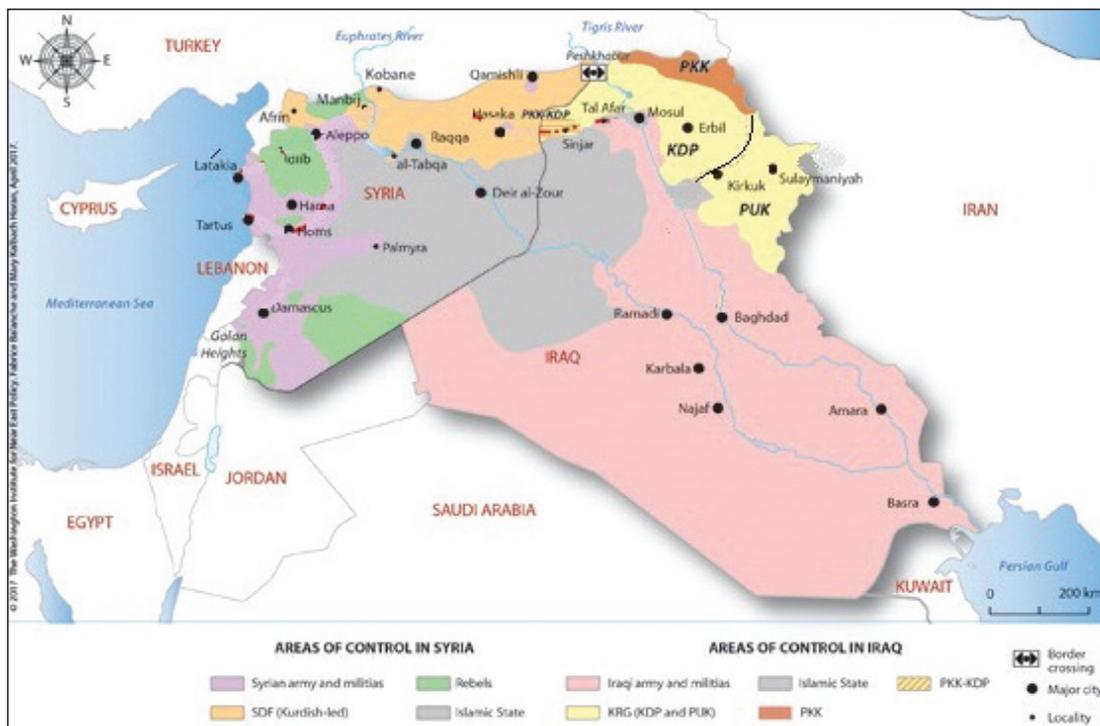


Delegation Report of the visit to Iraqi Kurdistan

17th – 22nd July 2017

UNITE the Union & the Centre for Kurdish Progress



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1. Executive Summary:

