

THE HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN IRAQ

HEARING

BEFORE THE

TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

—————
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THE HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN IRAQ

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2014

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
Washington, D.C.

The Commission met, pursuant to call, at 12:03, p.m. , in Room HVC 210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. James P. McGovern [cochairman of the Commission] presiding.

Present: Representative McGovern.

Staff Present: Soo Choi, Democratic Fellow; Andrew Longhi, Democratic Fellow; Dan Hall, Democratic Fellow.

Mr. McGOVERN. Good afternoon, everybody. I think we will begin.

I would like to welcome you all to the Tom Lantos Commission hearing on the Humanitarian and Human Rights Crisis in Iraq.

And I would like to welcome all of our witnesses today. I want to thank you for your hard work in providing protection and advocacy to people affected by the crisis in Iraq.

And I would also like to thank the staff of the commission for organizing this important and timely hearing. And this is the last day of Andrew Longhi, who has been a member of our commission for a while now. Appreciate his work.

And you are here on a day that is we are supposed to be in session and then we are not because we finished things up late last night, but I thought it was important to have this hearing nonetheless and important to get on the record the viewpoints of some of the people who are testifying here today, because this is an incredibly important issue.

For at least the past 4 years, a humanitarian and human rights crisis has unfolded in Iraq. The crisis escalated sharply in the beginning of this year due to the rapid expansion of Islamic State militants and the resurgence of sectarian militias. Sectarian attacks have spiraled to an alarming level. 2014 has been one of the worst periods of civil strife in the country's recent history.

All sides of the conflict have committed gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Most notably, Islamic State militants have committed brutal, systematic and widespread attacks against civilians, including mass executions,

sexual slavery of women and girls, forced recruitment of children, and persecution of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious communities.

On the other side of the conflict, Iraqi Security Forces and affiliated armed groups too, have posed threats to civilians by launching military attacks on civilian villages. Shia militia groups that support the Iraqi Government have also committed kidnappings and executions against Sunni civilian men. This conflict has taken a heavy toll on Iraq's most vulnerable civilians, women and children.

The deepening conflict has created a major humanitarian disaster. According to UN estimates, 20,000 civilians have been killed or injured across Iraq this year and millions have been forced to flee. To date, an estimated 5.2 million people are in need of humanitarian aid and protection. These people include Iraqis uprooted from their homes, communities hosting the displaced, and civilians trapped in conflict affected areas.

In addition, Iraqis displaced during earlier conflicts and Syrian refugees also have urgent humanitarian needs. The provision of humanitarian aid is further complicated by limited access to areas where fighting is ongoing.

As I noted earlier, the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Iraq existed before the invasion of Islamic State forces and has worsened exponentially since then; this includes the ability of the Iraqi Government to provide such basic services as healthcare, clean water and electricity, and to provide protection to such vulnerable groups as children, women and minorities.

These are matters of grave concern in their own right, as well as the fact that they contribute to the ability of ISIL forces to exploit the vacuum created by the absence of a state presence.

At today's hearing we hope to identify the needs of people affected by this staggering crisis and discuss what further measures need to be taken. To date, the United States has significantly scaled up the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection. The U.S. has also undertaken a separate active military role in Iraq to counter the Islamic State.

I would like to use this time today to assess our current response and learn how we can improve it. I look forward to hearing recommendations from our panelists on what the United States and international community can do to alleviate human rights abuses and human suffering in Iraq while reducing and preventing the rise of sectarian tension.

[The opening statement of Mr. McGovern is as follows:]

Prepared Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern:

Good afternoon and welcome to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's hearing on The Humanitarian and Human Rights Crisis in Iraq. I would like to welcome all of our witnesses today – thank

you for your hard work in providing protection and advocacy to people affected by the crisis in Iraq. I would also like to thank the staff of the Commission for organizing this important and timely hearing.

For at least the past four years, a humanitarian and human rights crisis has unfolded in Iraq. This crisis escalated sharply in the beginning of this year due to the rapid expansion of “Islamic State” militants and the resurgence of sectarian militias. Sectarian attacks have spiraled to an alarming level; 2014 has been one of the worst periods of civil strife in the country’s recent history.

All sides of the conflict have committed gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Most notably, Islamic State militants have committed brutal, systematic, and widespread attacks against civilians, including mass executions, sexual slavery of women and girls, forced recruitment of children, and persecution of Iraq’s diverse ethnic and religious communities. On the other side of the conflict, Iraqi security forces and affiliated armed groups, too, have posed threats to civilians by launching military attacks on civilian villages. Shi’a militia groups that support the Iraqi government have also committed kidnappings and executions against Sunni civilian men. This conflict has taken a heavy toll on Iraq’s most vulnerable civilians, women, and children.

This deepening conflict has created a major humanitarian disaster. According to U.N. estimates, 20,000 civilians have been killed or injured across Iraq this year and millions have been forced to flee. To date, an estimated 5.2 million people are in need of humanitarian aid and protection. These people include Iraqis uprooted from their homes, communities hosting the displaced, and civilians trapped in conflict-affected areas. In addition, Iraqis displaced during earlier conflicts and Syrian refugees also have urgent humanitarian needs. The provision of humanitarian aid is further complicated by limited access to areas where fighting is ongoing.

As I noted earlier, the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Iraq existed before the invasion of Islamic State forces, and has worsened exponentially since then. This includes the ability of the Iraqi government to provide such basic services as health care, clean water, and electricity, and to provide protection to such vulnerable groups as children, women and minorities. These are matters of grave concern in their own right, as well as the fact that they contribute to the ability of ISIL forces to exploit the vacuum created by the absence of a State presence.

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Mr. McGOVERN. I would like to introduce our first panel of witnesses from the administration. I am very glad to welcome Ms. Kelly Clements, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the State Department's Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration, and Mr. Thomas Staal, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator in USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. Both bureaus have led our government's humanitarian assistance to Iraq.

And I just learned an interesting fact about Mr. Staal, that he was actually born in Iraq, and so he has his parents were missionaries there, and I look forward to hearing his testimony as well.

So with that, I would say to the witnesses, you can any formally prepared testimony can be submitted for the record. You can read it or you can summarize it or do whatever you feel comfortable with.

And, Ms. Clements, I welcome you, and why don't you begin.

STATEMENTS OF KELLY CLEMENTS, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY,
STATE BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION; AND
THOMAS STAAL, DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, USAID BUREAU
FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

STATEMENT OF KELLY CLEMENTS

Ms. CLEMENTS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for holding this very important hearing on humanitarian assistance for those affected by the violence in Iraq and for your own personal leadership and support for our humanitarian efforts, indeed most important.

Given its most close relationship between Iraq and Syria, I am actually going to address the humanitarian response to the crisis in Syria as well.

The international community is struggling to cope, not only with wars in Syria and Iraq, but major crises in other parts of the world that you track very closely, I know, including the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Gaza, Ukraine, Somalia, Yemen and many others, not to mention Ebola.

Right now there are more refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons than at any time since World War II. The number exceeds 50 million people. Even as global humanitarian assistance rose to a record \$22 billion in 2013, the needs created by these complex crises, that are protracted in nature, continue to outpace the international community's collective ability to respond.

UN Humanitarian appeals for both Iraq and Syria remains severely underresourced. The Syrian crisis, the most catastrophic crisis we face in the world today, has resulted in the deaths of more than 200,000 Syrians, the vast majority of which, according to the UN Commission of Inquiry, happened at the hands of the Syrian regime. The conflict has uprooted nearly half of Syria's pre war population. The Assad regime and extremist groups continue to target innocent civilians, who are suffering from food shortages, inadequate shelter, and preventable diseases. More than 7 million Syrians have been internally displaced, more than 3 million have fled to neighboring countries, many of whom will be unlikely or unwilling to return to Syria for years to come, including the 225,000 that you mentioned in the northern part of Iraq.

I recently served as the acting deputy chief of mission at our embassy in Beirut, and I can tell you that the concern in Lebanon and in the region generally about increased refugee flows is palpable. Governments of neighboring states are starting to strain coping with this massive influx. In Lebanon, one in four residents is now a refugee. In Jordan, housing is in such short supply, that rents have doubled. In both Lebanon and Jordan, schools are running double shifts, hospitals are overcrowded, municipal services cannot keep up. Economic growth has slowed, and social tensions between host communities and Syrians are rising.

In Iraq, as you mentioned, ruthless attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant, ISIL, have left over 5 million people in urgent need of humanitarian aid. This includes some 2 million displaced throughout the country in this year alone. There was a previous 1 million displaced that we were caring for since the last decade.

Many families have been forced to flee multiple times as the front lines of the conflict have shifted. As the regional director of the UN refugee agency just recently told me, Iraqi IDPs have been more mobile than any group that he has worked with in his 30 year career at UNHCR. ISIL's depredations have also prompted many to seek safety outside the country, and this year the number of Iraqi refugees in the region has doubled. The needs are massive. 20 million people are affected. And while the Iraq and Syrian conflicts differ, the challenges are regional and integrated, and our humanitarian responses must be as well.

With the help of the United States and other international donors, UN agencies and international and non governmental organizations are saving lives. In Iraq, UN international relief efforts have distributed desperately needed supplies, food, shelter, basic household items like blankets and winter clothing, with strong support from many international and local partners, including some in this room.

International assistance has also reached millions of Syrians in need. This year Syrians received food and safe drinking water, had medical checkups, received polio vaccinations for their children. In neighboring countries, the UN and its partners helped over 350,000 children enroll in school, triple the number enrolled last year.

While the scale of humanitarian aid delivered to victims of both of these crises is unprecedented, humanitarian needs are outpacing the capabilities of donor governments and the international humanitarian system.

In Iraq, schools, unfinished buildings, warehouses are filled with families driven from their homes. Over 1 million Iraqis still lack adequate shelter for the winter and basic items, such as blankets and kerosene, that will keep them warm. And even though the World Food Program is providing food to 1.4 million Iraqis, almost 3 million Iraqis are estimated to lack adequate nutrition.

In Syria, almost 10 million people are food insecure and over 11 million are in need of clean water and sanitation. 85 percent of Syrian refugees live outside of camps, most in substandard shelter, and at least half of all refugee children are not enrolled in school.

President Obama has underscored the importance of providing both Iraqis and Syrians with Humanitarian aid. And we have been urging other donors to increase their contributions to UN led relief efforts.

Donors have been generous. The European Commission, the U.K., Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Canada, Germany, Norway, Japan have all made significant contributions to UN

relief operations in the region. We applaud, for example, the generosity of Saudi Arabia, whose \$500 million contribution to the UN in the early stages of the crisis was absolutely critical to providing life saving assistance to those who fled ISIL. Kuwait for its part has hosted three top donors meetings for Syrians, has given \$800 million to provide desperately needed food, shelter and medical supplies.

Getting relief into Syria is essential to slow the exodus of refugees and ease the pressure on Syria's neighbors, but we also need borders to remain open to those who have no choice but to flee for their lives. And as governments in the region are called upon to do everything in their power to aid those in harms way, they need our steadfast support to help cope with refugee populations that are likely to remain in neighboring countries for years to come.

My bureau has announced \$10 million in new funding to the UN development program's initiatives specifically targeting host communities hosting those refugees. Giving humanitarian assistance for development purposes is indeed unprecedented for us, but working with host governments to keep borders open and meet their needs is essential to ensuring the protection of refugees.

At the recent Berlin ministerial on Syrian refugees, we called upon other countries to also think creatively about how to address this complex crisis and coordinate the humanitarian and development assistance programs.

As we face these historic challenges, U.S. leadership, humanitarian diplomacy and resources remain critical to the effort. Thirty percent of international humanitarian assistance marshaled in response to the Syrian crisis has come from us, the United States, with more than \$3 billion in aid over 3 years, including \$135 million recently on emergency food.

Our contributions to aid Iraqi civilians in fiscal year 2014 exceeded \$208 million. Our refugee admissions program also extends help and hope to those displaced and endangered by the violence in Syria and Iraq.

Since 2007, we have resettled more than 115,000 Iraqis. In recent months the United States has received referrals for nearly 9,000 Syrian refugees, roughly 1,000 new referrals from the United Nations Refugee Agency each month. We expect the number to continue to climb this year.

The U.S. Government will use every means possible to protect and assist vulnerable Iraqis, Syrians and others affected by conflict. Failure to do so could endanger millions of innocent civilians, but the needs are vast, and U.S. leadership remains vital.

Thank you for your support. I welcome your questions.

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you very much. Mr. Staal.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS STAAL

Mr. STAAL. Thank you, Congressman McGovern, for holding this important hearing today.

And I am really glad to be here with you and with the folks here behind me to talk about the issues here and to shine a light on the devastating humanitarian situation and abhorrent human rights abuses committed by the self proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL.

You know, for me this is a personal and particularly painful thing to watch unfold. As you mentioned, I was lived in Iraq as a child and I have been back several times since then in the early days right in 2003 to help start up the USAID program, and then most recently in 2012 and 2013 as the USAID director there. And so it is really sad to see this happening to an ancient and wonderful civilization and people.

As you mentioned, ISIL is causing massive levels of human suffering, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis that Ms. Clements was just talking about in Syria that has now metastasized into Iraq. Millions of families have been torn apart, pushed out of ancestral homes, forced to flee unspeakable horrors in search of safety and dignity.

World famous Muslim and Christian antiquities and other minority groups' holy sites have been destroyed, including the tomb of the Biblical Jonah and the mosque of the Prophet Yunus in Mosul.

It is very sad for me personally to think that just last year I visited an ancient monastery in the hills above Mosul, and now that that is probably destroyed and the monks have had to flee. So it is really tough to watch, but all the more reason why we need to dedicate ourselves to assisting the country and marshalling resources from around the globe.

So today I would like to cover four areas: first, an update on some of our humanitarian response, including our efforts to provide protection and assistance to the most vulnerable; second, how we are focusing particularly on women and minorities to enable greater participation and hope for a better future for them; thirdly, our outreach and engagement with faith based communities and minority groups both here and in Iraq; and then finally, an outline of some key challenges that lie ahead as we seek to address these needs in Iraq.

Right now the international community is wrestling and grappling with an unprecedented four level three emergencies, that is the highest emergency designation by the UN. And, in fact, even for U.S. aid for the first time in our history, we have deployed four disaster assistance response teams simultaneously and activated three, what we call response management teams, that is like our operations center back here in Washington, and that is stretching the limits of our capabilities as well as the international community.

And, in fact, to respond to the urgent needs, particularly following the expansion of ISIL offenses in early August, USAID deployed a DART team to Iraq, and the DART leader even joined as the one civilian member of the team that went on to Mt. Sinjar to assess the humanitarian situation there. So we have been directly involved in that from the beginning.

And working through a number of partners, we have got about 12 UN and NGO partners on the ground in Iraq providing a variety of relief supplies: humanitarian emergency health needs, water, sanitation, hygiene support, emergency shelter, and addressing the massive protection and trauma needs of the populations.

The Government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government have also dedicated substantial funding, including the commitment of cash grants of \$860 per family, and we are working to make sure that that is actually reaching the needy people. And I think we need to give special recognition to the Kurdish people and the Kurdish Regional Government for hosting hundreds of thousands of people on a very short notice in their homes and in their communities. It has been very tough on them, and they are really sort of the first responders that we are now trying to support. A recent survey and a discussion that we have had directly with Yazidi leaders have noted that the people have been especially welcoming and generous. And then as my colleague said, the international community, including the Kuwaitis and the Saudis, have been very generous for the needs of the people in the region as well.

And now as winter ramps up, we are really focusing on winterization needs, making sure that the internally displaced people and the refugees that have come from Syria into Iraq have the basic needs at least of blankets and shelter and mattresses, things like that, and then specifically for women, the needs that they have of clothing and a variety of what we call a female hygiene kit to make sure that they have what they need. It is still a stretch. The basic, basic needs have probably been met, but as my colleague was saying, it is a very mobile population, so we are often finding new populations of IDP's, and we have to reach out to them, so and what they are receiving is not fully adequate, it is the basic, but a lot of people are still living in, you know, suboptimal positions in, you know, buildings that are unfinished with some plastic sheeting, things like that, and they need something much better, so we need to continue working on that. And then, unfortunately, we can't forget that there are over 2 million people that are beyond our reach in ISIL held areas, and we know that they are suffering very badly. Many of them have been displaced from their homes, but even the ones who stayed in their homes are suffering, and we haven't been able to reach them.

And now, while everyone is suffering, the IDP's and even the host families, women and girls are suffering a special hell, frankly. They have been the target of kidnapping, stoning, sex slavery, a number of other atrocities, particularly the Yazidi women and girls. In fact, in a meeting just this week, we met with Vian Dekhil, I think some of you met with her as well, the Yazidi member of parliament, and she shared with us firsthand some of the horrific stories, and it is just terrible.

So as a part of our USAID programs, we make sure that protection, especially of women and children, is a component of every project that we do through our humanitarian assistance, and we have provided through that nearly \$900,000 of various types of protection activities to ensure that we are meeting those needs, even to the point of making sure that latrines are you have separate latrines for men and women, that all the healthcare providers have special training in how to deal with the protection issues, a lot of psychosocial help, special child friendly spaces for children, those kind of issues to make sure that we are addressing those needs.

And one of the major needs that we are still wrestling with and I think we need to focus on, and that is as, especially women, but other people as well, children and even men, if they can escape from ISIL or towns are retaken, those people are going to need special psychosocial help, and so we want to make sure that we are addressing those needs.

We have had a very active engagement with faith based communities, Christians, Yazidis, other minority groups, certainly in Iraq through our staff on the ground there, but also we have had at least a dozen meetings with groups here in Washington to make sure that we understand what their needs are and that we are addressing them. There are times when we hear about an issue that certain groups are not being addressed fully their needs, so we are able to quickly send that information to our staff in the field and they can make sure that the needs are being met.

What is important, too, is that the message that is being sent out from Muslim leaders in the Arab world and the Muslim world is also addressing the issue of ISIL. And, in fact, a number of venerated religious figures, leading Islamic scholars across the Arab world are denouncing ISIL's depraved acts. In a powerful message, more than 120 Muslim scholars a few months ago signed an open letter denouncing ISIL's crude misinterpretation of the Koran. They dismissed actually point by point a number of speeches made by the leaders of ISIL, and the premier religious leaders of Saudi Arabia and Egypt have both come out publicly stating that ISIL is the number one enemy of Islam and that they are, in effect, adulterating Islam and are not legitimate. That voice needs to continue to be heard and we need to continue to support that and make sure that the King of Jordan was just here in town last week making the same message and is going to be encouraging that through his networks there.

We also are working through our development programs to address the needs of IDP's. We had existing programs on the ground working through local government, civil society, and we even have a program called Access to Justice that provides vulnerable groups access to the justice system that they wouldn't otherwise be able to do, and we sort of pivoted that when we had these large number of IDP's.

So, for instance, under this program, we are helping IDP's to get properly registered so they can get the various benefits that are provided by the Iraqi Government, that women's and it is especially for women. About three quarters of the beneficiaries

of this program have been women, so that is really important. And also we have a program, an employment program, and, again, focusing we have pivoted it to provide short term employment for IDP's.

So the challenges ahead are huge. Obviously humanitarian needs are there, and we are going to continue to reach out to donors, including both European donors, but also the Gulf donors on this. Access is going to be a huge problem in ISIL held areas, and we have to watch that as the areas become available.

We need to be innovative in our humanitarian response, especially focusing on women and looking at how we can empower displaced women who are now heads of households and struggling to provide for their families.

We need to think about what happens to these especially minority groups. Are they going to go home to their villages? Will they want some other settlement either in country or somewhere else? And that is going to be a challenge for us going forward.

And, finally, the new assessment for the needs in Iraq came out a couple months ago estimating \$2.2 billion is needed. Now, that covers both 2014 and 2015, so that is going to be a huge take. And the new assessment of needs from the appeal for Syria is going to be coming out next week. Last year it was \$6.6 billion, so we expect it to be at least that and probably higher this year. It is going to be a huge challenge for the U.S. and the international community, but, again, we are deeply committed to this effort.

I personally obviously am committed. And we really thank you, Congressman McGovern, for holding this hearing, even in this time when a lot of people are leaving town, but your being here really helps to show your commitment to this and the people here, and so I am really glad to be here to testify, and I welcome your questions.

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, thank you.

And thank you both very much for your testimony.

And even though a lot of my colleagues have left, we monitor how many people tune in to these hearings, and as of now, 76,000 people are tuned in to this hearing, which tells me that there is a great deal of interest and a great deal of concern, so I just I want you to know that you are being watched and listened to by a lot of people. And, you know, and I and, again, I appreciate the work that you do.

It is for me heartbreaking to turn on the news or to read articles in the paper about what is happening in Iraq and also in Syria. And not only do I have a tough time making sense of the sectarian divides and the battling factions, but what is particularly heartbreaking to me is this humanitarian crisis for people who just want to live their lives who were caught in the middle.

