

**THE UN REMAINS DEEPLY CONCERNED FOR THE SAFETY OF CIVILIAN
POPULATIONS**

(Baghdad, 9 October 2017) – Although the United Nations is relieved that fighting in and near Hawiga in Kirkuk Governorate is ending, humanitarian partners remain deeply concerned about the safety of civilian populations.

“More than 5.4 million civilians have been displaced in Iraq since 2014,” said the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande. “Millions of Iraqis have been helped to safety and protected by the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government during the conflict.”

Humanitarian partners working in Iraq characterize the humanitarian crisis as a protection crisis.

“Nothing is more important than protecting the civilians who have been impacted by the conflict,” said Ms. Grande. “International humanitarian law is clear. Everything must be done to ensure people are safe and have access to the assistance they need.”

“Protection remains our over-riding concern. Humanitarians are deeply worried about incidents of collective punishment, restrictions on free movement, evictions, forced returns and sexual exploitation and violence, including in emergency sites and camps,” said Ms. Grande.

“There are heart-breaking cases of children, the elderly and disabled people being separated from their families. Hundreds of thousands of people, including tens of thousands of very young children, have been exposed to extreme danger, stress, and trauma and will require years of specialized support and care.”

“We are deeply concerned by pressures sometimes exerted on humanitarian workers,” said Ms. Grande. “Every time we’re asked to do something which violates principled engagement we immediately raise the issue with authorities - and we keep raising the issues until there is resolution. It’s vitally important that the Government continues to fully investigate any violation of humanitarian principles and report of human rights abuses in a transparent and accountable manner.”

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