- Contained in the pages that follow is a report of a recent delegation visit to Iraqi Kurdistan that took place between 17th and 22nd July 2017. The delegation consisted of the Director of International for UNITE the Union and the Director of the Centre for Kurdish Progress;
- The delegation met with a whole range of people and organisations including Members of Parliament, the Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament, The KRG government's official spokesperson, senior figures from various political parties, representatives of civil society, NGOs and the media;
- It is clear that Iraqi Kurdistan is going through an extremely critical moment the outcome of which will have huge consequences for the entire Kurdish population and political movement – including those in Syria, Turkey and Iran. It will also have enormous ramifications for the region and global politics as a whole;
- In terms of security the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan is tense and fragile with Deash front lines still extremely close in cities such as Kirkuk, and with Mosul only recently liberated and less than one hour drive from the capital Erbil. The political tensions between the KDP and PUK are without doubt heightening tensions between the respectively aligned Peshmerga forces and wider communities. In addition the PKK remains a very significant military and political force that controls swathes of territory and has a strong presence in many key areas;
- The general political situation is also very tense with the government proposing a referendum on independence for the 25th September 2017 and the opposition demanding that the parliament must take the decision not the President. However in order for the parliament to be able to make the decision it must first be reopened following its closure in October 2015. In addition to the calls to reopen parliament there are also demands that new presidential and parliamentary elections be held, given that the president has already twice extended his term of office beyond the two term maximum and that the parliamentary mandate has now expired;
- The economic situation is deteriorating very sharply with growth plunging, unemployment rising quickly, government salaries being reduced to only one third of their former level, per capita income falling, and a huge budget deficit opening up. There is also real anger concerning the oil deal that has been made between Kurdish president Mahmood Barzani and Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and a demand that the deal be made public and parliament be allowed to scrutinise it;
- Civil society is extremely weak with organisations finding it very difficult to operate due to the political climate and tensions. Some fledgling NGOs exist and are making huge efforts but due to the political situation trade unions are effectively non-existent, even in sectors such as oil and cement;
- The UK and other governments, together with other international institutions must take more active steps to demonstrate they are not solely aligned with the official governing body of the KRG – especially as it no longer has any legitimate popular mandate. They should make it clear they support dialogue and fully inclusive solutions, respect for democratic values and the rule of law and give more solid support to organisations supporting the strengthening and development of civil society as a whole;

Full Report

2. Purpose of visit:

The purpose of this small delegation was to gain a better insight into the current political situation in the Kurdish region of Iraq. With the Kurdish population split between the four different political entities of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, and the highly interrelated nature of the conflicts and struggles in various parts of Kurdistan, it is impossible to view, understand and develop coherent solidarity strategies that are focused only on individual parts.

Therefore, with great attention being placed on the deteriorating situation in Turkey as well as the dynamic and moving picture in Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan), it was felt a visit to Iraq would be of considerable assistance in enhancing understanding and informing solidarity work, particularly as the looming independence referendum in the country is further focusing attention on this particular area.

3. Organisations and parties met with during visit:

The delegation lasted from the evening of Monday 17th July through to the morning of Saturday 22nd July. The visit included time in PUK controlled Sulaymanyia and the outlying area as well as Erbil the 'capital' of Iraqi Kurdistan and centre of the KDP controlled area. A visit to the city of Halabja also took place.

Politicians and organisations met included:

Day 1 – evening meetings following arrival in Sulaymanyia:

- Shorish Haji – former Iraqi MP and now a leading figure in the Goran party;
- Dr Youssef Mohammend – Speaker of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament and member of the Goran party;
- Dr Hussein Amen – Kurdistan National Congress (KNK)

Day 2 – 1st meeting in Sulaymanyia, subsequent meetings in Erbil until evening meeting with Adel Murad in Sulaymanyia;

- Dr Bahram Saleh – Former Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq (2004-2009), former Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, KRG (2009-2012), and Chair of the American University in Sulaymaniyah;
- Safeen Dizayee – Spokesperson of the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government Niharvan Barzani;
- Goran MP – at house in Erbil
- Dr Goran Zangana – Medical doctor currently practising in Scotland and returning to Sulaymaniyah soon, very active in Goran politics in the UK and Iraq;
- Nasim Ahmed Ali – Head of Administrative Board of Public Aid Organisation (PAO) together with colleagues at the PAO office in Erbil;
- Members of the local Goran Branch of Erbil – at their new offices since the previous ones were burned down around 18 months ago;
- Adel Murad – leading PUK politician together with other senior figures, including the former head of the customs service Seyid Ekrim of the KNK who was jailed for 3 years by the Barzani led administration;
- Adem Uzun from KNK Brussels office;
- Azos Rashid – son of Shanaz Rashid leading politician from the PUK, business person and political activists who grew up in the UK but spends around 1/3 of his time in Iraqi Kurdistan;

Day 3 – Sulaymanyia;