And, you know, and it is more than just about, you know, protecting oneself from getting shot in the crossfire. As you have talked about in both your testimonies, I mean, there are a whole bunch of other things that happen. I mean, people aren't getting healthcare and, therefore, there are maybe people who die from lack of healthcare, you know, lack of nutrition, you know, lack of having warm enough clothing during these winter months, I mean, all these kind of side effects. And we know how to solve all these problems, but it is very difficult in the you know, in the violent climate that exists in Iraq today.

And so I guess my first question to you is what are the most significant gaps in humanitarian assistance currently? And you both talked about, you know, the winters, you know, the winters in north Iraq are famous for being bitterly cold, but, you know, we have been provided information that over a half million people, 50 percent of which are children, don't even have enough blankets and warm clothes to keep them from succumbing to the elements.

If you could also address that. I mean, are we meeting the need, making sure people don't freeze to death? But I would be interested, where are the biggest gaps in humanitarian assistance currently?

Ms. CLEMENTS. Maybe I will start with that. Thank you for the question.

Indeed we are not meeting the needs overall. The needs are huge. I think we have focused on two near term requirements: one is shelter and the second being kerosene. And a couple of developments. On the shelter side, we estimate that there are probably 34 percent or so that still remain in inadequate shelter as we are approaching into the winter, well into the winter now, but that is something that certainly the UN international and local partners, along with the Kurdish Regional Government in the north and Baghdad authorities, are trying to look at very urgently.

The second is kerosene. And we estimate that there is a need for 40 million liters of kerosene. And actually with some strong diplomacy and some help from the Iraqi Government and a commitment from the minister of oil to our ambassador in Baghdad, they have committed to provide 20 million of those liters of kerosene, which is good news. About 3 million has been distributed, but obviously the needs are quite urgent. But those are just a couple of the near term, I think, requirements that we are quite concerned about, but I know Mr. Staal will have others.

Mr. STAAL. Thank you, Kelly.

That is very accurate. Basic really life saving needs are probably being met just but not adequately, and shelter is the huge one.

A couple others that I might mention. A lot of the IDP's were initially housed in schools. Now, most of those have been they have been able to move them out and put in developed camps, they are still building more camps, but they are that is an ongoing process, so that is going to be important, but the problem is that the kid the IDP children themselves are not getting any education, and that is something that needs to be done, obviously. And then longer term solutions as well, not right now a lot of people are in host families, in inadequate shelter, so that is going to be an issue.

And then, finally, even the basics of food, right now that has been covered through generous contributions from Kuwait and other donor from Saudi Arabia, excuse me, and other donors, but that is going to run out by the end of January, according to the latest information we have, and so we are going to need more money.

Now, obviously once we get the budget from Congress, USAID will be putting some more money into food, but the needs are so huge, that that is going to be burned up very quickly, so we really need to reach out to our international partners to provide more assistance coming up.

Mr. McGOVERN. I mean, I assume conversations are going on right now to make to address the fact that there will be a food shortage. I mean, are we optimistic that people are all stepping up to the plate and doing what they are supposed to do or are we concerned that people are hesitating?

Mr. STAAL. They are. I mean, they are all stretched with their budgets like we are. I mean, I think last week was a good example of generosity in the international community. You may have heard that for the Syrian refugees, the WFP had to stop distribution of food

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Mr. STAAL. to most of the refugees, and literally in just a few days, the international community came up with \$88 million, got it turned back on, but, again, you

have so many refugees coming out of Syria, that, that \$88 million will only last about 6 weeks.

So but the problem is, as Kelly mentioned, there are so many needs not only in Syria and Iraq, but in South Sudan and elsewhere.

Mr. McGOVERN. So how are we implementing these programs? Are we working with local NGO's, are we working with international NGO's, are we working through the Iraqi Government? Who is doing what? And I ask the question because it is very difficult for humanitarian workers to do humanitarian work in the middle of a war.

Ms. CLEMENTS. It is a great question, and the answer is all of the above. So in the case of Iraq and there are really key differences between Iraq and Syria.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Ms. CLEMENTS. Obviously we are dealing with Assad in Syria, who does not welcome such humanitarian aid and has made it very difficult for us to be able to reach a large number of people in that country.

In Iraq, the Government of Iraq has actually asked for help. The coalition was largely put together with Iraq's request, and that is something that is to be applauded. There is much closer cooperation now between the central authorities and the Kurdish Regional Government. That is also a good sign. It doesn't mean that everything's perfect yet, but obviously close cooperation helps.

They are being assisted by a very strong network of international and non governmental partners, local and international. And I think we were quite fortunate to have a very strong network. You know, the focus of the emergency this year has really shined a light on what is happening inside Iraq, but there have been, you know, hundreds of thousands of internally displaced for many years.

So the 12 UN agencies that Tom mentioned, we have 55 non governmental organizations that we have supported. We have had, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars that we have provided through humanitarian aid programs for over a decade, and that helps, because that means that obviously there is that kind of support from the international system to help governments who are struggling, including the Iraqi Government currently, to respond to the needs of its people.

Mr. STAAL. I might just add a little flavor to what Ms. Clements said, that we are also obviously working with local organizations through our international partners. It is usually the easiest way for us to do it since we don't have a lot of staff on the ground for the U.S. Government, so we work through our international partners. And then when you get a disaster of this side, the UN sets up what they call the cluster system

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Mr. STAAL. as you probably know. And because it was such a huge problem in Iraq in such a short period of time, we all pressed the UN to get themselves organized, and they sent out a very senior and well respected guy, an American, and Kevin Kennedy, to be the humanitarian coordinator specifically for the response there, and they set up the various cluster system, which brings together UN agencies and NGO's to work together on and that is that is working. And the Iraqi Government, as Kelly said. In Iraq, we are able to bring them in.

We don't actually give any money directly to the Iraqi Government. In fact, it is the other way around. They bring their funds to the table and that is all coordinated together there.

Mr. McGOVERN. So I guess, you know, one of the questions I have been that has been weighing heavily on me is how do we ensure that our assistance provided to Iraq is being utilized in a non sectarian manner? I mean, you know, I think of the sectarianism of the al Maliki Government helped create the conditions that permitted the rise of ISIS in Iraq to begin with. You know, what precautions are we taking to make sure that the aid that the state and USAID is providing is benefitting a broader array of communities in Iraq?

Because, you know, I think a lot of the a lot of what we are dealing with now, I think we can trace back to the behavior of the government that we helped put in power. And maybe you could also respond to, you know, what level of direct diplomatic communications has there been with the Iraqi Government in making sure that it is doing its fair share to respond to the needs of the displaced population?

I would particularly like to know about making sure that displaced Iraqis can access food provisions through the government public distribution system and constitutionally mandated payments to the KRG that are needed to buttress social systems and the Governorates that are hosting many of the IDP's.

And I raise the question, because, again, and, you know, we are here talking about humanitarian assistance, but there was an article in the newspaper not too long ago that we are providing the Iraqi Government with a lot of money for their military, and we read about, you know, 50,000 ghost soldiers that we are paying for that don't exist, and there is a history of corruption in this system.

And I should tell you in all candor, I am not in agreement with the U.S. policy of re engaging militarily the way we are. I do believe we have an obligation here on the humanitarian side and I do think we ought to be pursuing a political solution and we ought to outline what a political solution means like and not just say we are for a political solution and then continue on the military side.

But I do worry I want to make sure that all the good intentions and all the resources that are being provided that we have to coordinate with the Government of Iraq, that, in fact, is going to where it is going to and it is not the same old same old?

Mr. STAAL. Yeah. I will start out. It is certainly a great question and something that we are seized with literally every day to make sure that our assistance is getting to the right people. That is the very reason we work through the organizations that we do in Iraq, both UN and international NGO's, all of whom have a lot of experience in working in these kind of environments, and, you know, making sure that the assistance is based on need and it gets to people regardless of their political, religious or other affiliations.

And then in addition to that, we have staff on the ground. They are somewhat limited in terms of their travel, but they are there, both the refugee coordinators in Baghdad and Erbil, and some USAID staff in both locations, and they get out to a certain extent, but our partners are able to move pretty freely within Iraq. The access is good there, and much more difficult obviously in Syria, and, of course, not in the ISIL held areas.

And then a part of that is to make sure that the Iraqi Government funds are flowing and are flowing to the right people. As you mentioned, they have this public distribution system that is supposed to go to everyone; and secondly, that all IDP's are supposed to get a one off stipend of about \$860 per family, and so part of our job through our partners is to make sure that is flowing. And even through our development program, we help the people to get registered for those payments.

Mr. McGOVERN. Is it flowing? Are we happy with the way it is being implemented?

Mr. STAAL. It is flowing. It is not perfect yet and it is something that we are continuing to follow. And a lot of it has to do with their bureaucracy. We haven't seen so much that it has been corrupted and going to the wrong people; it is more a problem of it flowing at all and getting out to people who have been displaced who don't have any papers anymore to prove who they are, and making sure that it reaches those people.

Ms. CLEMENTS. Maybe, just a comment on that. It is sporadic and uneven, we would say. It is not necessarily an issue of resources on the PDS system. Unfortunately, when people are displaced, it is very difficult to then register in their new locations and actually get assistance in those locations. So part of our diplomacy with the Government of Iraq is to try to change and shape the registration system to make it more consistent. In terms of diplomacy, we have an active new ambassador, Stu Jones, who has made IDP's and humanitarian issues a very high priority in terms of his work with central authorities in Baghdad and raised these issues at the top with Prime Minister Abadie, deputy prime minister, as I mentioned, the minister of oil, he has met with the Minister of Displacement and Migration Affairs and the deputy foreign minister, it was actually the one who represented Iraq at the Berlin ministerial last month, and Assistant Secretary Richard met with, he and his delegation, which included KRG representatives, and so there was a very fulsome discussion about humanitarian issues with the authorities. And I think what we see is a real commitment to address the needs of the citizens and as well as the refugee situation, so we are quite encouraged.

Mr. McGOVERN. Let me ask you a question about funding. Since the August influx, donors have come forward with funding for immediate life saving interventions, and you have talked about that. There is now a concern on the short term nature of current funds. You mentioned a little bit about that with regard to the food assistance. I mean, the Saudi contribution covers only a 9 month period, and many donors are only covering 3 to 6 months' programming.

What is the United States Government doing to ensure that funds are long term and released in a timely and flexible manner for this response?

Ms. CLEMENTS. Well, Mr. Chairman, I mentioned a little bit in the opening in terms of a different approach that we are taking to the region in terms of not necessarily looking at this as a short term emergency and having discussions.

This is beyond Iraq, including Iraq, but also Jordan and Lebanon in terms of the protracted nature of the crisis, and trying to look at development injections, macroeconomics. And there is a much tighter conversation and discussion now between the humanitarian community and the development community in terms of planning and looking at long term issues.

Tom mentioned that we are soon going to see appeals come out for the Syrian crisis that will include the response in Iraq. And what we will see is a very strong approach by the host countries, national plans, for example, integrated into the overall response so it is not necessarily a short term fix. This obviously makes the price tag higher, but we need to start these conversations, not as, what blanket or clothing does a child need tomorrow, but what is going to happen next year or 5 years from now in terms of the population, and help the countries support the needs of their citizens as well as refugees.

Mr. McGOVERN. And maybe I could ask you, maybe to put a rumor to rest, because, you know, in kind of preparation for this hearing, we have talked to a lot of NGO's and we have talked to a lot of people, and there are some in the NGO community that have heard reports that the USAID mission in Baghdad, that they will only have a minimal presence by September 2015 that will respond to the Government of Iraq technical support requests only.

And I guess my question is, is the USAID mission in the process of scaling back its presence on the ground? And if the answer is yes, then why are we doing this when the violence is on the rise and humanitarian needs in Iraq are at the highest they have been in years? So I will ask you to respond to that.

Mr. STAAL. Yeah. Sure. We are in discussions right now with the Iraqi Government about our presence there. We have scaled back, obviously. It was the biggest aid program in the world a few years ago, and it is scaled back from that.

We see that there is a continuing need to work with the Government to build its capacity to address the needs of its own people, and we are in discussions with them about how they can help to finance that. So it is not sort of finalized yet, but we do see an ongoing presence of USAID there; in a smaller number, but certainly there. And certainly as long as the humanitarian situation is going on, we have a DART team there and will be there addressing those needs.

Mr. McGOVERN. So we are not drawing down, then?

Mr. STAAL. We are getting smaller, but not closing yet.

Mr. McGOVERN. Okay. All right.

Mr. STAAL. Yeah.

Mr. McGOVERN. But, yeah, I guess but my kind of initial reaction to that is the crisis is getting worse. Why would we be getting smaller? And when you say we are not closing yet, that doesn't make me feel good. So I am trying to figure out what am I missing here, you know, because I do think, look, you know, there are unless something dramatic happens where we actually see a real honest to goodness attempt to try to come up with a political solution, I worry that, you know, that we are just going to see things get worse.

And in terms of kind of the programs that USAID supports and, you know, and the work it does, it just seems to me that, you know, we you know, it would be important that we have some presence there, but just one thing, too. You had mentioned about all these IDP's that were in schools

Mr. STAAL. Uh huh.

Mr. McGOVERN. I mean, is that I think you mentioned that even though IDP kids are not getting education, are the schools all open in Iraq? I mean, has that kind of I know a lot of the schools were delayed because of all the IDP's in the schools. Has that been resolved or anyone know?

Mr. STAAL. Yeah. Go ahead.

Ms. CLEMENTS. Yes. Over the summer certainly many of the schools were occupied by internally displaced, and most of the internally displaced have been moved out into camps or other temporary sessions, so school is back in session.

What we don't have visibility on are the millions that Tom mentioned earlier in terms of the ISIL areas and what is happening in terms of education in those areas. So I want to dampen the enthusiasm that we have got kids in school, because we don't necessarily.

The other issue I might mention with regard to the last question, I think we need to make a distinction between humanitarian requirements and then the development needs of Iraq. We are not going away on the humanitarian side, and that will continue in a very robust way this year, and we hope next thanks to your support.

Mr. McGOVERN. I have just got a few final questions, so if you could bear with me here. The health system that is currently in place or not in place in Iraq, I mean, how do you assess the ability of people to have access to healthcare? I mean and, again, it goes back to my question earlier. I mean, with all this other stuff going on, you know, I worry that children aren't getting the care that they need or, you know, the vaccinations, the, you know, pregnant women aren't getting what they need. I mean, you know, we all we all get sick from something. I mean, I and I worry that, you know, the humanitarian crisis kind of leaks into kind of the basic healthcare infrastructure. I mean, how do you assess that?

Mr. STAAL. Yeah. That is an important question. USAID actually has had a health assistance program over the last few years building the capacity of the Iraqi healthcare system, and it has actually improved quite a bit over the last number of years.

Now, it is being overwhelmed by the numbers, especially in the Kurdistan region, but in terms of meeting basic things like vaccination and outbreaks of communicable diseases, they have done relatively well. And that is an ongoing challenge that we have and it is certainly a part of our humanitarian assistance programs to support the health system to meet these humanitarian needs right now, but the existing system has improved quite a bit and we will continue to support that.

Mr. McGOVERN. I just have got two final questions here. How does our government come up with a strategy in Iraq? I mean, how can the U.S. strategy in Iraq better support interventions that address the root causes of the sectarian violence, weak governance, political grievances and poor respect for human rights and rule of law? I mean, you know, as I look at what is going on right now, all these things are driving the displacement and the rise of extremist groups. And you know, and we can talk all we want about kind of the response to the immediate emergency, and we need to, because people need help right now, but how do we get beyond responding to emergencies? I mean, how do we because those are the things that I think are, you know, are, you know, driving all this instability.

And I have to be honest with you, I really haven't heard yet, and I am not talking about you, I am just saying in general, you know, a real strategy to deal with that. And if we don't have a real strategy, and I think it has to be something different than what we are doing, then I worry that, you know, we will be here next year and the year after and the year after having the same discussion. So I would appreciate any comments you have on that.

Ms. CLEMENTS. Well, maybe from the limited portfolio that we manage in relation to your question.

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, you can tell me anything you want. I won't tell anybody.

Ms. CLEMENTS. The 76,000 that are listening in.

Well, just maybe a comment. Tom and I actually co lead the humanitarian effort related to what the U.S. Government is doing with the coalition now. And I think one of the reasons why humanitarian assistance has been recognized as a key part of this, and when I say a part of it, we are very conscious of the fact that humanitarian assistance is provided based on need, that it is distinct from our military efforts, it is distinct, we try not to politicize, that sort of thing, there is strong recognition that we need to be addressing root causes in order to obviate the need for us to be providing so much humanitarian assistance going forward.

And certainly one of our end goals is that we are not dealing with humanitarian crises of the magnitude we are today, that displaced can go home, that they can restart their lives, that they can take care of their families, the solutions that we achieve, but we are in it for the long term. I mean, this is not something that is going to go away tomorrow certainly, but it is all part from addressing root causes to the solutions where people do not feel persecuted and can actually reassume their normal lives.

Mr. STAAL. Yeah. And, again, it is probably a little different between Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, we have a new government, and their actions are going to be critical, we believe, in addressing some of those root governance programs, not part of it is addressing things like corruption and so on, but a lot of it is the sectarian issues. And I know that our administration, the Secretary of State, the ambassador there, are working closely with Prime Minister Abadie to really reach out to the Sunni moderates and engage with them and bring them into the fold, for instance if you will, and I think that is going to be critical for resolving that issue there.

It is going to be tough for him, because he has a Shia base that he has to work with as well and it is a very complicated issue for him to deal with, but certainly one of the things that is very disheartening for us humanitarian people is that this is a manmade humanitarian disaster.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Mr. STAAL. It is bad enough when there is a typhoon or an earthquake and you have to deal with that, but it is just so much worse when it is a manmade one, and

Mr. McGOVERN. I agree. I used to think that the older I got, the more things would be clear for me

Mr. STAAL. Yeah.

Mr. McGOVERN. and it is the reverse is happening, and I don't understand, the older I get, why there are so many people in the world who choose to highlight their differences and spend their entire life, you know, driving wedges in societies. It is such a waste of time and, you know, and it just and we have got to figure out away to get around that and overcome that.

Let me just ask you finally, and I don't know if you can answer these or not, but if you could maybe talk to me about what actions the United States Government is taking to ensure that its advisors in Iraq are monitoring and reporting on adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law by the Iraqi security forces and what steps is our government taking to equip the Iraqi security forces so they can monitor civilian casualties, mitigate harm during operations, and ensure accountability for attacks on civilians?

Because while I while we rightfully worry about the terrible impact of ISIL, I also worry about the terrible impact of people we are supporting, and I think it is important that there is good oversight and that we feel comfortable with that. So I pose those as my final question.

Mr. STAAL. Yeah. It is obviously an issue that we feel very strongly about as well. The worst abuses are probably taking place in the ISIL held areas

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Mr. STAAL. and we still are wrestling with ways to get in there. In other parts of the country, actually one of our USAID partners has deployed what we call mobile protection teams throughout central and southern Iraq to monitor and document human rights violations and abuses by both state and non state actors, especially against displaced women and children.

So we are trying to address that issue and document those abuses so that at some point, when we can, that, you know, measures can be taken to take steps against the people who have committed those abuses.

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, I thank you both.

Anything you want to add before I anything I forgot? Anything we should know?

Let me just close by just and, again, this is kind of unfair to kind of have you depart with, but I think every time I get somebody from the administration, I should make this request.

I think one of the things that is troubling to me about the discussion on Iraq here in the United States is that, I know you guys are all doing what you are supposed to do, we in Congress aren't doing what we are supposed to do. You know, we are involved in

another war. We you know, we are bombing every day. We have got, to the best of my knowledge, at least 3,000 troops on the ground. We are I heard the Secretary of State's comments before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in which he said that, you know, we don't want to don't tie the administration's hands, you know, don't limit the role of the U.S. troops, they might need to be in don't say they can't be involved in combat, and, in fact, don't even don't even limit the countries that they can be involved in.

And I have to tell you, Congress has a responsibility, a constitutional responsibility when it comes to issues of war. And the reason why I think that the administration ought to be pressing Congress to vote and debate and vote on authorization, and I can't I am not sure I can support an authorization, but nonetheless, I think we ought to go through this exercise, is because I think that we I think through debate, you know, we might end up being able to improve upon some of the policy recommendations and maybe people can better understand or even think of other ways to help respond to the humanitarian crisis, but we ought to at least talk about it. And I worry that as awful as things are in Iraq, we are not we are not talking about that in the United States Congress, and so I appreciate the opportunity for these hearings.

In all you know, to be totally transparent here, one of the reasons why I am doing this hearing is because, you know, Claudia Lefko, who is here today with Susan Lantz, but Claudia, from my congressional district, came in and basically said, we are not talking about this stuff enough and there are lots of issues that we need to we need to grapple with, lots of humanitarian issues, and we are not doing it.

And so I think it would be helpful for you to tell people back in your buildings that you ought to involve Congress more on this and we ought to be debating this so we don't make mistakes that may be preventable, and that you know, and that there is a better understanding of kind of what can be what we can work on together, so

But anyway, I thank you for being here and I thank you for your testimony.

