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Written statement* submitted by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 August 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The situation of Women in Iraq*

Distinguished members of the United Nation's Human Rights Council,

As the Council debates the human rights implications of the violence and displacement in Iraq, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) on behalf of the Iraqi Women's Network urges the member states to consider the following:

We, The Iraqi women, who participated in the struggle for dignity, equality and democracy, launch today our call to the international community and the women of the world to support us to expose and condemn the terror and crimes committed by ISIS (Da'ish).

Since 9th June the Iraqi people have been subjected to the most heinous crimes of genocide, and ethnic and religious cleansing at the hands of ISIS terrorists, through the displacement of about one and a half million civilians from the provinces of Nineveh, Salahadeen, Kirkuk, Diyala and Anbar. Most of the victims are Christians, Yazidis, Turkmen and Shabak. Armed groups took many women and girls from those groups to unknown location. During the process of terrible collective displacement, a large number of children and women died, many others were lost, and huge numbers exposed to slow death by starvation, thirst, or as a result of deadly diseases, in particular those who fled to Sinjar Mountain, not to mention the trauma of most of the displaced people. The displaced women and their families live under harsh and inhumane conditions, with a sense of desperation at time, pushes them to seek immigration outside of Iraq.

The news are coming from the displaced people, from Sinjar, Tal Afar districts, Bashir sub-district, Mosul city, parts of Nineveh Plain and Amerli sub-district about incidents of kidnapping and harassment against women and girls, as well as assaults and practices reminiscent of prehistoric times, such as the sale of women into sexual slavery, murder, threats, robbery and forcing them to abandon their religions and convert to Islam. This is in addition to the seizure of their houses, looting and destroying their possessions.

In the areas controlled by the terrorists, fear spread among women because of the threats and attacks perpetrated on them, where the Badush prison in Mosul holding 160 women from various components, some accompanied by their children, are subjected to torture, beatings, whipping and sexual persecution. During the past three days, three of these detainees were released; one of them is only 17 years, under the condition of Jihad marriage for every 15 days with one of the gunmen. On August 13, 2014, the killing of Doctor Ghada Shafiq in Mosul, and later killing lawyer Ms. Najlaa Al-Omari who was a candidate in the elections of April 2014, and on 21 August carried out the murder of a woman by cutting her head publicly accused of prostitution.

Women are prevented from going out of the house unless accompanied by a man and for urgent reasons only, imposing on them to wear the veil and cover their hands, depriving them from work or jobs outside the house except female obstetricians and women working in the field of nursing at the hospital. The terrorists imposed a penalty of whipping for women violating these rules. Whipping is carried out in public, in particular in the city of Mosul.

In addition, our sisters in these areas suffer from the lack of medicine and a serious shortage of health services, which cause a lack of maternity hospitals to threads and anesthetic resulting to reduce acute caesarean operations to women, and during the months of June and July over 13 children suffered from quadriplegics died, not to mention other which leading to the deaths of many disabled people and those with chronic diseases. People are suffering from power and water cuts in this hot summer season and harsh economic conditions.

While we commend the Security Council resolution No.2170 issued on August 15, 2014, we, on behalf of 90 women's organisations and groups appeal to the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, the Committee on CEDAW and the Human Rights Council, as well as the international community, to take prompt measures to ensure the condemnation of the barbaric practices of the ISIS militants, which reached the level of crimes of genocide, through:

- The formation of an international fact-finding committee to investigate the "state of Iraqi women under the terrorism of ISIS",

- Take action to liberate women and children, who are still hostages by ISIS,
- The protection of the displaced women and their families, and provide a safe environment close to their home areas by international protection,
- The provision of urgent humanitarian relief services, medical, psychological and social for displaced women and their families,
- The protection of women and girls who are victims of ISIS oppression (shelter, and medical treatment), as well assuring the protection of witnesses.

The delay in taking deterrent action will substantially increase the extent of the suffering and contribute to the increase of violations, qualitatively and quantitatively. The delay will allow ISIS to persist and commit heinous acts against women, children and the civilian population, and commit terrorist operations beyond the borders of our country that will cause heaviest damage to international security and peace.

* Iraqi Women's Network, a non-governmental organisation without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.