

Statement on Today's UN Security Council Resolution on Da'esh Accountability

Earlier today, 21 September, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2397 establishing an Investigative Team to support domestic efforts to hold the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da'esh) accountable by collecting evidence regarding potential war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Iraq. The Global Centre commends the governments of the United Kingdom and Iraq for their leadership of this initiative, and welcomes the resolution as a crucial step towards accountability for atrocities in Iraq.

During 2014 ISIL launched a systematic campaign of mass atrocities across northern Iraq. For more than three years we have seen ISIL attack and persecute vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities, use civilians as human shields, enslave women and girls, and use indiscriminate weapons against populated areas. Many of these crimes were perpetrated against the Yazidi community in Iraq and amount to genocide. Tragically, approximately 3,300 members of the Yazidi community remain in ISIL captivity, including over 1,600 Yazidi women and girls, and mass graves have been discovered across areas liberated from the group.

The adoption of today's resolution advances efforts to end impunity and ensure accountability for atrocities. But all victims of atrocities in Iraq deserve justice. In this context, we regret the limited focus of today's Resolution. No voices should be marginalized or silenced in the pursuit of justice in Iraq, including those of Sunni families who have faced sectarian reprisals in territory reclaimed from ISIL. All perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Iraq – regardless of position and affiliation – should be held accountable for their crimes.

Nevertheless, the Global Centre encourages all UN member states to support today's resolution. We call for the expeditious submission of the Terms of Reference by the Secretary-General, the appointment of a Special Envoy and the establishment of the Investigative Team. We also emphasize the importance of ensuring due process in accordance with international human rights law, and in this context we recommend the government of Iraq adopt enabling legislation to incorporate genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity into domestic law.

States have a responsibility to protect all communities within their borders from mass atrocity crimes, and the international community has an obligation to ensure that responsibility is upheld. We look forward to continued efforts by the government of Iraq, the United Kingdom, the wider UN membership and international civil society to achieve justice for all victims of atrocities in Iraq.