financial transfers, money laundering, oil revenue, human trafficking, sales of looted art and historical artifacts, and other revenue sources; and a detailed strategy to robustly fund the Plan.

<sup>48</sup> Sarah Sewall and Larry Lewis, *Joint Civilian Casualty Study*.

- **Train Iraqi forces to conduct** battle damage assessments that account for civilian harm and to share such data with the coalition.
- **Avoid, to the extent feasible,** use of air strikes as a primary tool in densely populated areas, and consider tactical alternatives, for example, the possible use of ground force engagement through Iraqi forces conducting more door-to-door clearing operations to minimize civilian harm.
- **Develop guidelines to provide condolence payments** to civilians harmed by the coalition. Consider coordinating with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other agencies—who are accessing retaken areas and engaging with affected communities about their losses—to forward claims that could be attributed to the coalition for review and verification.



Iraqi CTS medics treat patients at a processing station for internally displaced people near Mosul in early March 2017. (U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Alex Manne)

## Proactive Protection Efforts

Countering the Islamic State’s strategy to target civilians requires the Government of Iraq to proactively protect its population from physical violence. This can be done through a range of measures, including establishing a presence near vulnerable populations, patrols, placing ISF and police forces between likely perpetrators and potential victims, and/or proactively seeking to preempt or disrupt the operations of those who wish to harm civilians.

As areas are retaken—western Mosul could be retaken in the coming weeks or months—ISF and police need to shift from offensive operations to the stabilization phase. The retaking of territory by

the Iraqi government does not necessarily mean the defeat of ISIS. The Islamic State is already executing attacks in Baghdad and in areas retaken through suicide bombers (human or vehicle borne). Civilians in eastern Mosul expressed concern to CIVIC that ISIS sleeper cells are present. In February 2017, ISIS began attacking civilians and anyone who supports the government and Iraqi forces. These attacks signal the group's continued presence in eastern Mosul, which could lead to significant casualties and damage.

As part of proactive protection efforts, Iraqi security forces should engage in regular dialogue with communities to hear near-daily protection concerns arising from threats from the Islamic State and irregular pro-government forces. Such regular community engagement and proactive measures to address protection concerns will not only enhance the safety of civilians but also build trust between the state and the population.

Creating a civilian casualty mitigation team, discussed above, can also assist in the government's ability to proactively protect civilians. Analysis of CCMT data can bolster threat assessment capabilities and serve to identify and counter trends in ISIS-caused civilian harm (e.g. a rise in one geographical location), prioritizing scarce resources, and identifying urgent additional measures to be taken.

Another ongoing challenge for civilian protection is a shortage of military equipment and trained personnel to safely defuse bombs and IEDs. Iraqi units have Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel, but officials say more resources are needed to clear homes in areas as they are retaken so residents can return. Security forces have dug deep ditches around some villages outside eastern Mosul because EOD units have not yet cleared these areas. They are off limits to civilians.<sup>49</sup>

As the conflict transitions from active combat to the stabilization phase, police forces tasked to provide security in recaptured areas should be trained to conduct searches and make arrests according to Iraqi law and international due process standards and ensure that civilians are not arbitrarily arrested and detained.

The Government of Iraq should:

- **Ensure coordination between military and police forces** to minimize harm to civilians when operating in the same area and ensure that separate rules of engagement and rules for the use of force are clear, well-trained, and followed.
- **Engage in regular civilian and security force dialogue**—with input from both men and women—to assess security risks from ISIS, from pro-government forces, as well as sectarian threats. Engagement with communities should not expose people to risk or cause harm to them. Civilians should be encouraged to raise protection concerns without fear of reprisals.
- **Prioritize public awareness campaigns on threats from IEDs and unexploded ordnance (UXO)** so that civilians are better educated about how to avoid these dangers.

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<sup>49</sup> CIVIC visit to villages southeast of Mosul, February 2017.

- **Undertake clear-and-hold operations** when holding forces are ready to provide security. In areas cleared by ISF, a rapid escalation of violence can be expected. ISIS attempts to retake an area as well as the targeted punishment of local “collaborators” all expose the local population to significant risk. Thus, in the context of any intended operation, due focus also needs to be directed at the capability to *hold an area* retaken with properly trained forces.

Anti-ISIS coalition should:

- **Continue to train and equip ISF on IED and EOD clearance** and disposal to reduce risks to the civilian population.
- **Financially support the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)** efforts at IED and UXO clearance in Iraq.