Mr. STAAL. Thank you.

Mr. McGOVERN. And thank you for your work. Appreciate it.

Mr. STAAL. Thank you very much.

Mr. McGOVERN. All right. Now, I am very pleased to welcome the members of our second panel. Our first testimony will be by Dr. Mazin Al Jadiry, pediatric oncologist at the Children's Welfare Teaching Hospital in Baghdad. Due to a family emergency, Dr. Mazin was unable to attend, but Dr. Leslie Lehmann will read his testimony and take his place on the panel.

Dr. Lehmann is proud of Dr. Mazin's international project to improve cancer care in Iraq. I want to thank both of you for your work in treating child cancer patients in Iraq, and I look forward to hearing about how not only the current crisis but also the past several years of turmoil have strained Iraq's healthcare system and threatened Iraqis people right to health.

We are also honored to have Ms. Sarah Margon from Human Rights Watch let me make sure I get these Ms. Kristele Younes, who is from the International Rescue Committee; and Ms. Andrea Koppel from Mercy Corps. I am thankful for your tireless efforts in providing humanitarian assistance and human rights protection for the people of Iraq, and I look forward to hearing your testimonies.

And I would like to formally submit the written testimonies of all the witnesses into the record.

And I would also like to formally submit for the record written testimonies from Catholic Relief Services and MADRE.

So, Dr. Lehmann, why don't we begin with you. Welcome. Thank you all for being here.

STATEMENTS OF MAZIN FAISAL FARHAN AL JADIRY, M.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS, COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF BAGHDAD, DELIVERED BY LESLIE LEHMANN, M.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PEDIATRICS, HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL; SARAH MARGON, WASHINGTON DIRECTOR, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH; KRISTELE YOUNES, DIRECTOR FOR U.N. HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE; AND ANDREA KOPPEL, VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY, MERCY CORPS

STATEMENT OF MAZIN FAISAL FARHAN AL JADIRY, M.D., DELIVERED BY LESLIE LEHMANN, M.D.

Dr. LEHMANN. Thank you, Congressman McGovern, for this opportunity to present Dr. Mazin's words. And, obviously, it would be much more eloquent coming from him, but perhaps his inability to be here is a further reflection on some of the instability in the region.

I am a pediatric oncologist, and I am here with my colleague, Kathleen Houlahan, who is the director of Pediatric Oncology Nursing at the Dana Farber/Boston Children's Hospital. And we have worked with the doctors in Iraq now for several years, and I think going from the more global perspective that the prior testimony was talking about to a more individual level, both of those perspectives add information to the puzzle.

So this is in Dr. Mazin's words: To give you a reasonable profile of our situation, we need 1,001 nights instead of only 1,000 words. It might be enough as an introduction to tell you we are living in a wounded land called Iraq and currently we need palliative care rather than curative treatment. Our country, where I have practiced medicine for 25 years, had one of the best healthcare systems in the Middle East, one that provided free, good quality medical services.

This changed dramatically beginning in 1990. Since then, most of the systems, institutions, and government structures that would support a modern industrial company and make good health possible have been damaged or broken. WHO defines health as a state of complete physical, social, and mental wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health is identified as a human right in the 1948 universal declaration, but the document has no binding legal power.

More recent covenants identify six basic rights that, taken together, help us define and understand health: adequate housing, education, food, social security, decent work, and the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. I will talk about health in Iraq from this broad definition.

I will focus on two things: First, the magnitude of the overall collapse of the country, how it affected health, and how difficult it has been to recover; and secondly, the impact of the last two decades on children, what that tells us about the present situation and the outlook for good health in the future.

The Iraqi healthcare system and overall health, especially the health of children and other vulnerable populations, deteriorated significantly after 1990. By 1997, WHO reported the health system was, quote, "close to collapse." Two years later, in March 1999, the U.N. report on the humanitarian situation in Iraq described the healthcare system as, quote, "decrepit," reporting that the country had, quote, "experienced a shift from relative affluence to massive poverty. The infant mortality rates today are among the most highest in the world. Low infant birthrate affects at least 23 percent of all births. Chronic malnutrition affects every fourth child under 5 years of age. Only 41 percent of the population have regular access to clean. And 83 percent of all schools need substantial repairs."

According to the summary report prepared by UNICEF for the U.N. Special Session on Children in May 2002, the under 5 mortality rate went from 50 in 1990 to 130 deaths per thousand children in 2000, an increase of 160 percent. Child health in Iraq declined more in the decade 1990 to 2000 than that for children in any other country in the world. It has been impossible to gather reliable data since then.

Some months after the 2003 war, my colleague Dr. Salma Al Hadad attended an international medical conference in Jordan. Delegates agreed that their first priority would be for a team to come to Iraq to conduct a comprehensive health assessment so we could develop a plan to meet the medical needs of children and their families, but no one came because of the lack of security. No one came.

I was asked to testify about health across Iraq, but I cannot summarize it with any accuracy. We don't have the data. What we do have and what I can share with confidence is our own statistics and narrative of children's health written by hand, by me, and other doctors in our oncology unit. There is no IT or data management, and we are one of the biggest pediatric cancer centers in the Middle East, dealing with almost twice as many patients as the King Hussein Hospital in Jordan and similar in size to the entire Harvard pediatric cancer centers.

Remember, we are talking about a unit in a hospital where we regularly average 1.5 newly diagnosed patients every working day. This, by any measure, is a huge number of patients, especially in an underdeveloped and underresourced setting like ours. The unit has the capacity for 30 to 40 beds, but inpatients usual number from 60 to 80. We have an average of 300 plus newly diagnosed malignant cases per year.

Despite the challenges and despite the fact that our emotional and professional capacity as doctors and nurses left to care for an increasingly unhealthy population is depleted, no one on the oncology unit thinks of leaving. An Iraqi poet puts it this way: The sun in my country is more beautiful than in others. And the dark, even the dark there is nicer. It embraces Iraq.

We stay and we work tirelessly to improve the quality of care, but we have a shortage of doctors and well trained nurses. Most nurses only have a secondary school

education. They have not received basic training in nursing and medical fundamentals. Only 25 percent are college graduates. Many doctors left and many continue to leave in response to the ongoing violence and instability. Many who stay have no context to measure the quality of care we are providing. This is a problem.

Iraq is isolated from the international intellectual, scientific, and medical community that cross fertilizes ideas that connects people and resources to help achieve the best practice and the best care for patients. We have less capacity and more patients with more serious illness. Their families have more serious problems than we used to see, problems that affect the way they can or cannot cope when their child is diagnosed with a serious illness, like cancer.

We find everyone in the family unit in bad health, yet there are no multidisciplinary teams in Iraq, such as one finds in Western countries. No social workers, no teachers, spiritual advisers or child life therapists in the hospital. No one to connect them with social services to support and sustain them through hard times.

All of us are suffering from the cumulative effects of a series of long term crises. Maybe this is why Iraqis prefer to die at home rather than in a hospital. A hospital is not a drug. It is a place, person, and time offered to the patient. It is a smile, an orientation, a trust. It is the knowledge and well structured practice. Sadly, I find a paucity of these attitudes and capacities in our system.

It hasn't always been this way. We have been experiencing a perfect storm in Iraq, a compromised healthcare system struggling to treat an increasing number of patients whose overall health is declining.

What does it say if I tell you that a consultant pediatrician, after having her breast cancer scientifically assessed in Beirut, followed medical protocols with teleconsultation in the U.S.? She received her chemotherapy treatment in her office in Children's Hospital and not in another hospital. And why did I take my father to Lebanon for GI intervention, even though such a procedure is available in Iraq?

We know we need help. Our unit has both reached out and been open to offers of international help and collaboration for the last two decades. Our collaboration with an Italian team of doctors beginning in 2003 has been the single most significant aspect of improving cancer care, providing us with much needed social, psychological, and scientific support. Communicating for 2 hours per week takes us away from the agonizing stress of our daily activities. We find collegiality and valuable professional opportunities to address critical medical and scientific issues. Our patient outcomes have improved in some cases, which contributes to our confidence in our capacity to provide better care.

In March of 2013, with the Italian organization and with Boston Children's Hospital Dana Farber Cancer Center for Blood Diseases and Cancer, we organized a week of lectures, training, and observation in medical cities as part of our project

Baghdad Resolve: An International Collaboration to Improve Cancer Care in Iraq. One of our long term nurses commented that it had been, quote, "the best week of my life in terms of professional development, support, and encouragement."

What we need to improve health, to claim health as a human right in Iraq, is long term stability. This would enable our government to direct adequate and necessary financial resources to critical human needs and would enable healthcare providers to develop and take advantage of more international collaborations to improve our capacity to deliver quality healthcare to Iraqis.

Respectively submitted, Dr. Mazin Al Jadiry, December 12, 2014.

[The statement of Dr. Al Jadiry follows:]

Prepared Statement of Mazin Faisal Farhan Al-Jadiry

Introduction

To give you a reasonable profile of our situation, we need one thousand and one nights (Middle Eastern folk tales) instead of only 1000 words over 7-10 minutes. It might be enough to suffice, as an introduction to tell you we are living in a wounded land called Iraq and currently we need palliative care rather than curative treatment.

Our country, where I have practiced medicine for 25 years, had one of the best health-care system in the Middle East; a system of primary, secondary and tertiary care facilities that provided free, good quality services. This changed dramatically beginning in 1990. Since then many if not most of the systems, institutions and government structures that support a modern industrial country have been damaged or broken. Everything – from the education and health care system to the health-sustaining infrastructure of water purification and the electric grid--has been negatively affected. Every person has been negatively affected in one way or another. Many have lost a relative or close friend, many lost their job, or their house, or their health. As pediatric oncologists, we feel we have lost a good deal of our institutional and professional capacity to treat the young patients who come to us with serious, life-threatening cancers.

There were some changes and improvements after the regime change in 2003, but we are still far below the expected medical standard. Hospitals and private laboratories in Iraq are still functioning without effective national or international quality controls. Things have been slow to change and difficult, given the on-going instability.

The Concept of Health as a Human Right

WHO defines health as: a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health is identified as a human right in the 1948 Universal Declaration but the document has no binding legal power. For that we must look at more recent International covenants, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which identifies adequate housing, education, food, social security, decent work and “the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” as the six basic rights that, taken altogether, help us define and understand health in a holistic way. More and more, doctors, medical and human rights professionals recognize that culture and environment determine health as much or more than internal physical factors of disease risk.

I will talk about health in Iraq from this broad definition, recognizing that there are many factors that stand in the way and make it difficult to achieve and sustain good health in our country. I want to

focus on two things. First, the magnitude of the over-all collapse of the country, how it affected health and how difficult it has been to recover. Secondly the impact of the last two decades on children, and what that tells us about the present situation and the future outlook. I am a pediatrician, but everyone –mothers and fathers as well as pediatricians—knows it is difficult to achieve and sustain good health without a strong, healthy start in life.

History and facts

The political, social and economic situation in Iraq deteriorated significantly after 1990, and so did over-all health, especially the health of children and other vulnerable populations. By 1997, WHO reported the health system was "...close to collapse... Government drug warehouses and pharmacies have few stocks of medicines and medical supplies. The consequences of this situation are causing a near-breakdown of the health care system...."

Two years later, in March 1999 the UN report on the Humanitarian Situation in Iraq, described the health care system as "decrepit" reporting that the country had "... experienced a shift from relative affluence to massive poverty. In marked contrast to the prevailing situation prior to the events of 1990-91, the infant mortality rates in Iraq today are among the highest in the world, low infant birth weight affects at least 23% of all births; chronic malnutrition affects every fourth child under five years of age; only 41% of the population have regular access to clean water; 83% of all schools need substantial repairs."

According to the *Summary Report* prepared by UNICEF for the UN Special Session on Children in May 2002, the Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) went from 50 in 1990 to 130 deaths per thousand children in 2000, an increase of 160%. Children in Iraq declined more in the decade 1990-2000 than children in any other country in the world.

It has been impossible to gather reliable data on the situation for children since then. Some months after the 2003 war, my colleague Dr. Salma Al-Hadad attended an international conference in Jordan. Delegates agreed that their first priority would be for a team to come to Iraq to conduct a comprehensive health assessment, providing the critical base line information needed for the medical community and government to develop a plan to meet the needs of children and their families. But, no one came because of the lack of security. No one came.

I was asked to testify about health across Iraq, but I cannot summarize it with any accuracy, because we still need the data. We don't have it. What we do have and what I can share with confidence is our own statistics and narrative of children's health written by hand by me and the other doctors in our oncology unit in Medical City. There is no IT or data management and we are one of the biggest pediatric cancer centers in the Middle East, dealing with almost twice as many patients as the King Hussein Hospital in Jordan, and similar in size to the entire Harvard pediatric cancer centers. Remember, we are talking about a unit in a hospital, where we regularly average 1.5 newly diagnosed patients every working day. This, by any measure in the world, is a huge number of patients, especially in an underdeveloped and under-resourced setting like ours. The unit has a capacity for 30-40 beds, but in-patients usually number from 60-80. We have an average of 300+ newly malignant cases per year.

Responding to the challenges has been difficult

This gives you an idea of the challenges we have been facing over many years. And you can see why I say Iraqis need palliative care; we are not in good health. How could any people in any country be in good health when everything they need to support health is broken. When human resources and capacity -- including the emotional and professional capacity of doctors and nurses left to care for an increasingly unhealthy population-- is so depleted? Forty years of continuous crisis has had a negative impact on us.

How have we responded? In spite of the challenges, neither Dr. Salma nor I nor the rest of the oncology team in our unit thought of leaving. An Iraqi poet puts it this way: The sun in my country is more beautiful than in others. And the dark, even the dark there is nicer. It embraces Iraq.

We stay and we work tirelessly to improve the quality of health care we offer our patients. But circumstances continue to work against us. I would say that in a holistic assessment, we are providing a lower level of care and services than we provided forty years ago.

Why? We have a shortage of doctors and other health care professionals. Many have left and many continue to leave in response to the on-going violence and instability. Many who stay have no idea about the level of scientific and medical achievement or standards outside the country. This is a problem; Iraq is isolated. We are not part of the international intellectual, scientific and medical community that cross-fertilizes ideas for the best approach to problems and the best care for patients, that might inspire us to higher levels of achievement. There are very limited opportunities to share information and collaborate on research; it takes an extra effort which many Iraqi doctors are not making.

The quality of medical education and training has suffered. New doctors are not prepared to meet the challenge of more patients and families with many and more serious problems than before-- problems that affect the way they can or cannot cope when their child is diagnosed with a serious illness. We find everyone in the family unit is in "bad health" which makes our job more difficult. We are expected to fix all the problems. Yet, there is no multidisciplinary team such as one finds in western countries. No social workers, teachers, spiritual advisors or child life therapists in the hospital. No one to connect them with social services to support and sustain them through hard times.

Our nurses work very hard, putting in many hours of work with more patients in serious or critical condition than their peers on other units. This makes it difficult to attract enough experienced and well-qualified nurses who are in short supply in Iraq anyway. Our nurses are mostly secondary school graduates; only 25% are college graduates. They have not received basic education or training in nursing and medical fundamentals and often lack proficiency in English, the official language of medicine.

Doctors and nurses in Iraq, myself included, are suffering from the cumulative effects of a series of long-term crises. It affects our ability to care for patients. Maybe this is why Iraqis prefer to die at home rather than in a hospital. A hospital is not a drug. It is a place, person and time offered to the patient. It is a smile, orientation and trust. It is a knowledge and well-structured practice. Sadly, there is a paucity of these attitudes and words in our current lexicon. It hasn't always been this way.

We have a perfect storm in Iraq: a compromised health care system, struggling to treat patients whose overall health is declining because of the on-going violence and chaos in our country.

What does it say if I tell you that a consultant pediatrician, after having her breast cancer scientifically assessed in Beirut, followed medical protocols with tele-consultation in the US. She received her chemotherapy treatment in her office in Children's Hospital, and not in another hospital. And, why did I take my father to Lebanon for GI intervention even though such a procedure is available in Iraq?

What is Working and What will be of help

We need help. For our part, the team on our unit has both reached out and been open to offers of international help and collaboration for the last two decades. Through our own efforts, combined with those of various partners we are developing and when possible, implementing strategies for holistic care for our patients and appropriate goals for improving hospitals and the Iraqi health-care system overall.

A collaboration with an Italian team of doctors, beginning in 2003, changed our lives and theirs, providing us with much-needed social, psychological and scientific support to carry on in our challenging circumstances. Communicating for two hours per week, takes us away from the agonizing stress of our daily activities. We find collegiality and valuable professional opportunities to address critical medical and scientific issues. Our patient outcomes have improved in some cases, which contributes to our confidence and our capacity to care for patients. Despite all obstacles, we find ourselves improving. This collaboration and psychosocial intervention has been the single most significant aspect of improving cancer care on our unit.

In March of 2013 we organized a week of lectures, training and observation in Medical City as part of our project, *Baghdad Resolve: An International Collaboration to Improve Cancer Care in Iraq*. Our partners, doctors from La Sapienza University in Rome, doctors and a nurse from Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard medical school, along with a children's advocate spent a week on our unit. One of our long-term nurses commented that it had been the "...best week of my life," in terms of professional development, support and encouragement.

What we need to improve Health, to claim health as a human right in Iraq is long-term stability. This would enable our government to direct adequate and necessary financial resources to critical human needs and would enable health care providers to develop and take advantage of more international collaborations to improve our capacity to deliver quality health care to Iraqis.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Mazin Al-Jadiry
December 12, 2014

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you very much for that powerful testimony. We appreciate it very much.

Ms. Margon.

STATEMENT OF SARAH MARGON

Ms. MARGON. Thank you, Chairman McGovern.

Thank you for inviting me to testify. This is an important hearing and an important contribution to the discussion on Iraq. I would like to share some context and insights from my recent trip to Iraq, as well as Human Rights Watch's longstanding research on the country where the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham or ISIS is one but not the only entity perpetrating gross and widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, as you mentioned in the last panel.

ISIS's extraordinary brutality is of course well known. Their campaign of killings is remarkably gruesome. They publicize, rather than hide, their abuses; promote their atrocities via social media; and make very clear they don't subscribe to the same norms, values, laws, and standards that serve to guide the international community. Instead, ISIS employs an overt strategy of cruelty to sow fear and subdue populations under its control. ISIS hasn't come from nowhere. The context is important. ISIS has been gaining strength by taking advantage of the brutal crackdown in Syria by Syrian and Iraqi authorities; the marginalization of Sunnis that began over a decade ago after the U.S. invasion of Iraq; and the conflict related chaos in Syria, among other factors. Similarly, the rapid territorial gains ISIS made this summer were largely enabled by the discontent, which you also mentioned in the last panel, that resulted from the Maliki led government policies that fed a cycle of sectarian violence through exclusion and discrimination.

Mr. McGovern, more than 11 years ago, after the U.S. forces invaded Iraq, it has become quite clear that the country's transition to anything that might look like a functioning and sustainable democracy built on the rule of law is far from accomplished. Even before ISIS's dramatic territorial gains earlier this summer, human rights conditions in the country were deteriorating. The rights of even Iraq's most vulnerable citizens, especially women and detainees, were regularly violated by the government with impunity.

Iraq has been grappling with a weak criminal justice system plagued by corruption for many years. The courts frequently base convictions on coerced confessions and trial proceedings that fall far short of international standards. Thousands of men and women have been detained without charge and subject to torture and ill treatment.

Emboldened by the Syrian conflict and multiple political crises in Baghdad, sectarian tensions over the last few years in particular have deepened as Al Qaeda in Iraq and other insurgent groups have carried out nearly daily attacks against civilians. Even before ISIS's rise, the past year would have been far bloodier than the last 5 years before it. 2015 threatens to be far worse. Before the current counter ISIS campaign, the Iraqi government was fighting a broadly defined counterterrorism campaign that employed draconian and abusive tactics by a heavy handed security force.

In December 2013, the Iraqi Government attacked a largely peaceful demonstration in Hawija that triggered a renewed conflict in Anbar province between local residents, Iraqi security forces, and multiple armed groups. The fighting, which included indiscriminate attacks by government forces on populated areas, along with the use of barrel bombs, which are condemned across the border in Syria, killed an unknown number of civilians and displaced close to 500,000 people. The conflict spread north after ISIS took over Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, this past June.

In early October, I went to Iraq and traveled about 2 hours south of Kirkuk to learn more about the ground fight against ISIS, including the role of the pro government Shia militias. My colleague and I had heard numerous anecdotes about the ransacking of Sunni villages by government backed militias after the U.S. led coalition air strikes helped liberate Amerli, a predominantly Shia town that was under ISIS's siege. While the militias did play a role liberating the village, what we learned that day also confirmed a devastating picture of arson, destruction, displacement, and killing committed by the militias with impunity. At the end of our visit, we pulled over on the side of the road to meet with a displaced family that was living in an abandoned strip mall. And a man in his late 40s told me, "I am no more afraid of Daesh" using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic state "than I am of the Shia militias or the Iraqi government."