- Meeting with various MPs from different parties including Goran, Komala, PUK, and the Islamic Party of Kurdistan, individuals included Parwa Ali Hama (Goran), Salar Mahmood (PUK), Dr Sherko Hama (Goran), Sinor Mahmood (interpreter & advisor), Akar Mohammed Abdullah (advisor and head of President's office);
- Visits to Ashti and Arbat refugee camps preceded by a meeting with the Director of Save the Children responsible for administering the camps. Both the camps are on the outskirts of Sulaymanyia with Ashti primarily supporting refugees from Rojava (Syria) and Arbat a much greater mix including Yazidi's from Shengal as well as Sunni refugees from Mosul;
- Visit to the Anfall museum documenting Kurdish persecution and attempted genocide by Saddam Hussein as well as the current struggles in Rojava and against ISIS in Iraq;
- Meeting with Shanaz Rashid at Kurdsat broadcasting headquarters (PUK aligned);
- Ezat Sabir Esmaeel – MP for Sulaymanyia and head of the parliament's economic committee;

Day 4 – Visit to Halabja and Iranian border region followed by meetings in Sulaymanyia;

- Formal meeting and discussion with Goran MP and speaker of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament Yousef Mohammed;

Day 5 – Sulaymanyia;

- Evar Ibrahim Goran MP from Erbil;
- Chia Mustafa – son of Nashwirvan Mustafa MP and founder of Goran Party;

4. Military/security situation:

Overall Iraqi Kurdistan remains on the very front line of the battle against Daesh. Iraqi troops have only very recently been able to push Daesh out of Iraq's second city Mosul and the civilian toll has been very high and the level of infrastructure destruction enormous.

Although not a Kurdish city, Mosul is nonetheless only one hour drive from the Kurdish capital of Erbil and the psychological impact of the proximity of the fighting and the level of threat weighs heavily over all Kurdish politics in Iraq. The military operations have also created a situation where large numbers of Shia militias from the Hashd al-Shaabi are now stationed in and around Mosul which, with the tension concerning the proposed independence referendum rising (see below), it is easy to understand brings very real added tension to the Kurdish region.

In Shengal, the Yazidi Kurds populated area where Daesh committed massacres in 2015 until they were driven out, forces of the KDP, Hashd al Shaabi and PKK allied forces are all currently in a tense stand-off with no side prepared to cede further territory.

Allegations abound that KDP Peshmerga effectively deserted the area when Daesh attacked in 2015 with only PKK forces arriving to finally offer any protection to the population. Having organised the population into a local defence force along the lines of the YPG and YPJ in Rojava – the Yazidi force being called the YBS – the units are not prepared to cede control of the territory back to the KDP Peshmerga;

Kirkuk is the oil capital of Iraq and is largely a Kurdish city controlled by the PUK aligned Peshmerga with the support of some several hundred PKK fighters who were requested to enter the city and help defend it against Daesh as the city was on the verge of falling in 2015.

Mirroring the situation further north in Mosul there are also now large numbers of the Iraqi government supported Shia militias stationed around the city as well as a small Turkish army base set up allegedly to protect the ethnic Turkmen of the area. The city is still very tense and extremely vulnerable with the front line only 10 miles away and frequent car bombs and attacks launched by Daesh. The future status of Kirkuk is critical to Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq as a whole and it is highly likely to be a political and possibly military flash point in the coming weeks and months.

Therefore despite the relative calm of Erbil and Sulaymanyia Iraqi Kurdistan as a whole is without doubt in a fragile situation with serious sources of tension and potential conflict in very close proximity to many areas.

5. Displaced persons:

Due to the conflict with Daesh there are a huge number of displaced persons in Iraqi Kurdistan currently numbering an estimated 1.8 million in a population of only 5 million. Although dealing with such a large number of displaced people would be difficult at the best of times, the political and economic difficulties (see below) and general strain of the security situation make providing shelter and care for so many an enormous challenge.

The delegation visited the offices of Kurdistan Save the Children in Sulaymaynia and had a full briefing and overview from the director and other senior officials in the organisation. Visits were then made to the Ashti and Arbat refugee camps to see the situation first hand. The situation in the two camps was markedly different with the infrastructure and facilities in the Ashti camp significantly better.