## Screening of Civilians

Security screening for those leaving ISIS-controlled areas continues to pose challenges both to civilians and to security forces. Iraqi and Kurdish security officials stressed the need to protect the population by identifying ISIS members amongst the civilian population through robust screening. Intelligence agencies—such as Iraqi National Security Service (NSS) and the Kurdish Assayish—are officially responsible for screening at various locations around Iraq including at IDP camps. But Hashd al-Sha’abi forces (Popular Mobilization Units or PMUs)—formed in 2014 to combat the Islamic State—are manning checkpoints and engaging in the screening of civilians, even though they are not mandated, nor trained, to do so. Arbitrary detention and disappearances have been reported at screening sites and at IDP camps such as Debaga and Zelkein under control of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and Jeddah in Qayyarah under Gol control.<sup>50</sup>

As civilians begin leaving western Mosul towards IDP camps in Hamam al-Alil and Qayyara, many will encounter six to eight checkpoints run by Hashd forces between these two areas.<sup>51</sup>

Families described the screening process at these sites. Men and boys, aged 15 and above, are separated from women and other children and taken to a separate tent. Names are checked against various official and informal lists of names of ISIS members. Tribes also send a “blacklist” of alleged ISIS members to Kurdish and Iraqi officials. In addition to the lists, information given by IDPs is also used.<sup>52</sup> But much remains unclear on how these formal and informal lists are compiled. How is the information on these lists being corroborated? How is an individual’s alleged ties to ISIS actually determined, and which authority or security agency has the final word? UNAMI has sent Iraqi and Kurdish officials guidelines on screenings, but it’s unclear if there is widespread implementation.

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<sup>50</sup> Human Rights Watch, Iraq: 37 Men Fleeing Fighting Detained, November 10, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/10/iraq-37-men-fleeing-fighting-detained>; Human Rights Watch, Iraq: Men Fleeing Mosul Held in Secret, February 1, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/02/iraq-men-fleeing-mosul-held-secret>

<sup>51</sup> CIVIC team visited the road between Qayyarah and Hamam al-Alil in February 2017 and observed that some Hashd members looked under the age of 18.

<sup>52</sup> Interviews with IDPs, security officials, and humanitarian organizations, July and October 2016, and January 2017.

Government of Iraq should:

- **Adopt and implement consistent guidelines on screening civilians** and train security forces on how to respect their dignity and prevent abuses.

## Train and Advise Mission

The 68 members of the global coalition against the Islamic State should continue to support the GoI and the KRG to secure Iraq and protect civilians even after major areas have been retaken from ISIS. Iraqi and Peshmerga forces have been the lead ground forces and have made impressive gains against ISIS, but are heavily reliant on coalition intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance (ISR) assets and coalition airstrikes. US military personnel, now over 5,000—as well as those of other coalition members—are providing logistical assistance, fire support, close air support, and high-value targeting, as well as advising behind the frontlines.

Coalition training to Iraqi and Peshmerga forces at training centers across the country should build on current program of instruction with scenario-based training on civilian protection that are tailored to challenges in Iraq. And the coalition, including NATO members, should commit to supporting Iraq in a new train-and-advise mission that supports building Iraqi and Peshmerga force capabilities to secure Iraq and protect civilians.<sup>53</sup>

As the conflict evolves, Iraqi security and police forces will need help disrupting and preventing attacks, minimizing triggers of Sunni-Shia violence, and protests against corruption or lack of services. Police forces should be trained on engaging communities and use appropriate force to patrol and secure areas.

Anti-ISIS coalition should:

- **Continue support to Iraqi and Peshmerga forces** in train-and-advise capacity post-Mosul and focus on strengthening Iraqi and Peshmerga military and police institutions including in the development of protection and harm mitigation tactics.
- **Support community police training** and non-violent crowd control training in retaken areas.