The circumstances around the post Amerli siege are emblematic of a larger and deeply worrisome effort underway throughout much of Iraq, as it scales up its counterterrorism campaign with support from the United States. Crudely empowered Shia militias are being used to punish the Sunni population on sectarian grounds. Meanwhile, ISIS continues to prey on vulnerable communities, including those historically concentrated on the Nineveh plains. These groups have a long history of marginalization, but ISIS has intensified this ostracism.

I also traveled to Dohuk, close to the Syrian border, when I was in Iraq or in Kurdistan, I should say to interview young Yezidi men, women, and girls who had recently escaped from ISIS's captivity. They described harrowing tales, many of which you have already heard, about cramped detention, abuse, forced conversion, forced marriage, and sexual slavery.

One 15 year old girl we interviewed, who had only arrived back with her family the day before, was taken from Mosul to Raqqa in Syria. Along the way, she was detained in four different locations, including in Badoush prison near Mosul with hundreds of other Yezidis, and she saw fighters take away more than 100 boys, some as young as 6 years old, from their mothers. She didn't know if they were going to be reeducated or to a training camp. It is very likely they were forced to convert, and many of them may have been killed. When she arrived in Raqqa after her grueling journey, she was detained in a private home with 20 other girls only to be sold shortly thereafter to an ISIS fighter for about \$1,000.

Thousands of families have been torn apart, 500,000 Yezidis, but also about 2 million IDPs throughout the rest of the country. The grim reality is that ISIS is going to be around for the foreseeable future, as other conditions that have enabled it to thrive. I have a number of recommendations that I will touch on briefly and then would be happy to talk about them in the Q and A.

First, the U.S. needs to be extremely cautious, and I can't stress that enough, as it scales up its engagement with the Iraqi security forces. They are deeply infiltrated and in some cases led by the Shia militias. Second, the administration needs to make sure that the Iraqi government is upholding its commitment to stop shelling civilians. There has been some rhetorical commitments. More needs to be done. And, third, the U.S. needs to scale up support more nonmilitary initiatives throughout the country, which my colleagues will talk much more about.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to take questions.

[The statement of Ms. Margon follows:]

Prepared Statement of Sarah Margon:

Chairman Wolf, Chairman McGovern, members of the Commission: thank you for inviting me to testify today. This is an important hearing.

I would like to share some insights from my recent trip to Iraq where the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS, is one, but not the only entity, perpetrating gross and widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

ISIS' extraordinary brutality is, of course, well known. Their campaign of killings is remarkably gruesome. They publicize rather than hide their abuses, promote their atrocities via social media, and make clear they don't subscribe to the same norms, values, laws, and standards that serve to guide the international community. Instead, ISIS employs an overt strategy of cruelty to sow fear and subdue populations under its control, bolstered by tactics that seem to be a throwback to another era.

ISIS hasn't come from nowhere. To the contrary, it has been gaining strength for quite some time by taking advantage of the brutal crackdown by Syrian and Iraqi authorities, the marginalization of Sunnis that began over a decade ago after the US invasion of Iraq, and the conflict-related chaos in Syria, among other factors. Similarly, the rapid territorial gains ISIS made this summer were largely enabled by the discontent that resulted from the Maliki-led government policies that fed a cycle of sectarian violence through exclusion and discrimination.

Chairman McGovern, Chairman Wolf, more than 12 years after the US-led forces invaded Iraq, it has become quite clear that the country's transition to a functioning and sustainable democracy built on the rule of law is far from accomplished. Even before ISIS' dramatic territorial gains earlier this summer, human rights conditions in the country were deteriorating. The rights of even Iraq's most vulnerable citizens, especially women and detainees, were regularly violated by the government with impunity.

Iraq has been grappling with a weak criminal justice system, plagued by corruption for many years. The courts frequently base convictions on coerced confessions and trial proceedings that fall far short of international standards. Thousands of men and women have been detained without charge, and subject to torture and ill-treatment. Emboldened by the Syrian conflict and multiple political crises in Baghdad, sectarian tensions over the last few years in particular have deepened as Al-Qaeda in Iraq and

other insurgent groups have carried out nearly daily attacks against civilians. The past year was far bloodier than the five years before it. 2015 threatens to be even worse.

Before the current counter ISIS campaign, the Iraqi government was fighting a broadly defined counterterrorism campaign that employed draconian and abusive tactics by a heavy-handed security force. A self-generating cycle of violence resulted in suicide attacks, car bombs, and assassinations that became more frequent and lethal, killing more than 12,000 people outside of combat zones over the last year alone.

In December 2013, the Iraqi government attacked largely peaceful demonstrations in Hawija that triggered a renewed conflict in Anbar province between local residents, Iraqi security forces, and multiple armed groups. The fighting, which included indiscriminate attacks by government forces on populated areas along with the use of barrel bombs, killed an unknown number of civilians and displaced close to 500,000 people. The conflict spread north after ISIS took over Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, on June 10, 2014.

In early October, I went to Iraq and traveled about two hours south of Kirkuk to learn more about the ground fight against ISIS, including the role of pro-government Shia militias. My colleague and I had heard numerous anecdotes about the ransacking of Sunni villages by government-backed militias after the US-coalition airstrikes helped "liberate" Amerli, a predominately Shia town of approximately 12,000 people under ISIS siege for almost two months. While the militias did play a role liberating that village, what we learned that day confirmed a devastating picture of relentless arson, destruction, displacement, and killings committed by various militias, with impunity. At the end of our visit, we pulled off the highway to speak with a family displaced by the recent violence. A man in his late 40s, who was living in an abandoned strip mall, told me, "I am no more afraid of Daesh"—the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State—"than I am of the Shia militias and the Iraqi government."

The circumstances around the post-Amerli siege are emblematic of a larger and deeply worrisome effort underway throughout much of Iraq as it scales up its counterterrorism campaign with support from the United States: crudely empowered Shia militias are being used to punish the Sunni population on sectarian grounds.

In the weeks that followed my visit, Human Rights Watch went to more than 20 predominately Sunni villages and heard consistent accounts of systematic destruction by Shia militias, under the guise of "fighting ISIS," that are determined to prevent villagers from returning. Hundreds of families were left homeless, searching for shelter in abandoned factories, graveyards, and under cars and trucks. This tactic intensifies sectarian tensions throughout the country and appears to be flourishing in the absence of any larger strategy for civilian protection.

Meanwhile, ISIS continues to prey on vulnerable communities, including those historically concentrated in the Nineveh plains, such as the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, Shia Shabaks, Turkmen, and Yezidis. These groups have a long history of marginalization but ISIS has intensified this ostracism, labeling them as crusaders, heretics, and devil-worshippers and then threatening them with death if they don't convert to Islam.

During my time in Iraq, I visited Duhok, in the northern part of the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan, to interview young Yezidi men, women and girls who had recently escaped ISIS captivity. They described harrowing tales of cramped detention, abuse, forced conversion, forced marriage, and sexual slavery. One 15-year-old girl we interviewed—who had only arrived back with her family the day before—was taken from Mosul to Raqqa, Syria. Along the way, she was detained in four different locations, including in Badoush prison, near Mosul, with hundreds of other Yezidis. While there, she said she saw fighters take more than 100 boys, some as young as six years old, from their mothers. Maybe they were sent to be "re-educated" or maybe to a training camp. It is likely they were all forced to convert; maybe some were killed.

When this girl arrived in Raqqa after her grueling journey, she said she was detained in a private home with about 20 other girls, only to be sold a few days later to an ISIS fighter for about \$1000.

Another Yezidi girl we interviewed was held captive with her four sisters, the youngest of whom was 10 years old. She shared the story of another young girl, with whom she was detained and who had been “selected” by an older ISIS fighter. He regularly took her to his home, locked her in a room and told his family he was “helping her with her Islamic education.” Instead, he was beating and raping her.

As the Commission Chairmen will recall, this past August, President Obama made clear the United States would “not turn a blind eye”¹ to a Yezidi massacre in Iraq. Certainly, there has been increased attention to the plight of the Yezidis, alongside other vulnerable communities in Iraq, but launching a military operation isn’t a sufficient long-term strategy to protect these groups—or any others.

Indeed, thousands of families have already been torn apart; more than 500,000 Yezidis and other religious minorities have been driven from their homes, most to the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan, which is already suffering under the strain of some 200,000 Syrian refugees and lacks the resources to mount an adequate response.²

But it is not only religious minorities who have been displaced. Thousands of Sunni families are also fleeing violence in other parts of Iraq, including in areas recently “cleared” of ISIS that are less accessible and virtually invisible to the international community. Countrywide, there are now approximately 2 million displaced Iraqis, many of whom have little access to basic services or any meaningful protection.

The grim reality is that ISIS is going to be around for the foreseeable future, as are the conditions that have enabled it to thrive. So instead of thinking predominately about military operations against ISIS, there is a need to shift gears and reflect on how the US can do a better job helping Iraqi civilians find a greater measure of protection while also ensuring US military operations do not inadvertently end up strengthening ISIS appeal to disenfranchised Sunnis. If the US doesn’t take this step, far too many people in Iraq will continue living in brutal conditions, under constant threat from a wide range of abusive actors, and without sufficient support for their most basic human needs.

Recommendations

Addressing the underlying social-political dynamics in Iraq that have been neglected for so many years—by Iraqis officials as well as by donor governments including the United States—is critical to reversing the current downward trajectory. There have been some encouraging signs by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi but the jury’s still out as to whether they’ll be tied to any meaningful institutional reform. That said, there are some near-term steps Human Rights Watch would like to recommend that could provide a measure of protection and support for those in need.

First, the US needs to be extremely cautious as it scales up its engagement with the Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi security forces are deeply infiltrated and, in some cases, controlled by militias that commit serious abuses with impunity. This means training and equipping the security forces will require a major overhaul of the security forces—and ultimately an elimination of the militias if it is to be not only an effective military force, but a professional, law-abiding one. As a first step, the Leahy Law, which requires human rights vetting of any foreign partner units before such programs can be operationalized, needs to be robustly and consistently implemented. Getting this right means shielding the United States from engaging with an extensively abusive and corrupt army. In general, an increase in train and equip programs need to be incorporated into a wider plan for reform that seeks to build an integrated force that is fully respectful of civilian protection.

¹ White House, “Statement by the President,” August 7, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-pressoffice/2014/08/07/statement-president> (accessed December 8, 2014).

² UNHCR, “Syria Regional Refugee Response.” 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103>(accessed December 8, 2014).

Certain security force units well known for their abusive tactics should be omitted from the reform process until the government takes steps towards remediation. Congress should also press the administration to develop clear policy guidance on how diplomats and military officials can support the Iraqis and other foreign governments to promote accountability. As you may know, the Leahy Law requires the administration to offer related assistance but this area of the law and associated policy are woefully underdeveloped. Finally, on this point, strong congressional oversight will be essential to ensure Baghdad does not funnel US government-issued weapons and equipment to Shia militias or into their own pockets, which appears to be happening already with some regularity.

Second, the administration needs to make sure that the Iraqi government is upholding its commitment to stop shelling civilians. In September, Prime Minister Abadi ordered his army to stop shelling populated areas in order to spare civilian lives. This order, which was made during a press conference, was an important rhetorical commitment to the lives of all Iraqis. But only days after it was made, the attacks began anew. The administration—with support from Congress — should make clear that deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians are unacceptable, not to mention illegal, and that additional military cooperation between the United States and Iraq will require a renewed call, backed up by clear benchmarks for implementation.

Third, the US needs to scale-up support for non-military initiatives throughout the country, whether through independent activists, media, relief aid, or civil society organizations. Such support is an important counter balance to military operations and helps promote a culture of oversight and public accountability—both of which are sorely missing.

In northern Iraq, this assistance should include support for local and international organizations to increase medical and counseling services for displaced people who fled ISIS. Programs should be geared towards the confidential needs of people who have survived sexual violence, including comprehensive post-rape care. Access to Iraqis outside Kurdistan—and information about the conditions in which they're living—remains extremely limited. Scaled-up support to impartial groups, including in the Anbar region, should be a priority and would indicate a commitment to all Iraqis.

Thank you and I'm happy to take your questions.

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you very much.

Ms. Younes.

STATEMENT OF KRISTELE YOUNES

Ms. YOUNES. Thank you very much, and thank you very much, Chairman McGovern, for holding this important hearing and for asking the International Rescue Committee to testify.

Over 1.9 million people have been displaced from their homes inside Iraq since December of last year. And that is on top of a significant number of people who were already displaced inside the country: 230,000 Syrian refugees and a remaining 1.1 million Iraqi IDPs who were displaced during the American led war in Iraq.

Some of the displaced Iraqis, particularly Sunni Arab men of fighting age have not been allowed to flee to Iraq safer governorates, including the Kurdish region of Iraq, or KRI. Ethnic and religious minorities have been the target of some of the most horrific violence by ISIS, but it is clear that all Iraqis have suffered at their hands and as a result of Government of Iraq and international military action. Not allowing these individuals to flee is not only a violation of the Iraqi constitution, which calls for an unimpeded freedom of movement, but also places people directly in harm's way.

Let me first talk about the situation in the Kurdish region of Iraq. An estimated 930,000 people of the newly displaced Iraqis, have fled to the KRI. Despite the generosity of the Kurdistan Regional Government, or KRG, and the people of the KRI, needs are enormous. The lack of available and adequate housing is the most pressing issue, with an estimated 516,000 people in the KRI alone in need of shelter assistance and sometimes living in public buildings, like schools and churches, and unfinished construction sites.

Of course, it is winter now and temperatures are dropping. And exposure to cold weather conditions grow with averages in the KRI between 3 and 41 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter months. An estimated 450,000 people, including 225,000 children need warm winter clothes and shoes. The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, estimates that there is a funding gap of \$173 million in winterization support that must immediately be addressed.

Due to the housing crunch, hasty construction of camps across the three governorates of the KRI has been ongoing, but these camps are unlikely to be up to standards and will only house a third of the IDP population, many of whom are reluctant to move to camps. The IRC recommends the use of camps to house refugees and IDPs only as a last resort.

We believe firmly that people should be able to choose where they live, have access to markets and public facilities, and enjoy freedom of movement. We would encourage the Government of Iraq, the KRG, United Nations agencies, international donors, and humanitarian nongovernmental agencies to do everything they can to find creative alternative housing options and avoid sending Iraqi IDPs to camps where many don't want to go.

As I mentioned earlier, there are 230,000 Syrian refugees also impacting the same KRI governorates hosting the new waves of IDPs, further compounding the strain the host communities are facing. The U.N. humanitarian system, as well as individual bilateral donors, often do not handle mixed population, meaning IDPs, refugees, and host communities, out of the same agencies and budgets.

This sometimes means, like I was able to witness in Iraq, unevenly responding to the needs of one population instead of the other, even if they are living side by side. The IRC would therefore encourage an area based approach looking at the existing needs of whole areas to assess the type of interventions required to assist displaced people of any profile and the communities hosting them.

Mr. Chairman, the situation in central Iraq has become sort of a black hole. We know that many civilians were not able to flee or are trapped and are in need of assistance, but we need more information, and we need it now, as lives are on the line. The United States and the rest of the international community must redouble efforts to assess the needs of vulnerable civilians and find creative ways of getting assistance to them. While it can be difficult to get aid into areas controlled by a group such as ISIS, all efforts must be made to allow impartial humanitarian aid organizations working through local communities to get critical assistance to innocent civilians that desperately need it. Finally, I would like to mention a far less known victim of this year's violence in Iraq, the pipeline of Iraqis who are waiting to be resettled to the United States. An estimated 20,000 Iraqis are queued for P 2 visas, which is a special category of visa established for Iraqis that work for U.S. Forces in Iraq or are closely related to such people, were employed by other organizations or media outlet that were perceived to be associated with the U.S., or were applying to join family members already living in the U.S. Processing of P 2 visas in Iraq has ground to a near halt, due to the evacuation of nonessential consular and citizen and immigration services staff from the Embassy in Baghdad. Even other categories, such as those eligible for special immigrant visas, Iraqis who have worked with U.S. Armed Forces, find it too dangerous to reach the U.S. Embassy for the interviews they must attend.

As Secretary of State Kerry recently noted, the conflict with ISIS could last several years. Given the terror they have wrought and the conflict that has resulted between ISIS and a variety of actors, we will likely not see significant movement of IDPs back to their homes in the near future. Therefore, we would like to make the following recommendations, which we will keep short and are happy to talk about in the Q and A: First, fund the existing \$2.2 billion Iraqi strategy response plan; second, encourage the Government of Iraq to meet obligations to its own citizens; third, urge Iraqi leaders to allow freedom of movement for all Iraqis; fourth, support the strengthening of public service provision in the KRG; fifth, assess and address humanitarian needs in central Iraq; and sixth, repair the resettlement pipeline to the U.S.

Thank you very much.

[The statement of Ms. Younes follows:]

Prepared Statement of Kristele Younes:

On behalf of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), I would like to thank Co-Chairmen Wolf and McGovern as well as the other Commission members for holding this important hearing and for asking the IRC to testify.

While the conflict in Iraq and international efforts to defeat the Islamic State (IS) have been headline news, the impact that the violence has had on the lives of Iraqis and efforts to aid them has only been a footnote in this story. Over 1.9 million people have been displaced from their homes inside Iraq since December of last year³. A more proactive approach must be taken to provide life-saving assistance and prevent them from suffering at the hands of a second “disaster”—the oncoming winter.

Whole of Iraq Picture

Before exploring the humanitarian implications of the recent violence, we need to open the aperture to view the larger picture of displacement in Iraq. While the violence that has occurred since June of 2014 to date has uprooted 1.5 million people from their homes⁴, this was on top of a significant number of displaced people already living in Iraq.

Between December 2013 and May 2014, up to 472,000 people were displaced in Al-Anbar province alone by armed conflict⁵: a figure that went largely unnoticed by the international community. The violence was triggered by measures taken by the Government of Iraq (GoI) that were perceived as sectarian and subsequent fighting between federal Iraqi forces and militia groups. Nearly 230,000 of the 3.2⁶ million Syrians fleeing violence in their own country have sought refuge in northern Iraq. Finally, there were a remaining 1.1⁷ million IDPs who were displaced during the American-led war in Iraq and the sectarian violence that was unleashed during that period.

This complicated “patchwork” of displacement must not be forgotten, and those forced to flee the violence of IS this year must be considered as one further component of a multi-layered humanitarian crisis that already existed in Iraq. A holistic response that addresses the needs of all displaced people in Iraq must be pursued.

KRI: Hosting Limitations

An estimated 930,000⁸ of the newly displaced have fled to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). In the Dohuk governorate alone this is 430,000⁹ people, with some communities reporting three IDPs or refugees present per every person in their community. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the people of the KRI deserve credit for opening their doors to host so many people and doing their best to assist them. They have largely let these people access medical systems, shelter in parks and schools and

³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Iraq IDPs Figures Analysis. <http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/iraq/figures-analysis>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ UNHCR. Syria Regional Refugee Response Information Sharing Portal. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Iraq IDPs Figures Analysis

⁸ United National Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 20. <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Iraq%20Crisis%20Situation%20Report%20No%20%208%20to%2014%20November%202014.pdf>

⁹ Ibid

hook up to electricity lines. However, the numbers are just too large for even the most generous of hosting communities to handle.

The lack of available and adequate housing is the most pressing issue with an estimated 516,000¹⁰ people in the KRI alone in need of shelter assistance. There simply aren't enough dwellings for people to reside in; not everyone has families that can host them or can afford to stay in a hotel or apartment even if there was a room available. As a result rents have doubled in Erbil. IDPs who can't afford these skyrocketing rents have resorted to hunkering down in half-constructed buildings with no walls or insulation, under bridges, in parks and in public buildings like elementary schools.

With temperatures dropping, the risks presented by exposure to cold weather conditions grow, with averages in the KRI between three and 41 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter months. An estimated 450,000 people—including 225,000 children—need warm winter clothes and shoes¹¹. Many families had to flee at a moment's notice, without time to bring items with them that would protect them from the cold. The UN Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that there is a funding gap of \$173.1 million¹² in winterization support that must immediately be addressed to prevent people from suffering from exposure to the elements.

The school year had to be delayed across the KRI twice due to sheer numbers of IDPs seeking shelter in local schools. The school year finally began on October 22 in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil governorates, and schools in the most impacted governorate, Dohuk, were only recently evacuated. With few shelter options, the question remains as to where to “evacuate” the IDPs. Due to the housing crunch, hasty construction of camps across the three governorates of the KRI has been ongoing. It is not clear whether the camps will be up to international standards in time for the worst winter months. Furthermore, they likely could only house one-third of the displaced population in the KRI if all were constructed, leaving a large question mark regarding the shelter options for over 600,000 remaining IDPs. As one family sheltering in a school told the IRC: “even though we don't have full services here, we feel safe. The locals are telling us we ‘have to go to the tents’ [i.e. camps]: but winter is coming and with all of these small children, the conditions will be too harsh for us.”