At the Ashti camp – which houses mostly refugees who have fled the fighting in Syria – the accommodation was mostly breeze block style but the camp was orderly with facilities and running water and electricity. At the Arbat camp – which houses a full mix of people including Yhazidi's from Shengal and refugees from Mosul – the accommodation was much less permanent with families often using plastic sheets and tarpaulin for shelter.

Running water and electricity were clearly not as stable and regular in supply as in the Ashti camp. The delegation was also told that serious tensions and fears existed between the different groups of refugees who were sometimes forced to live alongside those who had been on the very opposite side during the conflict.

Despite the very difficult conditions in the camp – including extreme heat in the summer and sub-zero temperatures in winter – the situation of those in the camps is described as better than for the vast majority of refugees who are simply housed in the society at large. Unlike the camp residents those in the society at large cannot be so easily supported and simply do not have the access to even the most basic medical or educational facilities.

6. Political situation & independence referendum:

The political situation in Iraqi Kurdistan is extremely complex and highly polarised. Although Kurdistan has regional autonomy under the Iraqi constitution, it is in reality divided into two separate zones of influence that operate effectively as two separate states within the region.

The KDP controlled area includes the capital city of Erbil and its international airport and has some 60 000 KDP aligned Peshmerga providing security, while the PUK controlled area includes the largest city Sulaymaynia and has a further 60 000 PUK Peshmerga providing security across the territory. The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and its' military wing the HPG also control a large swathe of territory in the Qandil mountains area and are clearly a very important political and military force in the region.

The Iraqi Kurdistan region is currently in the throes of a very serious political crisis that shows no signs of abating. At the middle of this crisis is the fact that KRG President Barzani should have left office in 2013 but has extended his term twice – the first time from 2013 until 2015 and the second from 2015 until 2017. In addition to this the parliament – which is located in KDP controlled Erbil – was closed at the order of President Barzani in October 2015 and has not reopened since. The speaker of the parliament – Dr Youssef Mohammed of the Gorran Party – has been barred from entering the parliament building and indeed the whole of KDP controlled territory¹.

In the middle of this deep constitutional crisis President Barzani has now placed the issue of a referendum on Kurdish independence from Iraqi on the table with the intention of holding it on the 25th September 2017. Although there is without doubt huge support for the idea of Kurdish independence, there is also huge scepticism as to why the referendum has been called at this moment and why it is being done in the manner that it is.

There is a real belief amongst opposition parties and politicians President Barzani has called the referendum as a means to deflect attention away from the dire and deteriorating economic situation, while at the same time causing the opposition severe difficulties concerning how to respond. None of the opposition wishes to appear to be against Kurdish independence, yet there is quite understandably very strong feelings that any referendum must be called in the correct constitutional manner and with the approval of the parliament.

There are also very strong fears amongst many in the opposition that a referendum vote for independence that is not supported by the wider international community could cause huge problems for the new country and could lead to dramatic economic and potentially military problems.

The Iraqi national government, Iran, Turkey, the US, UK, France, EU and host of other countries have all expressed their clear opposition to the referendum and move towards independence at this stage.

At the time of the visit discussions were clearly underway to try and find a way through the situation; however it was also becoming clear that a reopening of the parliament together with fresh parliamentary and presidential elections would have to be part of the process through which a referendum would be agreed.

¹ The last election to the Kurdistan Regional Parliament took place in September 2013 and produced a parliament with the following breakdown – KDP 38 seats, Gorran Movement 24, PUK 18, Kurdish Islamic Union 10, Islamic Group of Kurdistan 6, and 1 seat each for the Kurdistan Social Democratic Party, Kurdistan Communist Party, Kurdistan Toilers Party and the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan. In addition there are 5 seats reserved for Turkmen and Assyrians and 1 seat for Armenians. The total number of seats is 111.

