

UN urges 'post-ISIL' new Iraq to draw on religious diversity, support minorities

As Iraq rebuilds after defeating a terrorist group, the Government must draw on religious diversity and protect minorities, including Yezidi and Christians, a senior United Nations official has said.

"Iraq needs all its components, all its ethnic and religious groups, to rebuild in the [post-Da'esh period](#) and prosper in the future as a stable and united country," said the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, in a press release issued Monday.

He urged the authorities to proactively support these communities and ensure the return of minorities who had been persecuted by the terrorist group, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Millions of Iraqis have been displaced since the rise of ISIL and due to a battle to oust the terrorists.

His call comes in the wake of recent criminal and terrorist acts that targeted members of minority communities in Iraq.

Christians are one of the ancient communities in this country, dating back to the early days of Christianity and Mesopotamia. This indigenous community, which in the 1980s counted almost 1.3 million, has dwindled to an estimated 400,000 today, according to community leaders.

Last Thursday, three Christian family members were killed in Baghdad by armed men who stormed their house and stabbed them to death. In the last three years, Christians, particularly in Ninewa Governorate, suffered from the Da'esh terrorism.

Also last week, a member of the Sabeen Mandaean community was kidnapped from his shop in Baghdad and his body was later found on a street. In Nassiriyah in the country's south, another Sabeen Mandaean was stabbed at his shop but survived after his Muslim neighbours came to his aid.

"Iraq draws its strength from [its cultural and religious diversity](#), and its rich history. This treasure should be protected and nurtured by the Government and the people of Iraq," Mr. Kubiš said.

"There is no place for intolerance and discrimination, for targeting and suppressing minorities," he added, urging the Government to support and protect Yezidi, Christians, Shabak, Sabeen Madaeans, and other minorities.