



Include the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU) in the United States Government's Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF)

Last week in Baghdad, Iraq, the *Restore Nineveh Now Foundation*, a US-based 501 c3 organization, met with senior advisers to Prime Minister Haidar Abadi to discuss the inclusion of the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU) in the US Government's aid program for Iraq. In light of the US State Department's declaration that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is committing genocide against Iraq's religious minorities, we call on the US Government to work with Prime Minister Abadi to include NPU in its Iraq Train & Equip Fund (ITEF).

The objective of ITEF is to train, advise, and assist the Iraqi Army in initiating and sustaining combat operations against ISIL. According to *The National Defense Authorization Act for FY16*, US Government defense articles, services, and related training must be extended to "Kurdish and tribal security forces and other local security forces." The *Joint Explanatory Statement to the NDAA/Subtitle C-Matters Relating to Syria and Iraq* defines local security forces as those "...that are committed to protecting highly vulnerable ethnic and religious minority communities, such as Yezidi, Christian, Assyrian and Turkmen."

The Nineveh Plain Protection Units were formed in late 2014 to protect Iraq's Assyrian Christians from the genocidal onslaught of ISIL. As a registered, local security force under the authority of Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi, the NPU is headquartered thirty miles from Mosul and is strategically positioned for the upcoming military campaign to expel ISIL from Iraq. To date, the Government of Iraq has been able to provide only limited support to the 2,500 NPU members, and they urgently require US military assistance to participate fully in the anti-ISIL campaign.

Both Kurdish and Sunni tribal security forces have been trained and equipped by the US, but the program has yet to include other minorities such as the Assyrian NPU. In addition to fulfilling Congress' mandate to aid Iraq's military capacity, including the NPU into ITEF will also help temper competing sectarian-based territorial claims over the Nineveh Plain and promote national unity by integrating Iraq's minorities within the country's national security institutions.

We call on President Obama to fulfill the mandate of the *The National Defense Authorization Act* and immediately include the NPU into ITEF. Such an action is vital to the defeat of ISIL and stopping its genocidal campaign, key to a reduction in sectarian tensions on the Nineveh Plain and a concrete, beneficial step towards an inclusive, united Iraq.

Sincerely,

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