



PRESS RELEASE

UN-Habitat and UNDP Upscale Support on Housing Rehabilitation and Secure Tenure for the Returnees in Sinjar

On 25 April 2019, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) handed over 502 rehabilitated houses and Occupancy Certificates to returnees in Sinjar District, Ninewa Governorate. Extensively damaged during the ISIL occupation, these houses were rehabilitated as part of a larger project funded by the Government of Germany through UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP). A total of 1,064 houses were rehabilitated in Sinjar over a two-year period, with 1,501 Occupancy Certificates distributed to Yazidi returnees.

In the Sinjar area, Yazidis are an ethnic and religious minority group who, for decades, have been subjected to discriminatory policies that have denied their housing, land and property rights. Compounding this marginalization, these groups were particularly targeted for persecution and violence by ISIL. Through this project, damaged houses were rehabilitated and the need to restore residents with their rights for tenure security were addressed, which are essential to facilitate the dignified and sustainable return of IDPs and peaceful reconstruction of the Sinjar area. Yazidi returnees who had previously not been awarded official documentation for their residence, received Occupancy Certificates to verify occupancy rights of their homes.

The project was technically supported by the Global Land Tools Network (GLTN), adopting a community-based approach that directly engaged returnees and community members in the rehabilitation activities and verification of occupancy. 684 members of the Yazidi community (44% women) were employed under the project, encouraging the social and economic empowerment of conflict affected communities.

In recognition of the targeted persecution of Yazidi people during the ISIL occupation, Mr. Mohammed Al Tamimi, Director General, NGOs Directorate of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, thanked partners for their support in helping to rebuild this community, stating 'On behalf of the people of Sinjar, I thank UN-Habitat and the Government of Germany, through UNDP, for rehabilitating the homes of Yazidi families.' Mr. Dawood Jundi, Ninewa Provincial Council Member for Sinjar and representative for the Yazidi Community, added that 'this project enables Yazidi people who had been forced to flee during the conflict, to feel reconnected with their land.'

Mr. Ali Omer, Deputy Governor of Ninewa, stated that the community in Sinjar has suffered severely for decades and were never granted ownership of their houses and lands. He reiterated his gratitude to all partners who supported the Yazidi community and people in Sinjar.

Ms. Yuko Otsuki, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, a.i. also highlighted the importance of awarding residents with Occupancy Certificates for the first time, ‘Recognising the housing and occupancy rights for the Yazidi’s for the first time in modern history, is a groundbreaking achievement and a necessary tool for prompting more returns to the area.’

Embassy of Germany in Baghdad stated that: “Germany continues to support the Iraqi government in its stabilization efforts in the liberated areas. Housing rehabilitation, like this UN-Habitat project, is one important element. Other conditions for a safe and dignified return of IDPs include security, sound administration and livelihoods.”

Mr. Zubair Murshed, Programme Manager a.i., ICRRP, UNDP Iraq reiterates this sentiment, ‘The destruction of communities – and specifically housing – is a major obstacle for IDPs when deciding whether or not they can or should return to their former villages and cities. This partnership with UN-Habitat has not only seen the rehabilitation of houses but has also helped to rebuild a sense of community by enabling the safe return of over 13,302 Yazidis, and engaging hundreds more in the rehabilitation process itself.’

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