



Statement on Allegations Concerning Two Historic Churches in Mosul

BAGHDAD - 17 January 2019 - On 14 and 15 January, the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO) published on its website statements accusing, but not directly naming, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Iraq, and G4S, its implementing partner, with “crimes no less grievous and insolent than the crimes of Daesh” in conducting explosive hazard clearance without church authorization “in a barbaric and arbitrary manner with utter disregard for the holy and religious sanctity” of two historic churches in the Hosh al-Khan area of the Al Maedan district, Mosul.

UNMAS Iraq take these allegations seriously, welcome further investigation and are continuing to support and work closely with the government of Iraq on this matter. UNMAS Iraq has invited HHRO and officials of the Syriac Catholic Archbishopric in Nineveh Plains as well as other relevant Iraqi authorities to meet in person to carefully consider the facts relative to their statements and hope they will offer to correct the record when known.

UNMAS is keen on safeguarding all archeological, religious and historical sites during the conduct of its assessment and clearance operations and works closely with the Iraqi State and religious authorities to ensure this national treasure is secure and safe to prevent any additional damage to that inflicted by the terrorists and the conflict.

To date, UNMAS Iraq and G4S teams have cleared and safely removed from the church site, 53 suicide belts, 74 munitions of various types, seven Improvised Explosive Devices, and assorted ammunition and materials such as home-made explosives. The site and the accumulated debris remain heavily contaminated with explosives and will require further clearance.

UNMAS Iraq notes that, since beginning explosive hazard clearance in Mosul in November, 2017 through December 2018, UNMAS Iraq has completed 1,500 clearance tasks resulting in the removal of approximately 48,000 explosive hazards of all types, heretofore without any complaints.

UNMAS conducts all its clearing operations in close coordination and cooperation with the Government of Iraq.

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