The IRC recommends the use of camps to house refugees and IDPs only as a last resort: believing firmly that people should be able to choose where they live, have access to markets and public facilities, and enjoy freedom of movement. Recognizing the rapid onset of cold weather and the dearth of options for safe housing, we would encourage the Government of Iraq (GoI), the KRG, United Nations agencies, international donors and humanitarian non-governmental agencies to do everything they can to find creative alternative housing options and avoid sending Iraqi IDPs to camps where many don't want to go. Immediate action is paramount; it's a race against time and one where lives hang in the balance.

Protection Challenges for IDPs

Given the volume of IDPs that have streamed in to northern Iraq and the resulting strains placed on local infrastructure, there have been incidences of them not being allowed to enter. This is particularly true of Sunni Arab men of fighting age. While ethnic and religious minorities have been the targets of some of the most horrific violence by IS, it is clear that all Iraqis have suffered at their hands, as well as a result of GoI and international military action. Not allowing these individuals to flee is a violation of the Iraqi constitution, which calls for unimpeded freedom of movement, and places people directly in harm's way.

Once in safe governorates, other protection challenges include families not being able to access assistance provided through Iraq's Public Distribution System (PDS). The PDS provides a monthly food

¹⁰ UN OCHA. Briefing Paper on Response and Funding Gaps—Winterization, 3 November 2014. <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/Winterisation%20in%20Iraq%20-%20Briefing%20Paper%20-%202003%20November%202014.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

ration that is critical to many poor and vulnerable Iraqis. Since IDPs fled, many have not been able to connect back to the system as the ration cards they use are associated with their original residence. This has left the very people who need PDS rations most without basic food staples. Similarly, for the many IDPs who were unable to take their official IDs with them when they fled, the GoI must provide ways to recover duplicates or newly issued papers, which are vital both to receive assistance and access services, such as enrollment in schools. The GoI must move immediately to untangle bureaucratic hurdles that prevent IDPs from accessing critical services owed to them by their government.

Area-based Response

There are 230,000 Syrian refugees also impacting the same KRI governorates hosting the new waves of IDPs, further compounding the strains that hosting communities face. The United Nations humanitarian system as well as individual bilateral donors often do not handle “mixed” populations—meaning IDPs and refugees (as well as vulnerable host communities)—out of the same agencies and offices. This means that there is a risk of responding unevenly to the needs of one population instead of the other, even if they are living side by side. Furthermore, the impact on the residents and public service systems in the KRI of hosting so many refugees and IDPs is significant. Rents have increased, schools have been occupied, medical offices are short on supplies and other public services are strained from the pressure of so many new users.

Given these facts, the IRC would encourage an “area based response”—meaning looking at the existing needs of whole areas to assess the type of interventions required to assist displaced people (of any profile) and the communities hosting them. This involves a different way of working: by both considering the needs of IDP and refugees holistically, but also looking at ways of strengthening government social services so they can be used by these displaced groups without placing an undue burden on local residents.

First, agencies and offices that work with refugees and IDPs must jointly assess needs, plan responses and allocate resources. Second, support must be provided to the KRG to make sure that they can manage some of the response through their own systems: benefiting not only the people that they are hosting, but protecting their own population from the shocks that accompany such a significant inflow of people into their territory. This support should come in the form of adequate and timely budget support and payments to the KRG by the central GoI, which has been an ongoing problem and source of contention. The international community must further bolster the KRG’s ability to strengthen their health, education, safety and other systems by supplementing these resources.

Central Iraq: Little Known

The majority of humanitarian response has been focused on responding to the needs of IDPs who fled to the KRI. There is little information making it out about the situation of those who remain in central Iraq: whether they live in “contested” areas where there is continued active fighting or those controlled by IS and other armed groups. There are accounts of pockets of civilians trapped in parts of central Iraq and people who have had to flee multiple times as the location of fighting shifts. These people have very little to live on and are receiving no assistance from the GoI or the international community. The fact of the matter is that central Iraq has become a sort of “black hole.”

Given that we know that many civilians who were not able to flee or are trapped are in need of assistance, the United States and the rest of the international community must redouble efforts to assess their needs and find creative ways of getting assistance to them. We simply can’t leave large parts of the country—where needs could be massive—unaddressed. While it can be difficult to get aid into areas controlled by a group such as IS, all efforts must be made to allow impartial humanitarian aid organizations, working through local communities, to get critical assistance—like food, medical supplies and other essential items and services—to innocent civilians that desperately need it.

While there has been military involvement on the part of the United States, the Kurdish Peshmerga and federal Iraqi forces to drop assistance into these areas, military involvement in delivering

assistance should be a last resort to prevent militarization of aid efforts and the conflation of military and humanitarian objectives.

Broken Iraqi Resettlement Pipeline

A far less known “victim” of this year’s violence in Iraq is the pipeline of Iraqis that were waiting to be resettled to the United States. Processing of P-2 visas in Iraq has ground to a near halt due to the evacuation of non-essential consular and Citizen and Immigration Services staff from the Embassy in Baghdad.

An estimated 20,000 Iraqis are queued for P-2 visas—which are a special category of visa established for Iraqis that worked for US forces in Iraq or are closely related to such people, were employed by other organizations or media outlets that were perceived to be associated with the US mission or were applying to join family members already living in the United States. Similarly, there is a backlog of Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applications, a designation that was specifically set up to assist Iraqis that worked for US forces and now face danger due to this association.

With only essential Embassy staff present in Baghdad, only the SIVs are being processed. However, with IS violence and the activities of militias in various areas in and around Baghdad, it has become incredibly dangerous for Iraqis to attend interviews at the US Embassy. No other consulate locations in Iraq are currently processing SIVs or P-2 visas, meaning that the few people making it to the interview process with the skeletal staffing at the US Embassy face a difficult tradeoff between the danger of traveling to their interview and the potential longer-term safety of resettlement in the United States.

In order to surmount these obstacles, the IRC would strongly recommend opening interview facilities for P-2 visas and SIVs in alternate safe locations. Possibilities include, but are not limited to, Basra for those living in the south of Iraq and Erbil for those living in the north. Without making arrangements to adapt to the current obstacles to safety and security in Iraq, the US risks leaving some of the most vulnerable Iraqis—some of whom served this country—in harm’s way. Furthermore, the pipeline will continue to be log-jammed, making it difficult to add other vulnerable Iraqis—like religious minorities that have faced unspeakable violence in central Iraq—to the queue.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As Secretary of State Kerry noted at a conference of Foreign Ministers held earlier this month to discuss IS, it may take years of collective international efforts to successfully defeat the group. Given the terror they have wrought and the conflict that has resulted between IS and a variety of state and non-state groups, it is likely that we will not see significant movements of IDPs back to their homes in the near future.

The international community, the GoI and the KRG and UN agencies will therefore need to prepare themselves for a new layer of protracted displacement in Iraq. Given this fact, the IRC would make the following recommendations:

- Address displacement in all of Iraq. Make efforts to holistically assess and design a response to displacement in all areas of Iraq for people displaced during different periods of violence. Addressing only the needs of the IDPs created by IS’ campaign of violence would ignore the larger picture and the needs of millions of other displaced Iraqis.
- Fund the existing \$2.2 billion Iraq Strategic Response Plan. While the World Bank categorizes Iraq as a “lower middle income country”, the displacement crisis is more than the GoI can effectively manage and assistance is not getting to those who need it most. The inability to handle the scale of the crisis is compounded by Iraq’s budget crisis and current low petroleum prices. The international community must not assume that all of the needs of Iraqis will be met by the GoI, otherwise, significant gaps in life-saving assistance will result. Only 29% of the UN Strategic Response Plan has been funded.

- Encourage the Government of Iraq to meet obligations to its own citizens. While the GoI cannot manage the response on its own, it does ultimately shoulder the responsibility of caring for its own citizens. Great efforts should be made to provide public assistance to displaced people through Iraq's PDS system and other channels of support. Furthermore, the GoI must provide timely and adequate budget support to the KRG, which is shouldering a significant burden of IDPs in its governorates.
- Urge Iraqi leaders to allow freedom of movement. Iraqi leaders in the country's safer governorates must uphold the Iraqi constitution by allowing freedom of movement into their territories. While the burden of hosting influxes of IDPs –on top of refugees in some cases—is understood, not allowing certain individuals and families to flee into safer territory could have disastrous consequences.
- Make rapid and intense efforts to address the shelter crisis. A laser-like focus must be placed on addressing the dearth of adequate shelter for IDPs in the KRI in the coming weeks. Winter is on the doorstep and without significant efforts to find adequate housing and provide IDPs with winterization assistance, lives are on the line (again). These efforts should keep an eye toward longer-term solutions given the prospect of IDPs returning to their homes in central Iraq in the near future is low.
- Respond to needs by area, not by population. Some areas of Iraq's north are hosting IDPs and refugees, which is also putting a strain on local host populations. UN agencies and international donors must break out of the mold of addressing the needs of specific populations and work together to look at those present in an entire area. Not only would it prevent some groups from receiving assistance while others don't, it may present a more efficient and effective approach to addressing the impacts of a complex and multi-layered displacement crisis.
- Support the strengthening of public service provision in the KRG. Humanitarian assistance is important, but it won't be enough to address the full needs of displaced people. The KRG has allowed displaced Iraqis to use their services, but their systems cannot handle all of the additional traffic. Given that we are facing a medium to long-term crisis, efforts should be made to strengthen health, education and other public service systems in the KRG for use by IDPs and to ensure that the burden isn't unbearable for host communities.
- Assess and address humanitarian needs in central Iraq. The needs of people remaining or trapped in contested or IS-controlled areas of Iraq should not be ignored. UN agencies and international donors must make efforts to assess needs and to work with impartial humanitarian aid organizations to get assistance to people who need it.
- Get creative in repairing the resettlement pipeline to the US. New staffing arrangements at the US Embassy and consulates and alternate locations for interviews of Iraqis applying for P-2 visas and SIVs must be found to ensure that refugee processing continues. Iraq has become an even more dangerous place for those at risk given their previous affiliation or perceived association with the US mission in Iraq. Keeping the resettlement process moving is a lifeline to these individuals and one that has been almost completely severed in recent months.

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you very much.

Ms. Koppel.

STATEMENT OF ANDREA KOPPEL

Ms. KOPPEL. Thank you very much, Chairman McGovern, and I would also like to thank your cochair, Frank Wolf, for holding, as we have all said, this incredibly important and timely hearing. I would also like to thank you for inviting Mercy Corps to testify.

Mr. McGOVERN. I am a big fan of Mercy Corps, and thank you for mentioning my cochair Frank Wolf, who is leaving Congress. So we will have a new cochair, but I should have said at the outset of this hearing that he has been a great partner and a great hero on a whole range of human rights issues, and I know he cares very deeply about this. But thank you for mentioning it.

Ms. KOPPEL. Absolutely.

Mercy Corps has been in Iraq since 2003. We have been working all over the country. We have programs that primarily have been focusing on building up Iraqi civil society. In fact, our current work responding to the humanitarian crisis is now leveraging these investments to meet the needs of all conflict affected populations, and by that I mean the Syrian refugees, the displaced Iraqis and the host communities.

I just returned on Tuesday evening from a week in Iraq in the northern part, in the Kurdish controlled area, and then in Baghdad. I saw firsthand just how desperate the humanitarian crisis is for hundreds of thousands of people. Among them, and I have some photographs here, which I recognize the screens are a little far away, but among them are Christians, like the Nasr family, a family of eight who fled their home in Karakosh near Mosul, about 2 months ago when the Islamic state arrived.

They now lived crammed together in that single room in the partially built Ankawa shopping mall in Erbil, in Iraq's Kurdish controlled region. This facility is being managed by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, and yet there is no heat, no regular sources of food, no water, and an irregular supply of electricity. Imagine what that means for the families' newest addition, an 18 day old baby, or for the oldest member, a 74 year old woman, Sabihah Abdullah Ibrahim, who is blind in one eye and a diabetic with no money for medicine.

That speaks to your question earlier, Chairman, about the healthcare system in Iraq.

Mrs. Ibrahim told me that a few days ago she got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, and because there is no light, she tripped and injured her foot, which is already swollen and inflamed from her untreated diabetes.

Cascading waves of violence since January 2014 have displaced over 2 million Iraqis, just like Mrs. Ibrahim and her family, as well as 230 refugees from Syria. With the arrival of the heavy winter rains and sub zero temperatures, shelter and winterization

supplies, as we have already heard, are a paramount concern for approximately one out of every two internally displaced Iraqi. While almost 1 million still lack essential household items, like blankets, mattresses, food, and basic hygiene supplies, like soap.

Displacement camps run by the U.N. have reached capacity, while others remain ill equipped or under construction. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of families are seeking shelter wherever they can find it, in schools, mosques, churches, tents, or abandoned and partially constructed buildings. In one such building, right here that you can see, it is on the outskirts of Sulaymaniyah, about 100 Yezidis from the Sinjar region are quite literally camping out. They are the very young, the sick, and the very old. They are camping out in what looks to be like a grain silo, and I am told that it used to house chickens.

The population influx has increasingly strained public services, as Iraqi communities struggle to accommodate greater numbers of people. And since the population is so mobile and needs are in such a constant state of flux depending upon their location, Mercy Corps believes that cash assistance is the most efficient, nimble, and effective means to meet evolving needs.

The current humanitarian emergency in Iraq represents the tyranny of the immediate. And, yet, it was apparent during my meetings with a wide range of Iraqi and Kurdish government officials, as well as with a wide range of civil society, that the U.S. and other donor governments must move beyond what is essentially a short term emergency response that is internationally led to delivering aid in Iraq. Not only is this approach much more expensive and less efficient, but it is also adding unnecessary bureaucracy, which is slowing down the response.

Mr. Chairman, you know very well that when this latest crisis began earlier this year in Anbar province, it began as a peaceful demonstration with, just like Americans, people going into the streets, complaining about the lack of basic services that their government wasn't providing them. The central government wasn't responding to their needs. Eventually, after months of the government not responding, they began to get angry, as we have seen Americans get angry, only this was the opening that the Islamic state seized.

And they came in and they fed off that anger and began a reign of terror. If poor governance and political and economic grievances continue to go unaddressed, sectarian violence and extremism in Iraq will surely escalate. Another wild card, the arrival of tens of thousands of displaced Iraqis in towns and cities all over the country potentially upsetting the delicate equilibrium of these communities is a ticking time bomb. Now is the time to begin enhancing social cohesion and diffusing tensions between the displaced and their host.

Thanks to investments already made by the U.S. Congress approved a few years ago, Mercy Corps was already working to strengthen over 100 local nongovernmental organizations, and we were also training hundreds of highly influential and well connected members of Iraqi society. These are the grassstops. These are the sheikhs.

These are seven parliamentary members who have just been elected, and mayors, men and women, Sunni, Shia, Kurd, all across the spectrum of Iraqi society.

I have seen for myself, I had many conversations with these people, just how capable and, frankly, sophisticated Iraqi civil society truly is. With the latest crisis, civil society will need ongoing support right now. In Sulaymaniyah, for example, Mercy Corps is supporting the Kurdish Economic Development Organization, or KEDO. This is a 20 year old NGO specializing in microfinance. It is self supporting. They are now on the front lines of the crisis delivering humanitarian assistance to communities that, frankly, Mercy Corps, certainly the U.N., and others would not be able to reach. They know where they are. These are low cost targeted programs that have a multiplier effect. The Iraqi Center for Negotiation Skills and Conflict Management this is an Iraqi NGO that was created to reduce violence across Iraq and the whole Middle East region has received funding, a number of years ago, from the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, DRL, and USAID. They have supported this center because they train mediators in conflict mitigation. They now have a network of 350 of the people that I just alluded to a moment ago,

And, yet, despite Iraq's decade long Civil War, in recent years, we have seen a dramatic reduction in U.S. Government support and funding for civil society and conflict mitigation program. For instance, economic support funds had been reduced by 69 percent between 2013 and 2014. And so I would like to leave you and the other members of the commission with four key recommendations. I will just highlight them and be happy to speak to them in more detail.

First, fully fund the International Disaster Assistance account at the level of \$3.3 billion in the fiscal year 2015 SFOPs bill and support robust funding of the economic support fund to meet rapidly growing humanitarian needs.

Second, enable and empower the new central government of Prime Minister Haider al Abadi to gain credibility among his citizens for being responsive to the needs of the conflict affected population and to the Syrian people and, at the same time, adopt a national approach to align and better coordinate the assistance that is taking place with needs assistance, coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance, among multiple actors.

Third, significantly expand the U.S. assistance beyond the autonomous Kurdish region, which currently has 47 percent of the internally displaced Iraqis 47 percent and yet, the majority of the money is going into the KRI and is not reaching the other parts of the country which have the other 53 percent of the internally displaced. And, fourth, in order to diffuse potential conflicts in already fragile communities, the U.S. Government needs to adopt a more holistic relief to resilience approach to programs, even in its humanitarian response.

I wish to sincerely thank you, Chairman McGovern, thank the other members of the commission for holding this very important hearing, and I would be more than happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Koppel follows:]

Prepared Statement of Andrea Koppel:

I would like to thank the co-chairs, Congressman Jim McGovern and Congressman Frank Wolf for holding this important and timely hearing.

Mercy Corps has been in Iraq since 2003 working all over the country, with programs that have focused on supporting the growth of a healthier Iraqi civil society. Our current emergency response efforts addressing Iraq's humanitarian crisis are leveraging these investments to meet the needs of all conflict affected populations -- refugees from Syria, internally displaced Iraqis, as well as host communities.

Overview of Humanitarian needs

I have just returned from a one week trip to Iraq where I saw firsthand just how desperate the humanitarian situation is for hundreds of thousands of people. Among them are Christians like the Nasr family -- a family of eight who fled their home in Karakosh near Mosul about two months ago when the Islamic State arrived. They now live in the partially built Ankawa Shopping mall in Erbil in Iraq's Kurdish Region. This facility is being managed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and yet there is no heat, no regular sources of food or water and an irregular supply of electricity. Imagine what that means for the family's newest addition -- an 18-day old baby? Or for the oldest member -- 74-year old Sabihah Abdullah Ibrahim who is blind in one eye and a diabetic with no money for medicine? The other night Mrs. Ibrahim told me she tripped while she was walking to the bathroom in the dark and injured her foot, which is already swollen and inflamed from her untreated diabetes.

Cascading waves of violence since January 2014 have displaced over two million Iraqis like Mrs. Ibrahim and her family (with 1.4 million since June) as well as 230,000 refugees from Syria. With the arrival of heavy winter rains and sub-zero temperatures, shelter and winterization supplies are a paramount concern for approximately 800,000 internally displaced Iraqis, while at least 940,000 lack essential household items like blankets, mattresses, food and basic hygiene supplies like soap.

Displacement camps run by the United Nations have reached capacity, while others remain ill-equipped or under construction. As a result, tens of thousands of families are seeking shelter wherever they can find it: in schools, mosques, churches, tents and abandoned or partially constructed buildings like the one shown in this slide on the outskirts of Sulaymaniyah. Here about 100 Yezidis from the Sinjar region -- the old, sick and the very young -- are camping out in what looks like an open grain silo where chickens used to live.

The population influx has increasingly strained public services as host communities struggle to accommodate greater numbers of people. Workable solutions are urgently needed. Indicative of the strain -- the school year has already been postponed several months because so many schools are being used as informal shelters.

And countless internally displaced Iraqis are on the move, with many families displaced multiple times over the past year as they search for work or greater security and assistance. Since the population is so mobile, and needs are in a state of constant flux depending on their location, Mercy Corps believes that cash assistance -- which we plan to synchronize with an emerging governmental social service support system -- has proven to be the most efficient, nimble and effective means to meet evolving needs.

To date, while US and international assistance has focused predominantly on the Kurdish Region of Iraq which is hosting 47% of the total displaced population, it is important to note that all 18

governorates are hosting displaced families. As a result, a single nationwide response framework is of paramount importance to ensure that future planning is inclusive, coordinated and that humanitarian aid is commensurate to levels of need.

Breaking the Cycle of Violence

The current humanitarian emergency in Iraq represents the tyranny of the immediate.

And yet, it was apparent during my meetings with senior Iraqi and Kurdish government officials, as well as with a wide range of Kurdish and Iraqi civil society and displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees, that the US and other donor governments must move beyond what is effectively a short-term, internationally led approach to delivering aid in Iraq. Not only is this approach much more expensive and less efficient, but it is also adding unnecessary bureaucracy, and as a result, slowing down the response. In addition, it is not strategically leveraging prior US government investments in Iraq's civil society in order to proactively defuse tensions among displaced Iraqis, Syrians and their Iraqi hosts.

Remember, this latest crisis began in Anbar province in January 2014 with peaceful demonstrations against the central government by Iraqi citizens frustrated over the lack of basic public services. The government repeatedly ignored the protests and eventually the Islamic State seized upon growing anger in Anbar to recruit for their reign of terror.

If poor governance and political and economic grievances continue to go unaddressed, sectarian violence and extremism in Iraq will surely escalate.