## Oversight of Pro-Government Forces

Iraq is awash with armed actors. In Mosul, and surrounding areas, there are numerous forces, some of who are trained for different missions and with disparate allegiances and agendas. For instance, in Mosul alone there is ISF 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 9th Divisions, CTS, Federal Police, Iraqi National Security Service, Hashd al-Sha'abi forces, Nineveh Peoples Protection Unit, Nineveh Police Force,

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<sup>53</sup> On February 5, 2017, NATO announced a new training program on IEDs, which compliments NATO's efforts at training Iraqi experts on cyber defense. "NATO Launches Training Efforts in Iraq,"

February 5, 2017, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_140607.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_140607.htm?selectedLocale=en); NATO Trains Iraqi Experts on Cyber Defense, November 21, 2016, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_139179.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_139179.htm?selectedLocale=en)

Hashd affiliated with Sunni Shabak tribes, and Hashd al-Asha'iri (local Sunni Arab tribes taking the lead for Sunni-majority areas in Mosul), as well as Yazidi militias.<sup>54</sup>

In December 2016, the Iraqi parliament passed a law integrating the roughly 150,000 Shia majority PMU into the country's armed forces.<sup>55</sup> According to Major General Shuweli of the Deputy Nineveh Operations Command, the PMUs will report directly to the prime minister.<sup>56</sup> The law allocates a percentage of the PMU forces to be Sunni. It is unclear how many fighters will be demobilized.<sup>57</sup> The new law requires the PMUs to end loyalties and affiliations with all political parties. The Iraqi Parliament must approve the head of each division and any higher-ranking commander within the PMU.<sup>58</sup> Sunni parliamentarians, however, expressed concern that such a law legitimizes "militias," who are not trained and professional like the Iraqi army.<sup>59</sup>

There are significant concerns for the protection of civilians navigating survival amidst myriad armed actors with different roles and oversight by the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Ministry of Interior (MOI). The professional behavior of CTS officers in dealing with civilians caught up in the fighting has helped alleviate people's mistrust of Iraqi forces. But this support needs to be maintained by ensuring that all pro-government forces behave professionally and don't engage in revenge attacks.

Should pro-government forces and police engage in mass arrests, kidnappings and economic marginalization of Sunni communities, support for ISIS will continue. As noted above, there are allegations of abuse attributed to some pro-government forces, which need to be investigated. A member of parliament from Nineveh, Sheikh Mohiddin Mezouari, in February said Mosul residents have lived through ISIS horror and now fear being arrested and extorted by various armed groups in eastern Mosul. Security forces, including "militias," are undertaking mass arrests to identify ISIS affiliates responsible for shelling and suicide attacks, he said.<sup>60</sup> Two witnesses are needed by pro-government forces to arrest someone for being an ISIS member in Mosul.<sup>61</sup>

Proper oversight of pro-government forces, eventual disarmament plans, and/or integration of vetted individuals into security forces is critical to ensuring that the so-called liberators don't turn into predatory government actors. Civilian protection is the only way populations will support the government and shrink the space for ISIS to regroup.

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<sup>54</sup> Hashd al-Asha'iri are estimated to be 15,000 fighters from Mosul tribes trained by the US forces. Interviews with Iraqi and US officials, February 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Antonopoulos, "Law passes making the PMU a Part of Iraq's National Forces," al-Masdar News, December 19, 2016, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/law-passes-making-pmu-part-iraqs-national-forces/>

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Major General Abdulkarim Abduljabbar al-Shuweli, Deputy Commander of the Nineveh Operations Command and head of PMUs in Nineveh, February 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Omar Sattar, "Why Iraq's Sunnis fear new PMU Law," al-Monitor, December 1, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/11/pmu-iraq-security-forces-shiite-sunni.html>

<sup>58</sup> Mohammed Tawfeeq and Salma Abdelaziz, "Sunnis outraged by Iraq law legalizing Shiite-led militias," CNN, November 28, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/28/middleeast/iraq-shiite-militias-legal-sunni-outrage/>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> "The Campaign for Mosul," *Al Quds Al Arabi*, February 21, 2017, [http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=677571&utm\\_source=The+Campaign+for+Mosul%3A+February+1-21%2C+2017&utm\\_campaign=The+Campaign+for+Mosul%3A+February+1-21%2C+2017&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=677571&utm_source=The+Campaign+for+Mosul%3A+February+1-21%2C+2017&utm_campaign=The+Campaign+for+Mosul%3A+February+1-21%2C+2017&utm_medium=email)

<sup>61</sup> Interviews with security officials, February 2017.

Government of Iraq should:

- **Ensure only trained and vetted government-backed forces** are providing security and remove any official support of armed groups not formally under the MOD or MOI or Commander of the Armed Forces of Iraq.
- **Work with UNDP for plans to disarm** and demobilize forces.
- **Investigate and hold** pro-government forces accountable for unlawful actions.

