

C4JR Criminal Justice Working Group Statement on the International Crimes Law – Following the First Reading on 21 September 2026

The Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR) welcomes the news that the first reading of the International Crimes Law took place on 21 September before the Council of Representatives. The adoption of legislation codifying core international crimes - war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide - would represent an important step toward strengthening accountability for ISIL crimes in Iraq and advancing access to justice for survivors.

C4JR also welcomes the inclusion of a dedicated Fund to Compensate Victims of International Crimes in the draft law submitted to Parliament. This important provision reflects one of C4JR's longstanding recommendations and represents a significant step towards ensuring meaningful reparations and support for victims.

On 17 September in Erbil, C4JR, Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights and Yazda co-organized a stakeholder consultation in Erbil on Iraq's draft Law on Core International Crimes. The consultation brought together members of the Council of Representatives, Iraqi Government representatives, survivors, and civil society organizations to discuss the draft law, identify opportunities to strengthen its provisions in line with international standards, and promote survivor-centred accountability. The first reading on 21 September marked an important milestone towards establishing a domestic legal framework capable of properly reflecting the scale, brutality and systematic nature of ISIL crimes against diverse Iraqi communities.

The 17 September stakeholder consultation in Erbil was a fundamental step in this process, providing an important space for survivors and other stakeholders to shape the draft law and ensure that their perspectives remain at the centre of the legislative process.

Two members of the Survivors Rise Network (SRN), an advocacy platform bringing together survivors from diverse communities, who participated in the consultation, stated:

"The importance of this law is particularly evident in Iraq, given the great religious, national, and ethnic diversity of Iraqi society and the presence of a number of minorities

and components, such as the Yazidis, who need effective legal protection and guarantees to prevent discrimination, persecution, and crimes committed on the basis of identity." - SRN member

"It is very important that we have a say on the draft, because it concerns us. We hope they take our opinions into account and that we participate in all the steps related to this law and other laws that concern us and our future." - SRN member

Furthermore, two Speicher family members who participated in the consultation emphasized the importance of meaningful implementation and guarantees of truth and justice:

"For years, we have been waiting to find out what happened to our brothers and where they went. We want a law that guarantees our right to truth and justice, not just words and promises." - Sister of a Martyr

"If this law will protect the rights of our martyrs and hold the perpetrators accountable, then we support it. But we want it to be genuinely implemented on the ground because we are tired of waiting." - Father of a Martyr

C4JR believes that this moment presents a critical opportunity for Iraq to demonstrate leadership in addressing impunity, uphold the rights of survivors, and strengthen its justice system in line with international legal and human rights standards. As a recently elected member of the UN Human Rights Council, Iraq has committed to upholding the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.

According to Hassan Jameel, the Criminal Justice Working group's focal point, who moderated the session: "The establishment of a specialized court to adjudicate serious international crimes represents an important step toward enabling the Iraqi judiciary to address these crimes in accordance with their particular nature, while ensuring that judges and relevant staff have access to the necessary specialized knowledge and training."

Fiona McKay, an international legal expert who contributed to reviewing the law to ensure its alignment with international standards and a survivor-centred approach, emphasized the legal significance of the proposed framework, stating: "This draft law is an important opportunity to bring Iraq's legal framework for international crimes into greater alignment

with international law and to ensure that serious crimes are addressed through a clear and comprehensive national legal framework."

Together, these remarks highlight the importance of establishing a clear and comprehensive national framework capable of addressing serious international crimes in line with international standards and ensuring that the Iraqi judiciary has the tools and expertise needed to pursue accountability.

Accountability for international crimes is not only a legal obligation, it is a moral and political imperative. For survivors, it is an essential part of ensuring recognition, justice and redress.