7. Economic situation and oil deal:

The economic situation in the region has deteriorated rapidly during the last 2-3 years and it is not exaggerated to say that something of a real economic crisis is developing with unemployment now standing at around 20%, economic growth negative and per capita income falling rapidly.

Some 90% of government revenues come from oil exports and of the 5 million population some 1.2 million receive a government salary, so if the government stops paying – and they have reduced government payments to one third of their former value in the last few months – virtually every household is affected.

There is a very strong feeling that the oil revenues are being misused and are finding their way into the hands of a few families and organisations that are making enormous profits, while the rest of the society reaps no rewards at all. It was explained that even in the very best of times only some 50% of revenues ever found their way back into the wider economy via government revenues and spending, but that now the situation was dramatically worse.

At the very centre of this developing economic crisis is an oil deal that was struck between the Barzani government and the Turkish government of President Erdogan. Although very difficult to verify entirely as the deal itself has never even been placed in front of the parliament for scrutiny – the parliament was closed down 18 months after the oil deal was made in October 2013, various people explained their understanding of the deal from the sources of information that they have access too. In principle it appears that for each barrel sold or smuggled the following amounts were allocated:

- o \$3 per barrel to the Erdogan family (President of Turkey);
- o \$1.5 per barrel to the Barzani family;
- o Commission payments on a per barrel basis to HSBC, Halkbank (Turkish bank), Gulf Keystone, Gazprom and the Kurdistan National Bank - which gets 10% and which is owned by the son of the Kurdish President Mesud Barzani;

Another important aspect to recall when considering this staggering deal that has not even been made available to either the Kurdish or Iraqi parliaments, is that Kurdish oil a very low lift price standing at only \$5-\$7 per barrel. Therefore despite the permanent discounted rate that the oil is being sold at – between 25% and 33% below the official price - and despite the current low price of oil per barrel, there is still an enormous level of profit to be earned.

The current oil deal was signed between Erdogan and Barzani at the end of October 2013, and, on the basis of accusations that the Kurdish region was not remitting the due share of oil revenues to the Iraqi central government, the Iraqi government ceased to remit the 17% of income from the central state to the region in February 2014. This produced a situation where income from the central government totalling \$15bn in 2013, was replaced by only \$5bn income from the sale of oil in 2014.

It is important to recall that when the chair of the parliament's economic committee raised these issues and made a report, the response of the government was to issue five arrest warrants against the said MP and to ultimately close the parliament down in October 2015.

The rapidly deteriorating economic situation and the heavily disputed management of the country's huge oil assets therefore currently stand at the very centre of Kurdish politics.

8. Civil society and trade unions:

Civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan operates in a very difficult situation and is therefore understandably not in a strong and stable state. The general security situation and the conflict with Daesh obviously makes the overall climate difficult, however the internal situation with the existence of completely separate areas run by the KDP and PUK respectively, and the tense political standoff between them, only serves to make the situation for NGOs even more difficult as suspicions and questions of political allegiance and loyalty immediately arise and therefore act as a strong brake on development and any new initiatives.

Although trade unions formally have a role in Iraq as a whole and also in the Kurdistan region, as far as was possible to establish there is no real effective trade unions presence in the society. While it is true that some trade unions do exist – the global union federation IndustriAll for example has a Kurdish Iraqi organisation in membership – most organisations of workers tend to be professional associations with a compulsory membership that function more to control qualifications etc. These organisations have no real internal democracy or autonomy.

An indication of the state of trade unions in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan can be gained from the fact that the ITUC does not even include Iraq in their global rights index on the basis that no affiliate exists there. There has not been an article on Iraq on the ITUC website for more than five years.

In the same vein although the ILO have had projects in the past they do not provide an overview of the trade union situation on the ground. The global union IndustriAll reported in 2010 that its' two Iraqi Kurdish affiliates (that were allied with the KDP and PUK respectively), merged in 2010. However there is no recent information on any developments and no contact was made with the organisation.