Another wild card -- the arrival of tens of thousands of displaced Iraqis in towns and cities across the country -- potentially upsetting the fragile equilibrium of these communities. The time to begin enhancing social cohesion and defusing tensions between the displaced and their hosts is now. And one of the best ways to do this is by mobilizing local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and members of an emerging Iraqi and Kurdish civil society to take the lead.

Thanks to the support of Congress and US taxpayers, Mercy Corps was already working in Iraq to strengthen over 100 local non-profit organizations and we were also training hundreds of influential and well connected conflict mediators. I have seen for myself just how capable and sophisticated Iraqi civil society has become in just a short period of time, while also recognizing that civil society is still relatively new and emerging in Iraq. With the crisis, civil society will need ongoing support. This is particularly true in areas of the country that have not benefited from the relatively secure and supportive environment of the Kurdish Region of Iraq, and where the vast majority of civil society organizations are less than a decade old.

In Sulaymaniyah for example, Mercy Corps is supporting the Kurdish Economic Development Organization or KEDO, a twenty-year-old NGO specializing in micro-finance, which is now on the front lines of the crisis. With its deep roots in the community, KEDO is working directly with the local government to target hard-to-reach newly displaced arrivals with hygiene kits and food parcels. While in Kirkuk, another Iraqi NGO, Foundation of United for Relief and Sustainable Development (FUAD) is delivering aid to displaced Iraqis in rural neighborhoods that neither the UN nor Mercy Corps, on our own, would be able to reach. And KEDO and FUAD's direct deliveries serve yet another purpose -- preventing, or at least delaying, even more displaced Iraqis from flocking to over-crowded bigger cities.

And it is also important to note that these programs are not the big ticket infrastructure projects of years past. These comparatively low-cost, targeted, programs have a multiplier effect. For example: the Iraqi Center for Negotiation Skills and Conflict Management, an Iraqi NGO, was created to reduce violence across Iraq and the whole Middle East region. Mercy Corps, with funding from the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) and USAID has supported this center in its mediator training since 2010. The Center has invested years in training to establish a nationwide volunteer network of 350 Iraqi leaders in interest-based negotiation including: men and women, Sunni, Shia and

Christians, Arabs and Kurds, religious leaders, tribal elders, government officials, politicians, and members of Parliament.

Most, if not all, of these interventions have happened organically without direction from Mercy Corps or the government. For example, one of those trained by Mercy Corps, Ala Kamal a female NGO leader in Sulaymaniyah told me how shortly after the recent humanitarian crisis began she started a grassroots campaign. The campaign included local Christians and Muslims to collect in-kind donations and fundraise outside of Parliament for newly displaced Yazidi families -- in order to welcome them and pro-actively build social cohesion.

And yet despite Iraq's decade-long civil war, in recent years, we have seen a dramatic reduction in US government funding for civil society and conflict mitigation programming -- for instance Economic Support Funds (ESF) were reduced by 69% between 2013 to 2014.

Recommendations for Congress:

While the situation is bleak, there are still a number of concrete steps that Congress can take right now to help the people of Iraq, and to contribute to reducing tensions and investments in the kinds of programs that can eventually, when appropriate, segue to reconciliation once the current crisis abates and people start returning home. With that in mind, I would like to leave the Commission with the following four key recommendations:

First, fully fund the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account and support robust funding to the Economic Support Fund (ESF) to meet rapidly growing humanitarian needs as winter has now arrived.

- Congress must support the \$90 million in International Disaster Assistance (IDA) funding outlined in the President's supplemental request for Iraq, as well as provide a total of \$3.5 billion in the International Disaster Assistance Account in the SFOPS FY15 bill to allow the US government to respond to the pressing and historic humanitarian needs around the world.
- The FY15 Senate appropriations bill recognized the importance of civil society and included \$50 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) in the SFOPS bill for Iraq. We urge you to support this level and to continue strong support for ESF in FY16 to prepare Iraq today for a future peace.

Second, enable and empower the new central government of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and the Kurdish regional government (KRG) to gain credibility among Iraqis by being responsive to the needs of conflict-affected Iraqi and Syrian people. And at the same time, adopt a national approach to integrate needs assessments, coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

- Iraq's central government has just created a High National Committee in Baghdad to respond to the emergency, while the Kurdish Regional Government has created its own Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) in Erbil. And while both committees were designed to better coordinate, strategize and plan with the United Nations, importantly they are not coordinated with one another and they do not include representation from implementing partners -- both international NGOs and local NGOs which are interacting with communities all over the country.

Third, significantly expand international donor assistance beyond the autonomous Kurdish region -- which currently hosts 47 percent of internally displaced Iraqis, yet receives the vast majority of funding -- in order to support all conflict-affected populations in need across the rest of the country.

- According to a recent NGO led assessment, internally displaced Iraqis from Anbar have the least amount of funding at only \$3 per person, although it is increasingly one of the most affected and

contested governorates.¹³ This inadvertently plays into rivalries over resources and takes a segmented, rather than a nation-wide approach to addressing needs.

- The key to the success of a comprehensive approach to need is engaging with a range of Iraqi frontline responders. Especially in areas where the UN and international humanitarian agencies cannot operate securely, the US government must prioritize funding mechanisms that allow for scaling up engagement with existing networks of local NGOs or other well-established Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to deliver assistance to conflict affected populations where they are currently living.
- This will also reduce the likelihood of secondary and tertiary displacements to already crowded cities like Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk.

Fourth, in order to defuse potential conflicts in already fragile communities, the US government must adopt a more holistic -- relief to resilience approach to programs -- even in its humanitarian response.

- For example, the sudden mass displacements of tens of thousands of ethnically and religiously diverse Iraqis including: Sunni, Shia, Turkmen, Christians and Yazidis -- combined with refugees from next door in Syria -- has the real potential to disrupt the delicate equilibrium that exists within current community structures.
- The US must not wait for bigger conflicts to erupt inside camps or in urban host communities before it integrates a conflict mitigation approach in order to build social cohesion into its emergency response programming.
- Even after the Islamic State has been forced to retreat from Iraq, some believe that this is when the real crisis will begin. If history is any guide, that would be when retributions against those who supported IS could begin. A proactive strategy is essential now to get ahead of calls for revenge and prevent additional bloodshed.
- And while the oil wealth of Iraq should pay for major infrastructure as well as social services, the US and other donors must recognize that the Iraqi government has just announced its national budget is overspent, and until a new budget is approved, it will be unable to invest appropriately in its civil society groups that foster reconciliation programming.

I wish to sincerely thank the Commission for its focus on this tremendously important issue, and for extending me the privilege of testifying today. I look forward to answering any of your questions.

¹³ See: <http://www.acaps.org/img/reports/f-funding-tracking-analysis-for-the-idp-response-in-iraq-7-oct-2014.pdf>.

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, thank you very much for your testimony.

Thank you all for your testimony. I can't help but think of the word "devastating" to sum up the testimony that all of you have provided here today. And it is helpful as well because there is a tendency to talk about Iraq and throw numbers around and, you know, throw statistics around but not necessarily get into the nitty gritty of individuals, of individual programs. You know, we sometimes forget that there is a human face behind all of this turmoil, and I appreciate that all you have advocated for today and all the work that you do.

Let me just ask a couple of quick questions and then maybe some individual questions, but just kind of to put things in context. So our U.S. Government says that there is cause for great hope because we have a new leader in Iraq and everything is vastly different from the previous administration in Iraq. I guess my question to all of you is, do you feel, you know, that there is a new direction, that the concerns that existed in the prior government are being addressed and that there is reason for hope? We can go down the line.

Ms. Koppel, if you want to begin.

Ms. KOPPEL. The quick answer is "yes, but." While I was there, for example, apparently Prime Minister al-Abadi issued a new regulation that said that cars without license plates would not be allowed into Baghdad. That is something that people have been asking for for a long time. Why? Because criminality and gangs are increasing at light speed, I mean, in terms of their criminal activity, and they are the ones who are often driving around in cars without license plates.

I think there is a new sense of hope, and I don't think people want to be Pollyannaish about it. This has been a long haul over the last 10 years with the central government, but they are seeing Prime Minister al-Abadi take the right steps. And that is why one of our recommendations is, we don't want to see another Anbar. We want this crisis to be shortened, stopped as soon as possible. If Prime Minister al-Abadi is not seen as delivering and addressing the needs of his people at a time like this and if it is just international actors who are delivering the assistance, that will undermine him.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Ms. KOPPEL. So I think this is something that it is promising and we need to obviously keep a close watch.

Mr. McGOVERN. Ms. Younes.

Ms. YOUNES. I think the change was definitely welcome by the people of Iraq. I would, however, emphasize the fact that change is going to take time and that trust is going to take time to build. People have been extremely marked by the

sectarian approach of the Maliki government and are very concerned about some of the same trends continuing.

As Sarah Margon has mentioned earlier, a lot of the very people who have wreaked havoc are still embedded in some of these institutions. And I will let her speak more to that. But, more importantly, we also have not seen the current government really take the steps that were needed to provide the assistance that is needed to the displaced.

So there are very significant things that could be done and could be done relatively easily, like allowing for people to register for their public distribution system cards while they are being displaced, allowing them to have access to their identification government papers that would allow them to access assistance much more easily, and those steps have not been taken. Similarly, assistance to the KRG from the central government has been slow and very limited. There has been a budget crisis. The KRG is still waiting on hundreds of millions of dollars that is owed to them, and so that has been also very -- a complicating factor.

Mr. McGOVERN. Ms. Koppel, did you want to add something?

Ms. KOPPEL. I was just going to say that while I was there last week, that was another important thing that happened. There was an agreement between the KRG and the central government for those funds to be released, so that is another important step in the right direction.

Mr. McGOVERN. Ms. Margon.

Ms. MARGON. Right. Thank you. I think there have been some encouraging signs. Our concern is that many of them may be cosmetic. I will just give you a couple of examples. The announcement that the 50,000 ghost soldiers would no longer be paid was tremendously important for a whole lot of reasons, including the longstanding corruption and questionable budgetary funds that go to them and where they end up. But, at the same time, you have a minister of the interior who has got pretty deep connections to the a lot of the Shia militias. On the ground, you have Shia militias who are basically functioning as the security forces.

During my travels, I never saw a single Iraqi security force official. I saw plenty of Shia militia. And that just tells you that the ground fight is being waged by militias, by groups, by brigades who have intentions that are very much based on sect. And that doesn't align with some of the rhetorical comments that has been coming out of Baghdad and is very concerning as the U.S. aligns itself increasingly with the government.

The second thing I would say is, while there has been some movement to retire, if you will, some of the senior leadership in the security forces, the question of the institutional reform that goes along with moving them is very important. Thank

you.

Mr. McGOVERN. Dr. Lehmann.

Dr. LEHMANN. I would like to echo what you said earlier about seeing things less clearly the older I get, but I think a lot of things come down to a related rates problem -- this is my new analogy -- and I think it will be a race between improvements they can make and the disrepair the country is in. And what wins that race, I think, is hard to predict.

Mr. McGOVERN. And while I have you here, what can the U.S. Government do to help strengthen Iraq's healthcare system? You said international exchange and training programs are helpful. What else would be helpful?

Dr. LEHMANN. I think having a constant collaborative relationship with them at all different levels. And what we have learned from our global health work in Boston and in other places, that it has to come from the ground. So being in a sustaining long-term relationships that are driven -- the vision is driven by the people who are there and providing the care that they need and having it not be an episodic event. Things change over time. You have to build relationships. You know, trust has to be developed. And I think if we had an ongoing funded collaborative program at all levels of the healthcare system, it would be incredibly important and move things forward. It is just --

Mr. McGOVERN. I mean, is our government doing what -- are we thinking that way now, or is this something that we need to get our officials to be more engaged in?

Dr. LEHMANN. I think our officials need to become more engaged in it. I think how to sort of take the massive amount of resources that we have in America in healthcare and deliver them fairly and usefully over the world is a huge --

Mr. McGOVERN. With technology and stuff, I mean, we can do it a lot less expensively, and, you know, we can do the training and we can --

Dr. LEHMANN. Yes.

Mr. McGOVERN. -- provide the, you know, support structures. So, even in some of the most far off places, the most difficult places, we can make sure that everybody gets what they need.

Dr. LEHMANN. Exactly. And I would just say, it has to come from them, though, because after a deep knowledge of them, people are so enticed by a PET scanner or, you know, a proton beam machine. You can't bring in the high technology things and give them because they haven't grown up organically from the system, but to have an ongoing relationship so that they can build the foundations with our help

and then come up is --

Mr. McGOVERN. You need to build the basic infrastructure so that, you know --

Dr. LEHMANN. Exactly.

Mr. McGOVERN. -- you have got one area that has fancy machines and another area that has nothing.

Dr. LEHMANN. Exactly, but not episodic care -- or episodic interactions.

Mr. McGOVERN. Ms. Margon, you have talked about the need for a long-term strategy focused on the protection of civilians from various abusive groups, and I guess I would want to ask, like, what would that strategy look like, and, you know, what would your recommendations be? And if you could also comment on how our administration is currently implementing the Leahy Law and what your recommendations to Congress might be.

Ms. MARGON. Thank you. This whole topic sort of gives me heartburn, if I can be totally honest.

Mr. McGOVERN. We have some Pepto-Bismol.

Ms. MARGON. A couple of thoughts on this, and actually, I think -- let's start with the Leahy vetting. A protection strategy, obviously, the security forces are going to play a very large part, and the U.S. does needs to do -- the administration needs to do a much better job. Part of that entails embracing the Leahy vetting at the ambassador level in Baghdad, which is where the vetting starts. Congress can do a really strong follow-up job in regularly bringing the administration in and asking questions about what has happened.

If you do even the most basic vetting, I think it would become quite clear that a number of the units in the security forces are incredibly abusive and should not be getting assistance. Based on our research, the SWAT and counterterrorism units, which, unfortunately, were started and supported by the U.S. initially, are two of the most abusive ones around. There needs to be a much more whole-scale, widespread security sector reform process that ensures the security forces are functioning with a mandate of protection not preying on Iraqi civilians.

My understanding is that General John Allen has this as part of his agreement. Now, as you well recall, the U.S. has already spent over \$1 billion trying to overhaul and reform the Iraqi security forces. I don't know what General John Allen's plan looks like. I would encourage Congress to play an active role in asking those questions, to make sure that it is protection oriented. There are an increasing number of U.S. trainers on the ground. More eyes than ears is not necessarily a bad thing, but the question of who we are engaging with is tremendously important.

I would also just add that the CR that passed here last night and appears to be passing in the Senate has some unfortunate provisions attached to the billions of dollars that are supposed to go to Iraq, including a waiver on end user monitoring, which is very worrisome, given the infiltration of the Shia militias, and the potential for Leahy vetting to be vetted if the Secretary of Defense deems it –

Mr. McGOVERN. You mean waived?

Ms. MARGON. Excuse me, waived -- if the Secretary of Defense deems it a national security –

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, and that is where my frustration is. I mean, one of the reasons why I voted against this thing -- there is a whole bunch of reasons, but one of them was the fact that, again, we are providing all this additional military assistance; we haven't even authorized any of this stuff. And we are waiving human rights language, and I don't know of any hearing or any vote we have had to formally do that. It is part of this multiple 1,600-page document on everything from, you know, funding for things in the United States to funding for things halfway around the world. But it is like, I mean, we have these laws for a reason. We supposedly want to adhere to a high standard when it comes to human rights.

And I understand, and we have been hearing a lot of this, you know, look, war is ugly and things, you know, lines get blurred, but when that happens, the result isn't good. And we are learning that, you know, as the Senate Intelligence Committee released its report on some of our behavior. I mean, it just doesn't make any sense to waive human rights language when it comes to people who have a history of abusive behavior. And so –

Ms. MARGON. You have been out in front on this, and I thank you for that –

Mr. McGOVERN. -- and if there is specific questions that we ought to be putting to the administration, you know, please follow up with the commission. We will be happy to make that request.

Ms. MARGON. I would be happy to do that. Thank you.

Mr. McGOVERN. Ms. Younes, I agree with you on the visa issue. You know, it is not just the problem in Iraq. It is a problem in Afghanistan with regard to translators and interpreters who we are not providing the visas necessary to accommodate all the people that are impacted. And I think you put it quite clearly; you know, when there are people who are working with, whether it is U.S. military or, you know, civilians associated with the U.S. Government or translators or people working with our media, you know, they become targets, and not only do they become targets but their families do. So what we have to be thinking of here is not just how we help an individual; sometimes it is their entire families.

And, you know, your discussion on the people who have fled to the KRI, and you made some recommendations, but I just will ask again. You know, I am trying to think of what can the international community do to strengthen the systems in KRI? What specifically can we do? You know, what should we be pressing our government to do that will address some of the concerns that you raised?

Ms. YOUNES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On the resettlement issue, I couldn't agree more. This is a fundamental issue and an issue fundamentally of principle. These are people who are highly vulnerable because of their association with the United States. They were promised a solution and they have been left rotting for years now waiting for these visas to come through. I believe there are even some initiatives really looking into how many of them have lost their lives because they weren't resettled in time.

Mr. McGOVERN. Their families, too.

Ms. YOUNES. Absolutely, their families as well. So we recommend that alternative locations be established to be able to protect these people and to really look at every possible way that they can be brought to safety.

With respect to support to the KRG, I think the first thing is, of course, to strengthen the support of public services from the Kurdish Regional Government itself, so really to strengthen the health, education, other public services, to address the displacement but also to enable the host communities to go -- to really to work with the government, but, again, to not leave aside the issue of principle and to really emphasize the fact that all Iraqi civilians, regardless of their sect, are entitled to move around the country and are entitled to safety.

Right now, we are seeing, not just in Iraq but throughout the entire region, a margin of Lebanese -- and even in the Lebanon, the outflow of refugees have stopped, but, in particular, Sunni Arab men have been kept from entering the country, same as in Iraq and many governorates, because of the assumption that they might be aligned with ISIS or other armed groups, and that is a huge problem. So just as support to the KRG is essential, I do believe in a conversation about human rights, the Iraqi constitution, and the importance of allowing safety for those who flee is essential as well.

And, finally, I would say, you know, although I agree with my colleague from Mercy Corps that working with local institution, local organization is essential, is very important, I would also urge the U.S. to really significantly fund the U.N. appeal that is out there for Iraq at the moment. The needs are enormous. We really do need to work at a micro -- macro as well as a micro level. And the fact that it is December and that we still are talking about winterization and providing winter clothes and shoes is, frankly, ashamed. We should all be ashamed of ourselves.

Mr. McGOVERN. Do you agree with the assessment of the administration officials that we are going to meet the need of those who are vulnerable in the winter, that we are going to be able to get everybody the protection or the shelter and the clothing and everything they need so they don't succumb to the terrible climate? Are we responding to that need? Are we going to meet that challenge?

Ms. YOUNES. I think it is a great hope. I certainly don't think it is realistic as we stand today, not just for Iraq but for Syria as well. In Lebanon, we have already had Syrian children dying of cold.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Ms. YOUNES. And, in Iraq, as I was there last month, we were just starting to talk about winterization and actually providing adequate shelter during the winter and warm clothes, let alone the means to heat ourselves.

I think, as was discussed earlier, I think, by the previous panel, but also by my colleague from Mercy Corps, I think we need to move away from just emergency planning and looking at next month to really thinking into next year. Winter happens every year, and every year, we act like we are surprised.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Ms. YOUNES. We really need to get it together.

Mr. McGOVERN. Ms. Koppel, you talked about Mercy Corps' cash assistance program. And can you tell us, what are the advantages and the challenges of cash assistance? Because, you know, sometimes people wonder whether that is the most certain way of getting people the support they need. And how widely is the program implemented, and what other organizations provide cash assistance?

Ms. KOPPEL. I can speak to all of those with the exception of the last. I don't know what other -- I can speak to Mercy Corps' work.

Mr. McGOVERN. Yeah.

Ms. KOPPEL. So the reason that cash makes sense is that many of these people who are displaced and certainly the refugees have been on the run for weeks and months, months upon months. And they have been displaced multiple times. And when you are either walking to another place or grabbing public transport or taxi, you can only carry so much.

Some of these people have received things, frankly, that they don't need at this stage. So if you have money -- and, frankly, the way that we are doing our program, even though it could have been a one-time cash disbursement, we have broken it into

four tranches as a way both to give people what they need and, frankly, to extend the program. I mentioned before that short-term funding is what we have right now. What that means is that you get 3- or 4-month grants. You are then scaling down and scaling up during that period of time in a program. You may be laying staff off and then having to retire them. It is incredibly inefficient.

So what we decided to do was to have the same program but have the money and various programs be -- what is the word where you have things, not -- consecutive, rather than at one -- and it gives us an opportunity to go back and visit the families. So we ask the same questions when we give them that first tranche of money, the second and the third and the fourth time. And it gives us intelligence about how they are using the money and that shows us where they are in the stage of recovery.

