

With Mosul reclaimed, accountability key to heal Iraq's 'ISIL wounds' – UN rights chief

11 July 2017 – Although the retaking of Mosul city from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters by Iraqi Government forces marks a significant turning point in the conflict, Iraq must ensure that those who committed crimes must be held accountable, the United Nations human rights chief has said.

Dialogue between communities needs to begin now to try to halt the cycle of violence, and to promote accountability for the crimes against Iraqis, said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein in a news release from his Office ([OHCHR](#)).

The right to truth must prevail to ensure ISIL's crimes do not poison Iraqi society for generations, he stressed.

With Mosul now reclaimed, the extent of ISIL's violations and abuses has become even more evident. Information gathered by OHCHR strongly suggests that international crimes may have been perpetrated by ISIL during the three years that the group was in control not only of Mosul but of large areas of Iraq.

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ISIL's serious and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and gross abuses and violations of human rights, including the sexual slavery of women and girls, committed over these past three years have left deep scars on Iraqi society, Mr. Zeid said. This includes the abduction of 1,636 women and girls, and 1,733 men and boys from the Yezidi community who remain unaccounted for.

Even now, ISIL fighters can terrify and kill through bombings and abductions, and people are still being subjected to daily horrors and suffering in remaining ISIL strongholds, such as Tal Afar and Hawijah, Mr. Zeid warned.

He also noted that there have also been allegations of human rights violations and abuses by the Government security and associated forces, as well as by individuals taking revenge against captured ISIL fighters or people accused of supporting them.

Such punishments are an act of vengeance that works against national reconciliation and social cohesion, he warned.

The most fitting response... is to step up efforts to create an Iraq

grounded in equality and the rule of law," he said.

The High Commissioner welcomed the fact that the judicial authorities have launched investigations into allegations of serious human rights violations committed by pro-government forces, and he called on the Government to make the findings public and ensure that perpetrators are brought before courts.

Given the large-scale nature of serious crimes, Iraq should also seek legal reforms to allow domestic courts to have jurisdiction over international crimes. To this end, the OHCHR and the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq ([UNAMI](#)) are supporting efforts to initiate a legal framework to establish a specialised court competent to try alleged perpetrators for international crimes.

"I urge the Iraqi Government to prioritise advancing accountability and also repeat my call for the Government of Iraq to become a party to the Statute of the International Criminal Court ([ICC](#))," he said.