Somewhat more encouragingly a recent report by an organisation called the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative gives details of a project started in 2016 that is due to last four years. The report gives details of a study carried out to assess the current state of play and make recommendations as to what measures are needed to address the dire state of workers' rights and independent union organisations. The project outlined above is supported by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) – a very well-known and respected organisation with who UNITE has had good contact in the past.

NPA also supports the Public Aid Organisation (PAO) initiative that the delegation visited in Erbil. PAO exists to work with many different groups and aims specifically to deal with:

- Internally displaced peoples;
- Building democracy in Iraq;
- Helping develop the economy with specific focus on small businesses with the support of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Norwegian Government;
- Women's issues and domestic violence and participation with the United Nations;
- Children's issues together with Save the Children
- Human Rights and general civil society work with NPA;

It was reported that in some of the areas there is cooperation with the authorities and no direct conflict, however this is not because the projects are necessarily wanted or supported, but rather because the project organisers have sought out government involvement and support making it difficult for the authorities to refuse to cooperate on the more humanitarian aspects of the work.

By contrast when the work of the organisation has focused on sensitive areas, such as prisoners and the rights of prisoners, then there has been no hesitation on the part of the authorities to refuse permission to meet, to close down gatherings, and even to harass and jail activists.

PAO has sought to focus on building networks of individuals and organisations working in the target areas which has to date centred on five particular networks including justice for prisoners, electoral observance, ethnic minorities, journalists and health. As an example of ever present political pressure the leader of a political prisoners' organisation was arrested and jailed as was the leader of the network that had been established. In addition a project on participation and democracy in Duhok was banned on the basis that the local rulers did not support the aims and objectives of the project. The delegation was told that a recent training session with prison officers revealed that there had been a threefold increase in the prison population in recent months reflecting the growing political tension in the country.

The problem of the over powering nature of the political parties and the suffocation of all space outside the political realm was abundantly clear. However the critical importance of international presence, pressure and assistance for the development of a functioning and influential civil society was repeatedly underlined.

9. Media and press freedoms:

Various discussions during the visit revealed the deep problems in relation to journalistic and press freedoms. There can be very little doubt that most media outlets are closely tied to their allied political parties and that news is reported very much through the prism of that particular perspective. However, while it might rightly be argued that much of the UK or US press is also massively influenced by the political persuasions of proprietors, the clear fear and intimidation that exists for some media outlets to operate effectively across the entire Kurdish region is a cause for serious concern.

The delegation was informed of reporters being openly physically attacked and for it being impossible to enter and operate in the wrong territory.

10. Conclusions:

On the general situation in Iraqi Kurdistan:

- Although officially only one region Iraqi Kurdistan nonetheless effectively operates as two entirely separate mini states controlled by the KDP and PUK respectively, with the PKK also controlling a significant mountainous territory. As a whole the region is in an extremely tense and very fragile situation in which charting a route out of the crisis will be an enormously complicated task, one that by necessity will need to involve all political forces;
- First and foremost the current tensions surround:
 - o The planned independence referendum that the KDP government wishes to organise on the 25th September 2017;
 - o President Barzani's illegal closure of the Kurdistan regional parliament since October 2015;

- o The extension of President Barzani's term of office beyond the 2013 and 2015 deadlines;
- o The collapsing economy and the secret oil deal that President Barzani has struck with President Erdogan of Turkey that provides for enormous private earnings for both parties at the expense of state assets and the public purse;

Concerning the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan and solidarity with the wider Kurdish population and political movement:

- The situation in Iraqi Kurdistan is a critical part of the wider struggle for Kurdish rights and freedoms and cannot be separated from the struggles in Turkey, Syria or Iran. However, as with all aspects of the Kurdish struggle the situation and dynamics of the Iraqi area have their own unique importance and potential impact on the other areas;
- Although the independence referendum could theoretically lead to the creation of a first Kurdish state in the region which could mark a watershed and act as a rallying point for the Kurdish cause in other areas, given the huge divisions in Iraqi Kurdistan itself, together with the virtually unanimous opposition of neighbouring countries and world powers, a move towards real independence has at least as great a potential to create massive problems for Iraqi Kurdistan and to worsen the situation in other Kurdish areas such as Rojava and Eastern Turkey;

Recommendations for actions of the UK government, EU and other international institutions:

- President Barzani is clearly using the international standing and his continued welcome and reception in foreign capitals to give legitimacy and credibility to his chosen courses of action. It is therefore vital at this critical stage that the UK and other governments, together with international institutions, recognise and take measures to make their positions clear.