So if their answer is, we are buying blankets, we are buying some kind of basic grain, that tells us that they are in a very early stage. If they say, we are sending our child to school, that tells us that they are doing much better. And it helps us then to, with these assessments, to give better advice to the U.S. Government and others as to what needs there are. The program that we have right now is in Sulaymaniyah, and we are going to be expanding it throughout the Kurdish region.

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you.

I just got an email from a friend saying that the State Department is streaming this hearing on the State Department TV live. So why don't I just ask you, I mean, if they are listening, what do you want them to get out of this hearing? Dr. Lehmann.

Dr. LEHMANN. I was thinking of something that Mazin had told us, and it is just so hard to know how to provide care well, and we had thought about having Egypt provide the care -- provide some of the training for the Iraqi doctors. They are closer. It sort of spreads everything. But because of the sectarian issues, the Iraqi doctors weren't allowed to have visas to get into Egypt.

And so these problems just have such a broadening sphere of influence, that it ends up being hard to distribute it around the region the way that one would like to. And I think because we do have such a strong, robust, sophisticated, really basically humanitarian healthcare system in America, more or less, overall, and I feel truly honored to work, to be part of it every day, I think that we do have a responsibility to take that wealth of knowledge and wealth of resources and help systems that are in need, especially systems that had at one time the infrastructure to be upper tier medical systems.

And I also work in Rwanda, where they don't have the basics, and it is a lot harder in a way to build something that didn't exist than to repair something that did exist.

Mr. McGOVERN. So part of the issue is more cooperation with visas so that people can be given the necessary training?

Dr. LEHMANN. Yep, around here and training more locally as well.

Mr. McGOVERN. Is there anything else that the U.S. –

Dr. LEHMANN. Aid, I mean, money. Everyone wants –

Mr. McGOVERN. Is there any USAID support for the work that you are doing, or is there any pot of money out there that potentially could be supportive for the work that you do?

Dr. McGOVERN. So we met with USAID people yesterday and they felt that -- I want to say this right -- I can't tell you how inexperienced I am in areas of politics, but the mission of USAID as they saw it wasn't really in this venue. And there had been some bad experiences in the past where they had funded a specific hospital or built a specific hospital and it hadn't gone well, and I think that gets back to the things we were saying earlier, that you have to ask the people there what they want.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Dr. LEHMANN. I think we as a society are learning how to not impose the things that we think people need and more to ask what we think they need. But I would think a task force to figure out how we can deliver primary, secondary, and tertiary medical care, what they need throughout Iraq, and to provide expertise and funds.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right. And I would think that that is an important part of creating the view that the central government, you know, is working. I mean, if you can get people –

Dr. LEHMANN. Absolutely.

Mr. McGOVERN. -- the healthcare that they need –

Dr. LEHMANN. Absolutely.

Mr. McGOVERN. -- regardless of who they are, what their backgrounds are or anything like that, then that works.

Ms. Margon, any words for the administration?

Ms. MARGON. Sure, just a few. Going after ISIS is not a protection strategy. ISIS is a terrible, brutal, horrific militant group that is doing un-Godly things, but all Iraqis need protection, and it is not solely going to come from a military strategy.

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you.

Ms. Younes.

Ms. YOUNES. Obviously, I would urge the U.S. Government, the State Department, to really look at the extent of humanitarian needs and see how much it can increase its assistance, but I would also urge the U.S. to not forget about central Iraq and those places that we are not talking about right now because we don't know what the needs are and we are not thinking creatively about how we can access the very many innocent civilians that are trapped there or that are simply living under the control of those groups and whose needs are just as important as the needs of those who are able to flee.

Mr. McGOVERN. Ms. Koppel.

Ms. KOPPEL. A couple of things. The first, that we want to move beyond just emergency response. We need to be thinking about recovery right now, and as I said in my testimony, that includes having conflict mitigation programming that is interwoven with our humanitarian response so that we are diffusing these smaller crises, these -- putting out these smaller fires before they turn into a forest fire

Mr. McGOVERN. And you have one -- Mercy Corps supports the conflict mediation program?

Ms. KOPPEL. We actually began it, thanks to the U.S. Government.

Mr. McGOVERN. And just tell us a little bit about it, a little bit more about it.

Ms. KOPPEL. Absolutely. It is now an independent NGO, but when we started it, I think 6 or 7 years ago, it began with this idea that you train grass tops members of Iraqi society who have, as we see here in the United States, influence. These are Shia, Sunni, Kurd, they are tribal sheikhs, they are now parliamentarians, mayors of cities across the country.

And this was a 2-year training program. And, in fact, we are still -- we are still doing the trainings; 2-year trainings, every couple of months they go, and they learn how to diffuse crises, they learn sort of the fundamentals. And the great thing about it is that all of the examples are grounded in what they see every day.

As one of the people who has been trained told me said, he said, you know, we were -- before we started the training, we were expecting it to be, you know, one neighbor whose dog is barking and the other neighbor is complaining about it, and, frankly, we just can't relate to that, but the examples that they have are real Iraqi stories. And what they have done now, it has become sort of this organic organism that is living and breathing independent of Mercy Corps, independent of the center.

They are now on their own, and I met with about six of them, doing proactive activities to prevent conflicts from happening.

One quick example, Congressman. Ali Kamal in Sulaimaniya, she is a senior Shia Muslim who has -- quite prominent in Sulaimaniya, when she learned that some Yazidi Chris- -- some Yazidis were going to be coming to Sulaimaniya, she mobilized her network, got Christians and Muslims alike to begin a 1-month fund raising campaign. And where did they do it? They did it outside the parliament in Sulaimaniya, because it has 24-hour security, so that people who brought goods in kind would know that things wouldn't be stolen.

She also got the chairman of the parliament, the head of the parliament to agree to give basically a \$10,000 donation to kind of kick things off, and she got the local media to come and cover it so that she would spread the word. So on two fronts, you have both the message coming from the Sunni and Christian and Shia communities to the Yazidis saying, we welcome you, we want you to be here, we feel your pain, and from the Yazidi side, they don't feel animosity that they might have experienced and that they certainly are experiencing in other areas.

To get to your question to the other panelists regarding what asks we might have of the State Department and USAID, I hope they are watching, too.

Mr. McGOVERN. And I hope they are taking notes.

Ms. KOPPEL. So if I could just add one addendum to the cash assistance, why that is so important. It isn't just about people being able to buy what they need, but it is also about stimulating the marketplace. When you are doing direct assistance and you are handing out blankets and coats and water and food, if it isn't sourced locally, which often it isn't --

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Ms. KOPPEL. -- it is often flown in from other places, it costs so much more money and you are sometimes depressing the markets --

Mr. McGOVERN. Absolutely.

Ms. KOPPEL. -- in the places that you want to help. So when you are giving people cash, they are helping their communities and the tradesmen who are there, emphasizing, again, the relief to recovery and then integrating the conflict mitigation lens and having longer grants, and not just giving money to the KRI.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Ms. KOPPEL. They need it, but so does the rest of Iraq. And I would also urge the State Department to use the influence that they have with the United Nations,

with the KRG and with the central government of Iraq to have a more integrated approach to the planning, to the assessments and to the strategy.

We know now that the UN and the KRG have a joint coordinating committee in Kurdistan. We know that the UN and the central government of Iraq have a planning -- a big planning cell that they have pulled together, an emergency planning cell, but there are no international NGO's there and there are no local either Kurdish or Iraqi representatives, and, frankly, we are the implementing partners who can provide a lot of on-the-ground perspective.

Mr. McGOVERN. That is a good suggestion.

Absolutely. You know, and I was thinking this when you were talking about, you know, cash assistance and how it is more expensive to fly things in from out of the area or out of the country in some cases. I have always been a big advocate that whatever our development and humanitarian policies may be, they ought to be flexible, because one glove doesn't fit all.

I have been working a lot on school -- international school feeding programs on the House-authored McGovern-Dole school feeding program and in some areas of the world you can -- you know, you can provide cash assistance and you can buy local food and you can -- and it helps the economy and it is all good, in other areas, you know, if you buy too much of the food, the prices go up, you know, and you might have an adverse impact on the market, or in some places there isn't the food, but the deal is you ought to do whatever works, whatever helps build capacity in a community, because ultimately you want everybody to get to the point where they can, you know, provide for their own needs.

And I just kind of say in closing that, you know, I -- first of all, I appreciate everybody being here. And the reason why I made the announcement about the State Department, because I didn't want you to feel that you were just talking to me. And if you felt that 76,000 people weren't enough, then I figured then the -- amongst that crowd are people who can actually make some policy changes and do some good things.

And I appreciate all the work that the people at the State Department do and that USAID and all of our services, I know everybody wants to do the right thing, but I think one of the -- and the reason why I appreciated this hearing today is because I think it helps us start to think about this issue beyond just a military issue, you know, and that -- and beyond just providing emergency assistance. I mean, we have to help the country build capacity, we have to make sure that the healthcare system works and that everybody has access to healthcare, they should be able to have access to food, even on the issue of, you know, the conflict mediation program.

I believe in those programs. I mean, I have seen them work all around the world. And I don't know why we are not doing more of that and why we are not

supporting more of that and getting diverse people in a room together who may not ever have cause to want to even look at each other when they pass each other on the street, and get to understand that they have more in common.

I know there was this professor Roger Fisher at Harvard who -- he wrote this book on, How to get to YES, I think, I am -- am I saying that right?

Ms. YOUNES. "Getting to YES".

Mr. McGOVERN. "Getting to YES". "Getting to YES". And I did a lot of work in El Salvador in the 1980s, and I remember talking to him one time about his attempt to try to bring the various warring factions together, and he said that, you know, that he brought a diverse group together, and the first night, you know, people went around the room and introduced themselves, not their political ideology, but, you know, I am so-and-so and I am married and I have three kids, a 5-year-old and, you know, whatever, and then the guy, you know, that might -- someone from the FMLN, but then the guy in the military said, well, I have got two kids and they are this age, and all of a sudden you begin to realize that we are all human beings here and there is a lot -- you know, there is -- you can talk to one another.

We don't have to agree on everything, but we can talk to one another. And, you know, that is why when I began this -- you know, when I talk to administration officials, I said, we all talk about a political solution. I just don't feel I understand what the contours of that political solution may be, because I have my ideas how you can get to it, but I am not sure we are moving in that direction.

Because, again, so much of the emphasis, I think, is on, you know, we are protecting, you know, certain people from ISIL, and that is important, but at the same time, we are not protecting other people from other things, I mean, whether it be -- they be the government security forces or whether it would be a lack of healthcare or whether it would be IDP's who have been ignored or aid is not getting to where it is supposed to get to, but I -- I think -- I think we need to look at this new crisis kind of with fresh eyes.

And I think you have all been working on things that are really important and really essential, and so I hope that the administration is listening. And I look forward to working with you on supporting some of the initiatives that you have outlined here.

And I will just close by saying that one of the things this commission also does is that we remain open to your suggestions down the road. If we have a proposal on healthcare, you know, initiative or if there is an issue with visas or if there is an issue with the conflict mediation program or cash assistance or the Leahy law or whatever, you know, we are happy to help, you know, ask the questions and support the recommendations.

Our goal here is to lift the awareness on human rights and to promote human

rights and to make sure people, as we get involved in all these conflicts, don't forget that human rights should be first and foremost.

So I thank you for being here, and appreciate -- do you have one more thing you want to add? Yeah.

Ms. KOPPEL. I have one more thing --

Mr. McGOVERN. Sure.

Ms. KOPPEL. -- Mr. Chairman? I would love -- this is a dear colleague letter that a number of us, a number of our organizations have signed off on outlining a number of the recommendations that you heard some of us bring forth today. We would love it if you could sign it and help circulate it and --

Mr. McGOVERN. How could I say no, right? So, absolutely. So make sure you get it to the staff and we will --

Ms. KOPPEL. Thank you so much.

Mr. McGOVERN. -- we will be happy to do that.

But thank you so much for giving us your time and your expertise. I appreciate it.

Ms. YOUNES. Thank you.

Ms. KOPPEL. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 2:14 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES
Statement for the
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
Hearing on “The Humanitarian and Human Rights Crisis in Iraq”

December 12, 2014

Co-chairs Wolf and McGovern, Members of this esteemed commission, thank you for holding this important hearing today on the human rights and humanitarian situation in Iraq. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) would particularly like to acknowledge the important contribution of Representative Wolf to the Commission and to human rights throughout his career. Your commitment, Representative Wolf, will be missed. Thank you in particular for your recognition of faith-based organizations and our unique contributions to humanitarian and human rights endeavors.

The United States has a unique obligation to the people of Iraq, and the Catholic Church, as with many churches, has a unique relationship with so many ancient communities there. Many of the founding communities of the Christian faith have lived in Iraq for centuries. Nearly a decade ago, hundreds of thousands of religious minorities were driven from their homes as violence overtook Iraq. Many have found refuge here in the United States. Today, once again, religious minorities in Iraq, along with so many others, are being driven from their homelands.

As part of these unique relationships, the Church and the US government partner to provide humanitarian assistance in Iraq, based on need, not creed. In this testimony, CRS will share our perspective on the humanitarian situation on the ground and what more the US government can do to help. **In particular, we urge the US government to establish a long-term strategy to the response that includes all of Iraq and coordinates with a regional response plan. Such a plan should continue to offer market-based solutions as part of humanitarian aid to those in need and invest in longer-term, non-camp solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs).**

BACKGROUND

Since January of 2014, escalating violence in northern and central Iraq has caused devastation and mass displacement of Iraqis and further displacement of Syrian refugees. The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and greater Syria (ISIS) has taken control of large swaths of the Ninewa, Salah Al-Din and Diyala provinces and continues to threaten religious minorities, including Christians, Shia Muslims and Turkmen who have been singled out for attack. In July, ISIS issued an ultimatum to Christians and others who do not convert to their extremist brand of Islam or pay a tax, threatening their lives. During a Papal envoy's visit to Iraq, many elderly Yazidis wept and asked, “What sin have we committed to be slaughtered in this way?”¹⁴

As Pope Francis has lamented, the violence affects “thousands of people, including many Christians, driven from their homes in a brutal manner; children dying of thirst and hunger in their flight; women kidnapped; people massacred. All this gravely offends God and humanity. Hatred is not to be carried in the name of God. War is not to be waged in the name of God.”¹⁵

On August 14, Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, emphasized to President Obama, “We know too well that attacks on religious and ethnic minorities are attacks on the health of an entire society. Violence may begin against minorities, but it does not end there. The rights of all Iraqis are at risk from the current situation.” The Bishops throughout the United States set aside August 17, 2014, as a day of prayer for peace in the Middle East and Iraq.

Currently, 5.2 million people are in need, with 2.1 million Iraqis displaced due to the fighting and an additional 1.7 million host families also affected.³ Due to the regional aspect of the conflict, 230,000 Syrian refugees are also in the geographic areas of need, many of whom have been displaced multiple times. More than 2.8 million people need food assistance, and 800,000 need urgent shelter assistance. The UN declared a Level 3 humanitarian crisis in Iraq in August, 2014, which has been extended until May, 2015.¹⁶

¹⁴ “Papal envoy to Iraq meets displaced Christians and Yazidis”. Vatican Radio. 18 August 2014.

¹⁵ “Pope Francis: Angelus appeal for peace in Iraq, Gaza.” Vatican Radio. 8 October 2014.

¹⁶ UN declares Iraq ‘Level 3 Emergency’ to trigger more resources, speed up aid delivery. UN News Centre. 14 August 2014.

The conflict has driven the displaced to live in harrowing conditions; having been stripped of all possessions at ISIS checkpoints, families live in empty houses, schools, clinics, church compounds and abandoned buildings. Conditions deteriorate by the day. Many buildings serving as shelter are unfinished, with no windows nor doors, leaving families vulnerable to winter temperatures that drop as low as 3° F. Humanitarian aid currently provides winterization assistance, including blankets, winter clothes and other necessities.

CRS RESPONSE

CRS, founded by the United States bishops in 1943 as the official relief and development agency of the Catholic community in the United States, has been working in Iraq since 2003. CRS works closely with the Catholic Church and Caritas Iraq to assist those in need and has been able to scale up activities smoothly due to the umbrella of the church in Iraq which works well with the local government.

Bishop Richard E. Pates, then Chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, noted to National Security Advisor Susan Rice on July 25, that "the bishops of Iraq, representing the Chaldean Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic and Armenian Churches, appealed to the Iraqi government for 'full protection' of the rights of Christians and other minorities, 'financial support for the displaced families' including payment of civil servant salaries, and compensation for material losses and provision of housing, social services and education as the crisis continues."

Further, in an address, Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, called upon the international community not to remain inert or indifferent before the present situation. "In the specific case of violations and abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State, the international community, through the United Nations and the structures that exist for [addressing] similar emergencies, must act to prevent possible new genocides and to assist the numerous refugees."¹⁷ Cardinal Parolin continues, "The defense of Christians and of all the other religious or ethnic minorities is to be situated in the context of the defense of the person and of the respect for human rights, in particular for those of religious liberty and the freedom of conscience."¹⁸

Full protection of rights will only be achieved when a fully functioning, inclusive and secure Iraqi government is established, and the United States Conference of Bishops and CRS urge the US government to work towards this goal. Until then, CRS continues to work with the local churches and partners to respond to humanitarian needs.

CRS established offices in Dohuk and Erbil shortly after the exodus began, working with Caritas Iraq and the local Catholic Church to help meet the needs of the displaced, particularly the Christian and Yazidi religious minorities targeted by the so-called ISIS. Through funding from the US government, Caritas Internationalis and other public donors, private donations and foundations, CRS is providing basic needs: household items in preparation for the winter, shelter upgrades and winterization materials, and services to improve water and sanitation conditions. CRS and our partners are privileged to serve more than 30,000 beneficiaries in response to the Iraq conflict, currently programming over \$5.9 million in assistance.

Winterization is a priority. To facilitate the purchase of household items in preparation for the winter, CRS held voucher fairs, linking families to vendors of winter clothes, heaters and cooking materials, as well as blankets and hygiene items. Also, CRS and its partner Caritas Iraq have provided cash assistance to IDP families through cash vouchers. Each family, depending on size, received a voucher sum of \$100-\$600 to restore essential possessions seized by ISIS.

Shelter, particularly over the longer-term, remains a critical need. This conflict will not end soon, and therefore requires longer-term solutions. Most of the displaced religious minorities with whom CRS works have communicated that they will not return to their homes unless their safety can be absolutely guaranteed. CRS is currently working with government municipalities, homeowners and local contractors to upgrade shelters for 13,500 IDPs. The provision of long-term shelter and a process to integrate the displaced into existing communities of their choosing should be central to the US government's shelter response.

Water and Sanitation are key components of the humanitarian response, to avoid disease and facilitate daily activities. CRS is upgrading water and sanitation (WASH) facilities, such as protecting important drains, creating drainage for bathing facilities,

¹⁷ Cardinal Parolin on ME: rights threatened, risk of genocide." Vatican Radio. 22 October 2014.

¹⁸ Ibid.

and providing tools and equipment to IDPs so that they can prepare their new shelters accordingly. CRS is also promoting hygiene activities and distributing hygiene kits.

Through child friendly spaces, CRS provides safe and protected spaces for children out of school to play. These spaces are not only physically safe, but also will provide trauma healing.

CRS would like to thank the US government for its swift and effective response to help meet the needs of the many Iraqis who fled their homes for safety. CRS also appreciates the flexibility that has been provided by US government donors to ensure that the response can meet the ever-changing context and needs of those CRS serves. Those whom CRS serves have expressed their appreciation for all that the US government has done. CRS, its partners and the local Church are dedicated to helping those suffering the most as long as the conflict continues.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our experience in the field and communications from the local Church, CRS recommends that the US government undertake the following.

1. **Create and fund a long-term, whole-of-Iraq strategy to respond to the crisis.** The crisis in Iraq, tied to the crisis in Syria, will not end soon. However, much of the current US government funding for humanitarian assistance will end by March 2015. Cobbling together ad hoc, short-term responses will not only be insufficient to meet the needs of those affected by the conflict, but will ultimately be more costly. A long-term strategy should do the following:
 - a. **Focus on the long-term needs of the displaced.** This includes areas of shelter, livelihoods, education and trauma healing. Professionals, merchants and service providers who have been displaced desire the opportunity to work and engage in livelihood activities so that they do not continue to depend on assistance. Providing opportunities to engage in these activities will be important for sustainable solutions for the displaced. Additionally, displaced children have already missed one year of schooling; each year they are out of school increases the risk that they will not return.
 - b. **Continue to offer market-based solutions where markets are functioning as part of humanitarian assistance.** Displaced families have overwhelmingly indicated that cash assistance allows them a dignified way to meet their needs in the way they most see fit. With local authorities now open to cash assistance, CRS has shifted to cash voucher programs and established appropriate mechanisms to continue this type of efficient and effective assistance. Also, market-based solutions support local markets so that they are not additionally harmed by an influx of outside goods during the conflict. Routine monitoring of program activities provides adequate oversight.
 - c. **Invest in non-camp solutions for the displaced.** Camps are being constructed as short-term solutions for the displaced. However, many religious minorities fear that camps facilitate continued ethnic and religious persecution. Yazidis have moved into half-constructed Yazidi villages, where CRS helps them to finish construction. These and other alternative solutions should be considered, particularly because they facilitate livelihoods and other modes of self-reliance.
2. **Support a regional plan for the crisis, including support to host country governments.** The US government, in coordination with the donor community, should work alongside refugee host countries to develop and fund a coordinated, long-term humanitarian and development strategy for the region, including a contingency plan and a plan for refugee resettlement. The needs of the region were already beyond what many governments can muster, and the added crisis in Iraq will only increase the need for our financial support and attention. The plan needs to address the protection and other needs of Christians and other religious minorities.



