

ISIL 'down but not out' in Iraq; UN envoy urges efforts to defeat group's extremist ideology

22 November 2017 – The military victory against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) is only one component of a complex battle that addresses the root causes of extremist ideology, the United Nations envoy for Iraq said Wednesday.

“Da'esh remains able and determined to continue devastating random attacks against the Iraqi civilian population, against civilians globally,” Ján Kubiš, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq ([UNAMI](#)), [told](#) the Security Council.

“Da'esh is down but not yet out even in Iraq,” he stressed, adding that “only by defeating its loathsome ‘takfiri’ ideology, choking off its external support, and addressing the causes that prompted so many Iraqis to join or tolerate Da'esh can this terrorist organization finally be eliminated.”

He noted that on 17 November, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) fully recaptured Rawa, the last remaining densely settled area under Da'esh control in Iraq. Since summer 2014, Da'esh has lost 95 per cent of the territory it once controlled in Iraq and Syria and more than 7.5 million people have been liberated from its grasp.

But “this victory has come at a very high cost,” said Mr. Kubiš, noting that thousands of fighters and civilians were killed or wounded, hundreds of thousands of children brainwashed, entire cities in ruins, and some six million people have been displaced.

Further, Da'esh has exterminated or enslaved thousands of Muslims, as well as minority communities, particularly women and girls, in action amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, perhaps even genocide.

Mr. Kubiš encouraged the global coalition against Da'esh to continue both military and non military efforts to help Iraq ensure the lasting and sustainable defeat of Da'esh.

He said that inside Iraq, priority must be accorded to facilitating the voluntary return of internally displaced persons, stabilization, reconstruction and rehabilitation. It would also be crucial to reform the security sector and to enforce law and order against armed groups outside State control, including criminal gangs, militias and tribal elements.

Tensions between Central Government and Kurdistan Regional Government

He went on to state that among the prominent current concerns are the tensions between the Central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government

in the wake of a decision by the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to hold a unilaterally-declared independence referendum. The central authorities have rejected the referendum as unconstitutional and have taken steps to re assert federal authority over Iraq's external border crossings, including the international airports in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

On 6 November, he reported, the Federal Supreme Court issued an opinion stating that the constitution does not provide for authorizing the secession of any component of Iraq's federal system, and that the referendum was illegal.

All outstanding issues between the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government must be resolved through sustainable solutions based on the constitution, he emphasized, noting that UNAMI has also called for immediate negotiations with Government representatives on such issues as the budget, salaries and oil exports.

Turning to elections, he said the new Board of Commissioners for the Independent High Electoral Commission has a herculean task ahead, including holding two simultaneous elections, a tight timeline and security concerns.

He called upon the Council of Representatives to pass legislation to ensure that elections are held on 15 May 2018, adding that a United Nations electoral needs assessment mission has been deployed to help in identifying priority areas for support. UNAMI has also completed a draft law on the Establishing of National Specialized Court on Most Serious Crimes, to be discussed with relevant authorities.

Turning to the question of missing Kuwaiti and third country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including that country's national archives, he said Iraq and Kuwait served as models of good neighbourly relations in a region fraught with instability. Iraq's Government has made impressive efforts to identify grave sites, but efforts to identify missing Kuwaiti property has met with limited success.

Although there has been no progress in locating the national archives, the Government of Iraq has identified more than 6,000 Kuwaiti books. The United Nations and the international community will continue to pursue the matter and to support Iraq on that question until that chapter could be closed, he said.