## Stabilization Efforts and Rebuilding Trust with Civilians

ISIS has left much of Iraq in ruins. Many Iraqis have lost everything—including their homes and vehicles—in airstrikes or car bombs or from the ground fighting. Those returning home have found their neighborhoods, towns, and villages destroyed. Stabilization and reconstruction in Mosul and the religiously and ethnically diverse Nineveh plains will be complex. These requires planning and resources to help locals stand up a government, provide essential services, assist communities with reconciliation, and heal from the psychological and social damage of the Islamic State’s crimes.

People told CIVIC they hope the government will provide services and monetary assistance so residents can rebuild their lives. A 2009 Iraqi law providing monetary payments for conflict victims has been suspended since the fight against ISIS began. Livelihood programs that reflect the skills and economic activity from the pre-ISIS era need to be developed. Infrastructure and industries destroyed in the fighting or paralyzed under ISIS rule need to be rebuilt. On February 4, the court in Hamdaniya reopened after two-and-half years, much to the joy of petitioners, lawyers, and judges. “We are a resilient people and will put the dark times of Daesh behind us,” said Judge Salim Mohammad Noori.<sup>62</sup> These steps of rebuilding state institutions need support from the central government and the international community.

The Islamic State gained support in Iraq because of years of grievances and open revolt against the Maliki-led central government’s sectarian-driven policies. But the brutality of ISIS rule has made the majority of Sunnis disavow ISIS and hope for reconciliation with the Abadi-led central government. “Daesh destroyed Sunnis; they took advantage of our problems, they are the enemy of the Sunnis,” said Salim, echoing a prevailing sentiment amongst Mosul residents.

Civilians also expressed cautious optimism about the future. “We have not had good leaders,” said Mohammad from eastern Mosul. “For us to rebuild, we need a government that is not sectarian, that provides services and is accountable to the local people.”<sup>63</sup>

Government of Iraq should:

- **Renew the 2009 Iraqi Compensation Law** to address civilian harm and provide monetary assistance to those who have suffered losses including the death of loved ones, injuries, and property damage.

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with Judge Salim Mohammad Noori, Chief Judge of Mosul, Hamdaniya, February 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Salim, Erbil, February 2017.



- **Rebuild areas damaged by the Islamic State.** Prioritize return of essential services such as water, electricity, and health care. Reopen schools and courts. Develop livelihood programs that reflect the skills and economy of liberated areas.
- **Identify capable leaders** who have local support and train them on governance to lead multiethnic Mosul.

Anti-ISIS coalition should:

- **Fund the United Nation's humanitarian appeal** for Iraq and support the Gol's reconstruction efforts and community-based approaches to governance, economic development, and the rebuilding of courts and schools.

## **Organizational Mission**

The mission of Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) is to improve protection for civilians caught in conflicts around the world. We call on and advise international organizations, governments, militaries, and armed non-state actors to adopt and implement policies to prevent civilian harm. When civilians are harmed we advocate for the provision of amends and post-harm assistance. We bring the voices of civilians themselves to those making decisions affecting their lives.

## **Acknowledgments**

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**RECOGNIZE. PREVENT. PROTECT. AMEND.**

## **ABOUT THE REPORT**

In late January, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), supported by a US-led coalition, retook eastern Mosul from the Islamic State (ISIS). After a three-week pause, ISF is now engaged in operations to retake western Mosul. The area's old buildings, narrow streets, and dense population of 750,000-800,000 will make the task difficult and places civilian men, women, and children at risk. CIVIC's MENA Director and Program Officer travelled to eastern Mosul in February and met with civilians, humanitarian organizations, Iraqi and Kurdish government and security officials, as well as select coalition members currently in Iraq. This policy brief assesses progress and challenges to protecting civilians and stabilizing Iraq after the defeat of ISIS in Mosul, and also offers recommendations.

## **ABOUT CENTER FOR CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT**

CIVIC's mission is to improve protection for civilians caught in conflicts around the world. We call on and advise international organizations, governments, militaries, and armed non-state actors to adopt and implement policies to prevent civilian harm. When civilians are harmed we advocate for the provision of amends and post-harm assistance. We bring the voices of civilians themselves to those making decisions affecting their lives.

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