If there is a serious commitment to support the development of a democratic, tolerant and inclusive Iraqi Kurdistan, then amongst other things the said governments and institutions should:

- o Make publicly clear that they will not work exclusively with the government of President Barzani as it has exceeded its democratic mandate and its legitimate powers by closing the parliament;
- o Insist on dialogue and cooperation with all actors in the country in this critical moment;
- o Insist that the parliament be reopened and all democratic rights respected, and that elections for the presidency and parliament be scheduled at the earliest possible moment and with full international oversight;
- o Demand that the oil deal agreed between President Barzani and President Erdogan be published and subject to public and parliamentary scrutiny;

- o Provide more political and concrete support for the building and development of civil society, in particular in relation to those organisations that seek to hold government accountable in key areas and to promote the wider wellbeing of ordinary people, such as those for political prisoners, displaced persons, women, ethnic minorities, human rights, media freedoms and trade unions;
- o Demand that the border with Rojava in Syria be opened and that trade be allowed to take place with the embattled region that has been at the forefront of the fight against Daesh in Syria and Iraq;

Recommendations for unions, NGOs and civil society actors:

Civil society is under severe pressure in parts of Iraqi Kurdistan and is struggling to evolve and develop in the way that the population clearly wants and needs. Unions, NGOs and other civil society groups outside of Iraqi Kurdistan should;

- Seek to raise awareness and understanding in their own organisations and the wider public as to the urgent need for more support for civil society in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, and stress and explain how important this is for a peaceful and prosperous development of the wider region;
- Offer practical education and training support for groups and organisations on the ground, in particular there is a clear need to support the development of genuine trade union organisations that are financed and controlled by their own members;
- Pressure national governments' and international organisations to maintain and develop support for civil society organisations ;

Abbreviations:

Daesh	Term used for the Islamic State that controlled territory in Syria and Iraq, also known as Islamic State, ISIS and ISIL
Goran	Movement for Change – formed in 2009 on a platform to fight corruption and now the second biggest political party in Iraqi Kurdistan, unique in not having a military wing
Hashd al Shaabi	Iraqi Shia militia group recently established and funded by the Iraqi central government
HPG	People’s Defence Force, military wing of the PKK
IndustriAll	Global trade union federation bringing together unions in the manufacturing and extraction sectors
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party – formed in 1946 and dominated historically by members of the Barzani family since its formation
KNK	Kurdish National Congress – coalition of Kurdish organisations formed by exiled politicians, lawyers and activists
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government – regional governmental administration of Iraqi Kurdistan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation – voluntary organisations outside the state sphere
NPA	Norwegian Peoples Aid – Norwegian NGO supporting many civil society projects in troubled areas of the world
PAO	Public Aid Organisation – An Iraqi NGO supporting civil society
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party – pan Kurdistan political party of the left set up in 1970s and led by imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan – political party controlling parts of Iraqi Kurdistan established in 1974 following failed Kurdish revolts against the Ba’ath regime
Rojava	Kurdish area of Northern Syria whose forces have played a critical role in the defeat of Islamic State (Daesh)
Unite the Union	Largest trade union in the UK with 1.4 million members in 20 different sectors covering manufacturing, transport and services
YBS	People’s Protection Units established to protect the Yazidi community from the attacks and violence of Islamic State
YPG/YPJ	Peoples Protection Units (YPJ exclusively female) established in Syria’s Kurdish regions to protect the community against attacks and violence of Islamic State

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