

Statement by the Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR) Criminal Justice Working Group on the conclusion of UNITAD's mandate and message to the survivor community

September 17, 2024

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- As the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Daesh/ISIL (UNITAD) officially concludes today, the Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR) Criminal Justice Working Group acknowledges this pivotal moment and the significance it holds for the future of justice in Iraq. For many survivors, the work of UNITAD has represented a sense of hope that those responsible will be held accountable. As this chapter closes, it is essential to continue this process and continue the fight for justice, together, in Iraq.

Since its establishment in 2017, UNITAD has played a critical role in documenting the heinous crimes committed by ISIL, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. This evidence is not just data; it represents survivors' stories, pain, and their demand for justice. Such work has been vital in laying the groundwork for future accountability and justice for survivors. As we move forward, it is essential to build on the foundation UNITAD has provided, with a focus on collaboration and survivor-centred justice.

Looking Ahead: Building a Collaborative Future for Justice

With the closure of UNITAD's mission, the focus must now shift to the next phase of justice in Iraq. The end of UNITAD's mandate should not be seen as the conclusion of efforts to seek accountability, but rather as the beginning of a renewed commitment to justice, one that involves stronger cooperation between the Government of Iraq (GoI), Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), international actors, civil society and survivors.

It is crucial to foster a constructive dialogue between Iraqi authorities and the survivor-community, aimed at overcoming past challenges and ensuring the pursuit of justice. This moment presents an opportunity to address past shortcomings and to establish a more effective, survivor-focused justice mechanism that operates within Iraq's legal framework.

A Call for Future-Oriented Reforms

As we reflect on UNITAD's contributions, we must advocate for forward-looking reforms that will empower Iraq to continue the fight against impunity. The Iraqi parliament should prioritise the passage of legislation that incorporates international crimes into domestic law, enabling the prosecution of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity within Iraq.

Furthermore, the establishment of a robust witness protection programme is essential to safeguarding the rights and security of those who come forward to testify. These steps are not only necessary for achieving justice but for restoring the trust of survivors in Iraq's legal system.

Commitment to Survivors: Placing Their Needs at the Centre

The survivors of ISIL's atrocities must remain at the heart of any justice process. Their voices, experiences, and needs should guide the development of any future accountability mechanisms in Iraq. C4JR and its members are committed to ensuring that survivors are not forgotten and that their pursuit of justice is supported through practical and meaningful reforms. C4JR will continue to advocate for solutions that respect and prioritise the needs and rights of survivors. Their continued involvement and support is crucial.

Moving Forward Together

While the end of UNITAD's mandate may signal a new phase in the justice process, it does not mean the end of our collective efforts. We will continue to push for accountability, for putting the evidence that has been gathered to their intended use, and support all calls for justice and reparations. This moment is an opportunity for us all to reflect on the progress made and to renew our commitment to ensuring that justice is served for all survivors. The resilience and courage of survivors has brought us far, and together, we will continue to fight for the justice they deserve.

A New Chapter for Justice in Iraq

As we close this chapter with the conclusion of UNITAD's mandate, we open a new one with the potential for meaningful progress. C4JR reaffirms its dedication to working with all stakeholders to create a justice system in Iraq that is both effective and responsive to the needs of survivors.

- For more detailed recommendations and analysis, please refer to C4JR's Position Paper on an ISIL Accountability Mechanism in Iraq: <https://www.justice-iraq.com>.
- Direct link to the position paper: <https://tinyurl.com/sbdp9x5v>