MADRE

Testimony by

MADRE

Presented to:

**The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission James P. McGovern,
Massachusetts, Co-Chairman Frank R. Wolf, Virginia, Co-Chairman**

United States Congress

“The Humanitarian and Human Rights Crisis in Iraq”

December 12, 2014

I. Introduction

II. Background

Founded in 1983, MADRE is an international women’s human rights organization that supports the development of networks of community-based women’s organizations in over 25 countries. MADRE has been working in Iraq for over a decade conducting trainings with the aim of building the capacity of local organizations to promote women’s rights and democracy in Iraq. Currently in partnership with both international and local organizations, MADRE offers humanitarian aid; safe passage and shelter for women and girls fleeing violence; and provides medical care as well as psychosocial support for victims of violence. MADRE works to build the capacity of local Iraqi women’s organizations by providing them with the necessary skills and tools to identify and document human rights violations and raise public awareness for the protection and promotion of the rights of marginalized and at-risk Iraqis.

As a result of our experience and extensive collaboration on multiple projects with our local partners in Iraq, we have identified the following issues as prominent factors that impede the provision of much needed humanitarian aid to vulnerable populations, and the protection of human rights.

II. Women’s Human Rights Violations in the Context of ISIL

The threats to civilians, particularly vulnerable groups such as women and girls, posed by ISIL and other militia groups should be understood as a continuing outgrowth of the deterioration of human rights over the last couple of decades in Iraq. Comprehensively addressing the rights and humanitarian needs of women and girls fleeing ISIL-controlled territories requires addressing the pre-existing threats to women and girls embedded in Iraq’s laws and social norms.

As men have either been killed or heeded calls to fight ISIL, women have become the heads of hundreds of thousands of households. Women and the children in their care are also the majority of the over two million people who have fled their homes in fear of ISIL and airstrikes. Although there are numerous provisions under Iraqi law that aim to protect women's human rights, gaps and deficiencies within the law itself, the criminal justice system, and law enforcement allow for the continuation of human rights abuses in violation of international human rights standards.

For these reasons, we should not consider immediate violations committed against marginalized and at-risk Iraqis including women and girls by ISIL as isolated events. It is equally important to consider and respond to the context and underlying conditions that fuel women and girls' vulnerability and undermine their capacity to survive and recover from the crisis.

The US Government has an opportunity to show strong leadership in this endeavor. Through targeted programming and strategic funding to local Iraqi women's organizations the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) is already making strides to promote the rights, protection and physical security of Iraqi women at-risk, as well as other marginalized and vulnerable individuals. Programming to support capacity building and technical assistance to local women's organizations and vulnerable populations has strengthened knowledge of human rights, improved abilities to document and report on cases of abuse against marginalized and at-risk Iraqis, and to advocate for the human rights of these communities at both the national and international level. DRL has further supported programming to enhance immediate and direct service provision to women and other vulnerable victims, supporting safe housing to protect individuals from the current threat of ISIL, as well as lifetimes of violence and discrimination. These safe houses have provided safe haven, physical and mental rehabilitation, life skills and training on human rights and fundamental freedoms to numerous marginalized and at-risk Iraqis. The support these individuals have received has allowed them to emerge from their experiences with a renewed sense of self-worth, pride, and energy to be active participants in the struggle to promote and defend human rights for all in Iraq.

Given the ongoing threats of violence and discrimination under the current context in Iraq, it is crucial to continue to support DRL to re-double its commitments to meet the urgent needs of women and other marginalized and at-risk Iraqis confronting ISIL violence. It is equally important to equip DRL with the resources to support the training and capacity building of marginalized and at-risk communities and the organizations that support them, to enable them to effect long-term change.

Iraqi NGO's Unable to Provide Legal Shelter to Women Fleeing ISIL Related Violence

As the situation currently exists, local human rights organizations seeking to provide the shelter and support desperately needed by so many are forced to do so clandestinely. Iraqi officials maintain that the establishment and maintenance of private shelters by NGOs is illegal. Amending the shelter law to allow NGOs to run private shelters for displaced families and individuals would greatly aid the local Iraqi women's organizations already mobilizing an emergency response to protect at-risk individuals. These local organizations are in the best position to reach displaced families and to provide shelter and aid. They are able to operate in areas unreachable by the government and/or international aid organizations. In order to advance the physical safety of women fleeing ISIL's grip, the efforts of local Iraqi women's organizations must be supported.

On September 19, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq at the UN Security Council Ministerial Debate on Iraq, Nickolay Mladenov noted in a statement that the "pressure on local communities across Iraq is growing" and the continuing influx of 1.8 million displaced Iraqis has created "a massive shelter crisis." With the rapid increase in the number of displaced individuals over the last two months, on November 26, 2014, Mr. Mladenov further urged "the relevant authorities to create safe shelters for survivors of violence," identifying the overwhelmingly female displaced population as "Iraq's bleeding wound."¹⁹

The arrival of winter creates further challenges for families and individuals affected by Iraq's current shelter crisis. Reflecting on winter's threat to vulnerable Iraqis, Will Parks, head of UNICEF in northern Iraq, stressed the need for adequate shelter, stating, "We've got military situations all around us right now, and those are threats to life. But winter takes lives. It doesn't bargain... Winter just kills children". IDPs in the Kurdistan region of Iraq – host to 47 percent of the total displaced community – will soon become acutely aware of winter's hazards. Within its most recent situation report, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) noted that unfinished buildings are the most common of the critical shelter

¹⁹ United Nations in Iraq, *Captive Women and Girls at the Hands of Terrorist Groups are Iraq's Bleeding Wound*, November 26, 2014. < http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=2936:captive-women-and-girls-at-the-hands-of-terrorist-groups-are-iraq-s-bleeding-wound&Itemid=605&lang=en > [accessed December 9, 2014.]

types occupied by displaced people in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Adequate shelters and support must be provided to these displaced individuals to prevent further deterioration of health, and potentially death.

In the absence of government sponsored services and legal remedies to address gender-based violence, local Iraqi women's organizations are at the forefront of providing necessary services. Local organizations have first-hand understanding of the current crisis in Iraq hence are best situated to identify and meet the needs of the communities they serve. However, even prior to ISIL's invasion, Iraqi NGOs and women's rights defenders encountered regular harassment, arbitrary surveillance, and warrantless searches. As a result, their efforts to provide protection to those fleeing violence are greatly hindered.

Honor Crime Vulnerability for Women Fleeing ISIL Conflict

Leniency toward honor-related crimes in the Iraqi Penal Code exacerbates the situation for potential victims of honor-based crimes and killings. Articles 128²⁰, 130²¹, and 409²², the combination of which allow for mitigated sentences as little as six months for honor-related crimes, are particularly concerning. This clemency on the part of the justice system sends a message to Iraqi women and society at large that such gross acts of violence are tolerated. In the absence of protection mechanisms and legal remedies, people threatened with honor crimes have limited recourse; some are forced to flee cities under siege with no guarantee of safe haven.

The current human rights and humanitarian crisis in Iraq greatly increases the vulnerability of women and girls to honor crimes. In particular, traditional notions of "honor" have led to calls from some Iraqis for the government to bomb the schools and hospitals that serve as makeshift ISIL prisons. Occupants of these prisons include women and girls who may have been raped. In advocating for the government to destroy these prisons, some Iraqis hope that the death of these rape victims will "save the honor" of the people from besieged towns.

Additionally, honor is often perceived as compromised when a woman is abducted or kidnapped. The frequency with which ISIL kidnaps women and children from their home creates issues beyond the period of abduction, if the lives of those kidnapped are spared. For those that have escaped ISIL's clutches and have returned home, many face a lasting stigma fueled by the presumption that abductors rape or sexually assault the women kidnapped. The shame and perceived loss of honor associated with these women sometimes compel family or community members to target these individuals in efforts to restore collective honor. For those that do not fall victim to honor killings, the stigma associated with their kidnapping can compel them to delay treatment or go without medical care altogether. Opting out of or delaying treatment for injuries sustained through an abduction presents a host of potentially deadly health risks unique to women and girls.

In order for Iraqi women to experience safety and protection from honor killings – a human right to which they are entitled – the Iraqi Penal Code must be amended to equate killings motivated by "honor" with all murder under law, in compliance with international standards. It is only through the unmitigated criminalization of honor killings that meaningful steps to eliminate the practice can truly take hold.

Obstacles to Women Obtaining Identification Documents

Women fleeing from different forms of violence including honor killings, domestic violence, trafficking, sexual slavery or forced marriage, cannot obtain legal identification without verification from a male family member. The Civil Status Identification Document, considered to be the most important official document in Iraq, is required to access public services including food assistance, healthcare, education and housing, as well as employment. The Civil Status ID is also necessary to obtain a passport in order to travel abroad.²³

²⁰ Iraq Article 427 Penal Code 1969, <http://selfscholar.wordpress.com/2012/07/18/the-middle-east-rape-marriage-laws/>; see also United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Iraq*, 31 May, 2012.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Middle East Consultancy Services (MECS). "Iraqi Civil Status Identification Card or al-Bitaqat al-Shikhsiya." 9 September 2012. [Accessed 1 Dec. 2014]

According to credible reports²⁴, although not codified in the country's law, an Iraqi woman can only be granted a Civil Status ID if a male relative vouches for her. However, in many cases, women seeking to obtain IDs have escaped GBV imposed by male relatives. Additionally, in the current context, many men have either been killed or joined the fight against ISIL. As a result, women cannot provide verification from a male family member, rendering it impossible for them to receive the Civil Status ID.

Without such identification documents, women cannot travel, find housing, obtain employment, access health services, or enroll in education institutions. In such cases, women could become stateless and are left more vulnerable to violence and discrimination. According to reports on the ground, thousands of stateless women reside in every major city in Iraq.

Staff members of MADRE's local partner organization in Iraq, while assisting a female Iraqi minor whose entire family had been murdered, were informed that due to provisions in the Iraqi Personal Status law, she could not obtain identification documents without the presence of male relatives until she reached 18 years of age.²⁵ Consequently, she was unable to attend school, obtain social care or access a range of other public services.

Such discriminatory and gendered identification practices are conducive to further exclusion of women and girls from the public sphere, forcing them to forfeit their rights to education, employment, legal and other public services. Considering the current state of the crisis in Iraq, it is all the more critical to establish a mechanism for displaced women and girls to obtain identification documents without the need for verification from a male family member. Establishing this mechanism would greatly facilitate women in their efforts to access housing, health services, employment and education.

The Critical Need for Public Education

In an effort to raise awareness of, and accessibility to, services and shelters for marginalized and at-risk Iraqis as well as promote respect for human rights and equality, MADRE and its local partner have launched a public awareness and outreach campaign through Al Mousawaat radio station and newspaper. Over the course of the last two years, Al Mousaawat Radio (Equality Radio) has been successful at raising awareness about shelters and services offered to vulnerable groups. It has also succeeded in educating listeners about peace, tolerance, and the inherent link between respect for human rights and the achievement of democracy in Iraq.

Despite these efforts, Iraqi society as a whole remains in great need of public education and sensitization around issues confronting marginalized and at-risk women and girls. The radio is an integral mechanism for combating societal discrimination to counter the current climate of hostility.

Public education is advanced through a number of radio's initiatives. Specifically, call-in sessions allow listeners to freely discuss peace and tolerance. Radio skits dramatize complicated human rights scenarios and model progressive conclusions, providing many Iraqis with their first exposure to peaceful resolution. Additionally, informational shows address topics such as the importance of pluralism and women's economic rights.

The radio also serves as a powerful tool for discouraging sectarianism and seeks to prevent civil society from being swept into the ISIL-imposed violence and division that has taken hold of many Iraqi provinces. In addition, the radio station frequently employs shelter residents, offering them opportunities to obtain job skills and facilitating their transition from victim to agent for positive change.

Despite the station's overwhelming success, Al Mousaawat radio station has been shut down as a result of a government crack down on media campaigns since June 2014. Although the station has submitted all requisite paperwork to obtain the legal permit necessary for the station's re-opening, the Communication and Media Commission has refused to grant the permit without providing an official legal reason.

Considering the devastating scale of the current crisis and the growing sectarian violence, it is critical to exploit varied public education mechanisms to promote peace, tolerance, and to provide examples of non-violent methods to resolve conflict.

²⁴ Institute for War and Peace Reporting, *Passport Misery Highlights Iraqi Women's Plight*, 29 June 2011, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e1c7a912.html> [accessed 8 December 2014]

²⁵ MADRE, Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, 20th Session of the Working Group on the UPR Human Rights Council. November 2014.

Supporting such domestic initiatives will greatly contribute to creating long-term positive social change and fostering a culture of democracy and respect for human rights in Iraq.

The Persecution of LGBT Iraqis

Compared to the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis facing persecution and threats to their livelihoods today, LGBT Iraqis may be the least protected in terms of threats to their safety because their persecutors range across society at large; they have little to no family, community support or government protection and their physical appearance may put them at risk in public. In addition they face risk and hostility in refugee circumstances. The current conflict has only exacerbated this issue.

Human rights abuses against this persecuted minority have been documented for over a decade. The most common threats to gender non-conforming Iraqis come from their families, communities, and tribes who view their existence as damaging to their collective honor. Consequently, family members often commit physical abuses such as severe beatings; force these individuals into heterosexual marriages or make death threats to supposedly defend their honor.

LGBT Iraqis have also faced organized, deadly persecution instigated, inspired, or tolerated by state actors and members of militia. Such “pogroms” peaked in 2009²⁶ and again in 2012²⁷. Two militias in particular, the Mahdi Army and the League of the Righteous, are strongly suspected to be behind attacks against and killings of LGBT individuals. In addition, since 2007, Iraq’s security forces have become increasingly enmeshed with militias.²⁸ As a result, the close coordination between security forces and sectarian militias means the police is a source of threat, not protection for persecuted LGBT individuals in Iraq.

The rapid advance of the ISIL and its takeover of large swaths of Iraq has spelled the beginning of a new chapter of deadly risk for LGBT Iraqis. Although little concrete information is known about the daily suffering of LGBT persons in the ISIL-controlled areas, the group has made clear that there is no place for gender non-conforming individuals under its rule. These views are expressed in the group’s published interpretation of the Islamic law as well as in practice. In a statement apparently from June 2014, the ISIL said that in Syria it had condemned a man to death for homosexuality and carried out the punishment. Therefore, based on its own legal interpretations and its own claim to having carried out such sentences, coupled with reports of widespread sexual violence and instances of summary and arbitrary executions of persons believed to have engaged in homosexual acts, anyone believed to be LGBT under the ISIL control is likely at imminent risk of death.²⁹

What makes today’s situation lethally dangerous to LGBT Iraqis and a matter of humanitarian crisis is the lack of formal state protection mechanisms such as shelters and law enforcement as well as a breakdown of law and order in the Iraqi society at large. In addition, inner-Iraqi escape routes have either been cut off due to ISIL’s territorial control over the northern areas or filled with high-risk checkpoints. Most organizations keep their distance, one international NGO worker surmised, because it is “dangerous for NGO activists to deal with LGBT [persons] as they themselves would be stigmatized and threatened.”³⁰

Therefore, due to the diminished access of LGBT Iraqis to safe places, it is essential to increase resettlement spaces for LGBT individuals and to expedite direct resettlement of LGBT individuals fleeing violence and persecution.

Recommendations

Among global donors, the United States government stands in a unique position to support a rights-based approach in delivery of humanitarian aid in Iraq. There are practical steps that the United States government can take to reduce human rights abuses and defuse sectarian violence in the current crisis. MADRE recommends the following actions for the consideration of the distinguished Commission and the Government of the United States to ensure the respect and protection of human rights in Iraq.

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, *They Want Us Exterminated*, August 2009.

²⁷ MADRE, *When Coming Out is a Death Sentence; Persecution of LGBT Iraqis*, November 2014.

²⁸ Myriam Benraad, “Iraq’s Tribal Sahwa: Its Rise and Fall,” *Middle East Policy Council* (vol.18, no.1), Spring 2011, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/iraqs-tribal-sahwa-its-rise-and-fall> [accessed October 1, 2014.]

²⁹ MADRE, *When Coming Out is a Death Sentence; Persecution of LGBT Iraqis*, November 2014.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

- 1. Urge the Iraqi government to amend the shelter policy to allow local NGOs to run private shelters for displaced families and individuals.** Local Iraqi women's organizations are mobilizing an emergency response to protect people at severe risk as the threat of sectarian violence grows. They are in the best position to reach displaced families and to provide shelter and aid and their efforts must be supported.
- 2. Urge the Iraqi government to amend the honor crimes law to equate killings motivated by "honor" with all murder under law, in compliance with international law.** Norms of "family honor" recognized in Iraq's Penal Code, which allow for mitigated sentences, are a grave threat to women and girls who have been detained or abused by ISIL fighters. Hence the law must be amended to protect women and girls from targeted killings by their family and community in the name of honor.
- 3. Urge the Iraqi government to allow women and girls to obtain identification documents without the permission of a male family member.** Acquiring identification documents enables women and girls to benefit from much needed social services. It also plays an important role in their ability to transition out of shelters.
- 4. Invest in public education programs that promote peace, tolerance, and respect for human rights.** Public education tools such as Al Mousawaat radio and newspaper are essential to inform marginalized and at-risk populations about shelters and services offered. Furthermore, they play a central role in the vernacularization and domestic appropriation of international human rights standards and concepts such as democracy. The Iraqi government should allow media promoting democracy and human rights to continue working.
- 5. Urge the United Nations, local and international NGOs to increase safe and sanitary resettlement spaces for LGBT individuals.** Considering the growing threat to the LGBT community due to the current crisis, it is all the more critical to ensure that LGBT individuals fleeing violence have access to safe shelters as well as medical and psychosocial services.
- 6. Expand funding to DRL for continued support to programs that meet the immediate needs of communities in crisis and enhance local capacity to effect long-term change.** It is crucial to continue to establish and maintain safe spaces to promote and protect the rights and physical security of at-risk populations. It remains equally critical to act in the present moment to promote programs that fortify the voices and build the capacity of progressive citizens and organizations within Iraqi society who demand an end to violence and discrimination, and promote the establishment of a truly rights-based and democratic Iraq.



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

The Humanitarian and Human Rights Crisis in Iraq

Friday, December 12th, 2014
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
HVC-210 U.S. Capitol Visitor Center

Please join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for a hearing on the humanitarian and human rights crisis in Iraq.

Since January 2014, violent conflict in Iraq has intensified with the expansion of the Islamic State and resurgence of sectarian militias. All sides of the conflict have reportedly committed gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, especially the Islamic State's systematic targeting of Iraq's non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities. According to U.N. estimates, 20,000 civilians have been killed or injured across Iraq in 2014 and millions have been forced to flee.

Iraq has been experiencing a humanitarian crisis for at least the past four years, with a sharp escalation in 2014 due to the invasion by Islamic State forces. To date, an estimated 5.3 million people are in need of humanitarian aid and protection, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), communities hosting the displaced, and civilians still trapped in conflict-affected areas. The provision of humanitarian assistance is complicated by ongoing fighting, earlier waves of IDPs and refugees since 2011, and spillover from fighting in Syria.

Please join us as experts discuss the ongoing conflict, human rights abuses, and the humanitarian needs and challenges in Iraq. Panelists will also provide recommendations on what the United States can do to alleviate human rights abuses and human suffering, while reducing and preventing the rise of sectarian tension. Witnesses are:

Panel I:

- **Ms. Kelly Clements**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
- **Mr. Thomas Staal**, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance

Panel II:

- **Dr. Mazin Faisal Farhan Al-Jadiry**, Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, College of Medicine, University of Baghdad**
- **Ms. Sarah Margon**, Washington Director, Human Rights Watch
- **Ms. Kristele Younes**, Director for U.N. Humanitarian Affairs, International Rescue Committee

- **Ms. Andrea Koppel**, Vice President of Global Engagement and Policy, Mercy Corps

***NOTE: Dr. Leslie Lehmann, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School, will present the testimony of Dr. Mazin Faisal Farhan Al-Jadiry.*

This hearing will be streaming live at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/hclive17>

For any questions, please contact Soo Choi at 202-225-3599 or soohyun.choi@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

James P. McGovern
Co-Chair, TLHRC

Frank R. Wolf
Co-Chair, TLHRC