

**ASSYRIAN CONFEDERATION OF EUROPE**

Statement by the Assyrian Confederation of Europe, January 15 2018

**US decision on aid to Assyrians in Iraq crucial for victims of ISIS**

The Assyrian Confederation of Europe applauds the agreement reached between The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on increased assistance to Assyrians and Yazidis in Iraq's Nineveh province. The 55 million USD earmarked for rebuilding infrastructure in the Assyrian region of the Nineveh plain and Yazidi Sinjar region will strengthen hopes for a brighter future after the terror and destruction of ISIS.

Assyrians have suffered ethnic cleansing and genocide at the hands of ISIS and face real danger of disappearing from Iraq after decades of demographic decline which has accelerated the last few years. The death and destruction spread by ISIS has affected all Iraqis but for Assyrians and Yazidis it poses also an existential threat. This is why development aid earmarked for these indigenous ethnic groups is both crucial and a moral imperative.

This important agreement by USAID and UNDP on rebuilding basic infrastructure must be followed by political steps to improve security in the Assyrian and Yazidi regions. The Assyrian local force The Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU), sanctioned by the Iraqi ministry of defense, must receive political, economical and military backing to provide security in the Assyrian region. The empowerment of locally sourced security forces in the Nineveh plain and Sinjar is as crucial as rebuilding infrastructure to halt the exodus of Assyrians and Yazidis from the area.

The Assyrian Confederation of Europe calls on Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to follow the example set by the U.S. and earmark direct aid to Iraq's most vulnerable and affected communities. The EU:s new strategy on Iraq which is to be presented later this year should include provisions for direct EU funding for rebuilding the Nineveh plain region.

The Assyrian Confederation of Europe Brussels, January 15 2018